

Tucson Mountains ASSOCIATION SINCE 1934



April 2014

Spring Newsletter

Dear TMA Supporter,

Welcome to our newsletter! We have a number of exciting things to report.

President's Column - Bob Gilby

• **TMA is going paperless.** In an effort to conserve resources such as trees, paper and postage, we will be sending out our newsletters and alerts electronically. We plan to call members who previously requested paper newsletter.

• **Big Thank You** to departing board members Barbara Whitaker, Ed Verburg and Dustin Cox. They have assured us that they will continue to work with TMA on selected projects.

• **Board Member Recruitment:** Are you interested in advocating for preserving open space and our beautiful Sonoran Desert, westside community? Join our board! We'd love to have you. Please contact Bob at bgilby@cox.net

• **Friendly reminder:** please mail in your membership dues for 2014. Paying for multiple years saves time and resources.

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Please thank the many businesses that support TMA by supporting them!

Western National Parks Association

Silverbell Dental

Save the Scenic Santa Ritas Update



*by Gayle Hartmann,
President SSSR*

After years of public meetings, comments, and more public meetings the Coronado National Forest recently released the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Rosemont Mine. It calls for approval of the mine with some minor mitigation. We have been expecting this result and it does NOT mean the mine can move forward.

In response to the Final EIS, we sent a thorough and comprehensive objections document to the Regional Forester in Albuquerque. Many others, including Pima County and the Tohono O'odham Nation, also sent objections. We expect him to make a decision sometime in April. If he has any backbone, he will decide the Final EIS is inadequate and he will NOT issue the Record of Decision (ROD). But, it is likely that he won't have any backbone and, thus, will issue the ROD. If that happens, do not be alarmed!

Rosemont still needs multiple permits. Perhaps the most important is a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers that would allow the dumping of mine wastes into area waterways. We don't think they will get this permit. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has veto

David B. DeBruyne, photographer

Antigone Books

The Sanctuary - Hair Cut & Style

AIO Financial

San Carlos Grill

Loft Cinema

Teresa's Mosaic Café

Delectables Restaurant

Rusty's Family Restaurant and Sports Grille

Yoga Connection

New Asia Chinese Restaurant

La Cabana

Bianchi's Italian Restaurant

Shall We Dance Studio

Wild Bird Store

J A Daly, artist

B Line Cafe

Tucson Audubon Society

Cafe Poca Cosa

Hotel Congress

Dr. Richard Baim - Silverbell Eye Care

Brooklyn Pizza

Native Seeds Research

4th Avenue Yoga

power over the Corps, has expressed serious concerns. The EPA administrator from Region 9 sent a letter to Coronado National Forest Supervisor Jim Upchurch stating that the Rosemont's Draft EIS was "environmentally unsatisfactory" and that pollution from the mine would pose an unacceptable "risk to human health and the environment."

As you also may know, we are currently contesting the issuance to Rosemont of air and water permits by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. And, there are likely to be court battles in the future. The battle has a long way to go and we are still confident that we can prevent this environmental and economic disaster from occurring.

For more information:
<http://scenicsantaritas.org/home>

Interstate 11 Proposal



For many years, there have been various proposals made to create a bypass highway around Tucson for the purpose of connecting the US-Mexico border to the Phoenix area (and on to Nevada and eventually Canada),

establishing an international trade corridor. Previously, a proposal promoted by the Arizona Department of Transportation would have sited this highway either along the San Pedro River corridor or bisecting Avra Valley west of Tucson. In 2007, the County Board of Supervisors opposed this proposal (Resolution No. 2007-243). Currently, a nearly identical proposal to the Avra Valley route is being studied.

San Agustin Brasserie Restaurant

Downtown Kitchen

Beyond Bread

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TMA opposes this current proposal for a number of reasons:

- The bypass through Avra Valley would harm Tucson Mountain Park, Saguaro National Park West, and Ironwood Hills National Monument.
- It would sever critical wildlife linkages including the Ironwood-Tortolita linkage zone, the Ironwood-Picacho wildlife linkage and the Avra Valley linkage zone.
- Severed linkages will isolate wildlife populations, make it difficult for wildlife to move across the landscape to adapt to changing habitat due to climate change and make them more susceptible to extinction.
- It would harm lands in the county's Conservation Lands System which helps to protect the county's most biologically rich lands.
- This bypass would destroy and/or degrade important and increasingly rare riparian habitat, which protects against flooding, prevents erosion, protects water quality and groundwater recharge, and provides shelter, food and natural beauty.
- A new highway would divert cars and trucks away from existing businesses on or near the current Interstate 10.
- A new transportation corridor would lead to intensive residential and commercial development, further fragmenting habitat.

The construction of a new transportation corridor would have a huge carbon footprint, increase pollution, worsen the heat island effect, and cause local jurisdictions to incur large financial responsibilities for new infrastructure costs. In their Resolution, the Board of Supervisors urged that the existing Interstate 10 be expanded to provide for greater transportation needs, and multi-modalities be employed including passenger rail. TMA agrees.

Although planning is at the early stages, it is not too soon to

contact County Supervisors and County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry to make your views known. For additional information, please contact the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection:<http://www.sonorandesert.org/>.

Painted Hills Update

The 287 acres of open space comprising Painted Hills has peaks and ridges, wildlife corridors, and 9,000 saguaros. For many, it offers the first pristine view of the Upper Sonoran Desert as visitors and residents drive up to Gates Pass.

TMA representatives are working cooperatively with the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection (CSDP) and Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association to preserve Painted Hills. TMA sent a summary of the two public forums that were held last year to the County Administrator and County Board Members. An article also was recently published in the CSDP's newsletter on our efforts to preserve Painted Hills. We further have been active in contacting County officials to check on the progress of adding Painted Hills to Tucson Mountain Park, and will continue to do so to ensure a positive outcome for this important property on the west side.

Thank you for voicing your support for preserving Painted Hills!!

Water Matters

There are a number of upcoming opportunities to learn more about water issues or related activities:

Water Forum-There will be a special meeting sponsored by Ward offices on "What You Always Wanted to Know About Water" including: Do we have enough water for the future? How is Tucson Water keeping water safe and

secure? Why do water rates go up? What does it cost to deliver water to your tap?

When: Thursday, April 24, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., Ward 3,
Councilor Karin Uhlich

Where: Ward 3 Office, 1510 E. Grant Road

When: Wednesday, April 30, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., Ward 6,
Councilor Steve Kozachik

Where: Ward 6 Office, 3202 E. 1st Street

Watering Hole Celebration-The Community Water Coalition and Watershed Management Group are co-sponsoring a special "Earth Day" event with a Living Lab and Learning Center, and then a gathering at the Watering Hole for a community-wide party!

When: April 19, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. for Lab and Learning Center, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. for party

Where: Watershed Management Group, 1137 N. Dodge Boulevard

Youth Stewards-The Community Water Coalition's "Training Youth Stewards" project will engage, educate, train, and empower 10 to 15 students related to strategies to promote water conservation, groundwater recharge, and improving riparian habitat through four public meetings. If you want to be a Youth Steward (ages 15 - 23), applications are currently being accepted for this program.

Timeline for Program: February 1 - November 28, 2014

Contact: Karilyn Roach, CWC Coordinator
at kroachatwatershedmg.org or 396-3266, ext. 7.

Sunset Road Development

As development proceeds in our region, an important question is how well the Tucson Mountains will remain biologically connected to the surrounding areas. Their long-term biological health depends on the ability of animals and plants to move between the Tucson Mountains and the

surrounding areas such the Tortolita Mountains to obtain habitat and food, to maintain their genetic diversity, and to shift with the seasons and climate change.

The northeastern slopes of the Tucson Mountains are especially important for connection with the areas to the northeast, including the Santa Cruz River corridor and the Tortolita Mountains; but this northeastern region is undergoing rapid development. A substantial part retains SR zoning, which specifies a minimum lot size of 3.3 acres per house; but other parts have been upzoned substantially blocking large parts of the region to free wildlife movements. A beautiful parcel of Sonoran Desert habitat totaling 80 acres remains at present undeveloped in a critical part of this northeastern wildlife corridor. It is immediately south of Sunset Road, and contains East Idle Hour Wash, which is well located as a corridor between the Tucson Mountains and the confluence of the Santa Cruz River, Rillito River and Cañada del Oro Wash (Corazón de Tres Ríos del Norte). This property also has protected peaks and ridges, important riparian areas, and special species management areas.

Originally zoned as SR with a proposal for 22 housing units, the developer recently requested a change in the County's comprehensive plan to allow for a cluster development with 46 housing units in a design that TMA judged would provide substantial barriers to the movement of wildlife through this important corridor formed by East Idle Hour Wash and the surrounding areas, and at the same time destroy important habitat.

TMA opposed the change at a Board of Supervisors' meeting in fall 2013. Many neighbors also turned out in opposition to the change. Some were concerned about traffic in the region, but others were concerned about the impact on biological resources. Nevertheless, the Board of Supervisors voted to amend the County's comprehensive plan, although they instructed the developer to work with the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection and TMA to obtain a better design, which would ultimately have to be approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Sweetwater Preserve Trails

Those of you hiking recently in Sweetwater Preserve will have noticed flagging marking locations for new and replacement trails in the Sweetwater Preserve in the newly acquired eastern parcel. These trails will consist largely of a loop around the main valley in the east with connections to the existing trail system. The plan is also to decommission and partly restore some of the old, informal, but often badly eroding trails that exist there already.

TMA has been working with the County Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Department to obtain a biologically friendly trail design that will also provide excellent opportunities for recreation. Much of the construction and restoration of decommissioned areas will be done by volunteers. We will be announcing how to volunteer at a later time. Restoration work will provide an especially good opportunity for hands on involvement of TMA members in biological restoration.

Pima County Bond Advisory Committee Meeting

TMA wrote a letter to the Conservation Acquisition Commission advocating for an allocation of \$285 million for Conservation Open Space on the next County bond election. Strong scientific evidence implies that the richness of the plant and animal life of an area is directly related to how large it is, and how well connected it is to other areas. If preserved areas are small isolated areas, we can expect substantially impoverished plant and animal life in the future. Current rates of species extinctions are estimated to be more than 100 times the pre-industrial rate. Much of this is due to destruction of habitat. In addition, there is a special need to ensure adequate wildlife corridors between some of the large protected areas that we have.

The Conservation Acquisition Commission has identified a slate of areas that will help fill gaps in current representation, but more will need to be done. The Tucson Mountains will be harmed in the long run by failure of effective conservation throughout Pima County because of the needs of organisms to migrate over the landscape in this time of climate change.

The economy and our quality of life benefit greatly from the biologically rich open space that is a current feature of Pima County. Open space in

this region supports tourism and makes it attractive to skilled professionals and high tech industries, providing strong support to the economy. We should not risk undermining these strong economic and quality of life benefits.

3 Ways You Can Support TMA

- Send in your membership dues (\$30) for 2014 and beyond
- Donate toward TMA's operating expenses
- Send a donation to our conservation account (tax-deductable)

Your support makes it possible to continue our work! Please talk up TMA with friends and neighbors and share the newsletter. The larger our membership, the more influence we can have with city and county officials in advocating for your concerns.

Follow this link to renew your membership!

<http://www.tucsonmountainsassoc.org/join.html>

Questions? Comments? Contact Us!

TMA@TucsonMountainsAssoc.org