

FROM TMA PRESIDENT, PETER CHESSON

Bond Election 2015: Support Proposition 430, Natural Area Conservation and Historic Preservation

The good news is that the County Board of Supervisors recently voted to hold a bond election this fall with \$112 million for natural area conservation and historic preservation, including \$95 million for purchase and protection of critical open space. Among the properties eligible for purchase are key parcels of land providing connections between the Tucson Mountains and the Tortolita Mountains and the Ironwood Forest National Monument. Other properties eligible for purchase would provide further preservation within the Tucson Mountains. For the Tucson Mountains to retain its wonderful wealth of wildlife it is critical that it remain connected to other areas by corridors of open space. Isolated areas lose species because the animals cannot migrate from place to place to find habitat right for the season, and have difficulty recovering from harsh times. Both plants and animals need to breed with others outside their local area to remain genetically healthy. And to survive changes in the climate, they must be able to move to new places. Now is the time to save the connections between the Tucson Mountains and elsewhere as urban encroachment threatens to cut them off and make this place poorer for us all. So we urge you to support the bond election and especially proposition 430, the open space part of the bond election. It is a wonderful investment in our future. Read TMA's full arguments in favor of proposition 430, and check our website. For information about supporting the bonds in general, see www.yesonpimacountybonds.com, and also the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection: <http://www.sonorandesert.org/>

The following is TMA's argument submitted to the Board of Supervisors in favor of Proposition 430: Natural Area Conservation and Historic Preservation

Pima County is a very special place. We have an abundance of natural areas that form the back drop to our cities, and provide habitat for the flora and fauna that delights us all. These natural areas are critical to our quality of life, and to our economy. They promote recreation and tourism, and through the quality of life, they make our area attractive to professional employment and high-tech industry, which is dependent on highly skilled professionals. Few major cities are so well endowed with nature or have nature contributing so abundantly to the way of life. We are fortunate indeed. But nature is at risk. Urban encroachment is diminishing these areas, and threatening to cut them off from one another. As areas become isolated, they lose species because the animals cannot migrate from place to place to find habitat right for the season, and have difficulty recovering from harsh times. Both plants and animals need to breed with others outside their local area to remain genetically healthy. And to survive changes in the climate, they must be able to move to new places. Proposition 430 would be an investment in our future to secure critical connections between land already preserved in Pima County. The critical linkages between the key mountain ranges, and between existing preserved areas, are eligible for purchase. As time passes, their price will become beyond reach, or the land will already be developed and lost. Now is the time to make this investment in our future. Without it, we will all be much the poorer. Pima County will lose some of its grandeur, and suffer economically too. Proposition 430 is a wise investment with a return much greater than its costs.

TAKING THE LEAD TO SECURE WATER FOR THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER: AN UPDATE FROM THE WATERSHED MANAGEMENT GROUP (WMG)

Did you know that a 23-mile stretch of the Santa Cruz River as it runs north out of Tucson enjoys year-round flow supported by effluent, or treated wastewater, released into the river channel daily? Along this stretch, native willow, palo verde, and mesquite trees, as well as other wetland plants have established a rich ribbon of riparian habitat for birds and other desert critters. In addition, this verdant corridor provides cooling shade and a beautiful escape for people along The Loop bike and pedestrian path.

However, with no formal agreement to keep this water from being designated for other uses, there is no guarantee this will continue to flow into the future.

Therefore, the **Community Water Coalition**, of which TMA is a founding member, has sent a proposal to the City and County asking them to dedicate an allocation of water from the **Conservation Effluent Pool (CEP)** to maintain this established habitat along the Santa Cruz.

The CEP, which sets aside 10,000 acre feet of water annually for conservation purposes, was created in 2010. Our proposal would be the first designation of CEP water, creating an important precedent for utilizing the CEP and expressing a community value for sustaining flows in our rivers. Our west side City Councilmember **Regina Romero** and **Mayor Rothschild** have been very supportive of this proposal.

We're asking you to help. Please take a minute right now to contact **Councilmember Regina Romero** and **Mayor Rothschild** to thank them for supporting the proposal to set aside CEP water for this purpose, and contact **County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry** to encourage the county to also support this proposal. See contact information below.

Regina Romero's email is regina.romero@tucsonaz.gov, Mayor Rothchild's email is jonathan.rothchild@tucsonaz.gov, and Chuck Huckelberry's email is CHH@pima.gov.

For more information please see the WMG website: watershedmg.org

CALL FOR THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE TO EVALUATE IMPACTS OF THE "VILLAGES AT VIGNETO " DEVELOPMENT

The **Tucson Audubon Society**, **Huachuca Audubon Society** and **Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection** are trying to get as many concerned citizens to send letters to the Army Corps of Engineers, editors of local newspapers and posts, about a proposed development for the city of Benson, to its members. Below you will find an abbreviated executive summary from the Tucson Audubon Society for the "Villages at Vigneto" development. There are also links below for those interested in taking action, contacting these organizations or reading the full executive summary and press release.

The information below is posted on our website at: <http://tucsonaudubon.org/what-we-do/conservation/alerts.html>

If you have any questions, please contact **Matt Clark** with Tucson Audubon Society at mclark@tucsonaudubon.org.

SUMMARY: The Villages at Vigneto ("Vigneto") is a large, Tuscan-inspired development proposed by El Dorado Benson, LLC ("El Dorado") on over 12,000 acres of private land located south of Benson, AZ, pop. 5,100. Vigneto will include 27,760 new homes, commercial developments, golf courses, parks, vineyards, lakes, orchards, resorts, and an extensive road and utility network and is intended to attract

up to 70,000 new residents. This population explosion would dramatically impact the environment surrounding Benson, and carries with it the potential to significantly alter the San Pedro river system. The Benson City Council is poised to vote on the final development plan soon, which would pave the way for construction to begin.

Read the full Alert and TAKE ACTION

Executive Summary: Tucson Audubon letter to the Army Corps of Engineers (May 19, 2015)

Tucson Audubon press release (June 8, 2015)

AZ Daily Star Article: http://tucson.com/news/local/reconsider-permit-for-big-benson-project-audubon-urges/article_e9b83a80-e85c-536c-843b-ca6e5a0e4290.html

For LTE's to respond to AZ Daily Star article:

<http://speedway.tucson.com/letters/?action=letter&uuid=e9b83a80-e85c-536c-843b-ca6e5a0e4290>

ANNUAL MEETING

Mark Sunday, October 25, 2015 on your calendars NOW! We will hold our Annual Meeting and Potluck at Milagro Co-Housing (3057 N Gaia Place) again this year starting at 6:00 pm with a tour of the grounds at 5:00 pm. The silent auction was such a success last year that we have decided to hold it again! Of course we plan to have live musical entertainment as the culminating activity. Don't miss our fun event. Oh, by the way, if you have something you would like to donate to the Silent Auction, please contact Charlene Pesquiera at 520-358-1783 or cb1202mail@gmail.com We need your help and support! It's a potluck, so bring a side dish or dessert (entrees and beverages will be provided).

BOARD MEMBER RECRUITMENT

Are you interested in advocating for preserving open space and our beautiful Sonoran Desert, and west-side community? Join our board! We'd love to have you. Please contact Paul Eckerstrom at 520-743-1380 or eckerstrom2@gmail.com.



GUIDELINES FOR THE HABITAT COMPETITION

Categories:

1. Best preserved natural habitat, properties 3 acres and more
2. Best preserved natural habitat, properties less than 3 acres
3. Best habitat restoration
4. Best provision for wildlife corridors
5. Best provision for species at risk

Eligibility: Anyone not on the TMA board can enter property they own or manage that lies on the eastern side of the Tucson Mountains between crest of the mountain range and the Santa Cruz River.

Submission: Entries must consist of a brief description, address of the property, contact information, map of the property indicating the part of the property that is habitat, and photos. The description must detail how the property preserves habitat, the efforts the owner or manager has made to protect and restore habitat, and how the habitat fulfills the aims of specific competition categories. Entries should address the specific judging criteria listed below. The photos and map should provide documentary evidence. Properties of finalists will be visited by a board member.

Entries are requested by October 1, and photographs of the properties will be displayed at the annual meeting. Winners will be announced after it has been determined that entries of sufficient quality have been received. Entries can be submitted as zip files to the TMA email address (TMA@TucsonMountainsAssoc.org) with subject line, habitat competition.

Judging criteria:

General criteria:

- (A) Fraction of the property supporting vegetation native to the Tucson Mountains.
- (B) Absence of alien plant species.
- (C) Match between the vegetation on the property and vegetation in nearby undisturbed areas.
- (D) Continuity of between native vegetation on the property and native vegetation in nearby areas taking into account constraints due neighboring properties.
- (E) Value of the property as wildlife corridor.

Restoration criteria

- (F) Documentation of the state of the property prior to restoration
- (H) Degree of recovery of the property to its natural state taking into account the time for the restoration
- (I) Local sourcing of seeds and cuttings

Wildlife corridors

- (J) Location of the preserved areas on the property relative to washes and continuous vegetation in neighboring properties.
- (K) Location of the property relative to significant wildlife corridors in the local area.
- (L) Control of threats such as dogs and cats to native species, e.g. preventing pets from ranging freely over the preserved area.

Species at risk

- (M) Documentation of specific features, such as appropriate vegetation and landscape elements, for native species at risk.
- (N) Documentation of the use of the property by species at risk.
- (O) Control of threats to species at risk.

Tucson Mountain Vegetation Reference

Property owners are advised to consult the following publication for any concerns about which plant species are native to the Tucson Mountains.

Annotated Flora and Vegetation of the Tucson Mountains, Pima County, Arizona, by R. Rondeau et al, Vol 12, No. 2 of the magazine "Desert Plants," available from Desert Plants, 2120 E. Allen Road, Tucson, AZ, 85719, phone 393-8759.