

CCA Conservation Committee Activities September-December,2021

For more detailed information about any of these activities inquire of Pearl.

Conservation Committee members:

Pearl Mast, chair, Anna Lands, Barbara Clark, Bob Evans, Daniel Baker, David Omick, Elna Otter, Lynn Smith-Lovin, Nancy Ferguson, Sue Newman

I. Advocacy

Villages at Vigneto

---As represented by EarthJustice, continue to monitor the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers actions related to the Villages at Vigneto development. Currently Vigneto's Clean Water Act Section 404 permit is suspended (but not vacated) by the Corps and our litigation is stayed until further action of the owners or the agencies.

Our co-plaintiffs are Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance, the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Maricopa Audubon Society, and Tucson Audubon Society.

SunZia

--Collaborated with Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance to encourage Congress people to push for alternatives to be considered in the EIS beyond just those proposed by SunZia.

--Attended meeting of the Lower San Pedro Collaborative at which representatives of SunZia and Pattern Energy presented, again advocating for expanding the range of alternatives considered.

Arizona Surface Water Protection Plan/Water of the US

--Signed on to letter prepared by Sierra Club and other environmental organizations advocating for Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to adopt stronger protections for surface waters, especially ephemeral waters. Despite the Biden administration's plan to propose new rules for Waters of the US, ADEQ has pressed on with plans to implement Arizona legislation that would drastically limit which waters are protected and to what extent.

II. Monitoring/Data Collection

Wildlife Cameras

--Cameras continue to be serviced by Joe Page when he is in Cascabel. Bob Evans processes the photos as previously noted. Objectives at this time are: Watch for T&E species such as jaguarundis, maintain large data set (which can serve as a rally point in defense of public action even if the data is not useful in a court of law), document presence/absence of species at a given point, track movements of feral pigs in the Valley, document illegal or undesirable activities.

III. Connectivity

Road

--Maintained (via Barbara Clark) contact with the person who supervises road grading. Successfully advocated for narrower graded lanes through most of the summer.

Fence Inventory

--Continue the Fence Inventory project as part of the Connectivity Work Group of the Lower San Pedro Collaborative. Scott Wilbor completed the initial draft of the map showing fences and related wildlife permeability in the Hot Springs Canyon/Paige Canyon wildlife corridor. Held a meeting of landowners, managers, and other interested community members on December 9, which included presentations by Scott Wilbor and Don Swann of Saguaro National Park. They reiterated the importance of this corridor and explained how fences can disturb wildlife movement between sky islands. A discussion followed regarding how we might use this information to improve wildlife movement. Ideas mentioned included modifying existing fences to be more wildlife friendly, fortifying fences in the riparian zone, and ensuring continuous fencing along the boundaries of State Trust leases so that smaller landowners would not feel the need to fence out cattle. Another meeting of those who expressed interest is being planned.

IV Collaboration

Lower San Pedro Collaborative

--Continue to participate in the Collaborative, which now includes 21 organizations and agencies focused on how we can work together to conserve the Lower San Pedro. Pearl and Alex are both in the Connectivity Work Group, which coordinates the Fence Inventory project. Anna and Pearl participate in the new Landowner Engagement working group.