

## **CCA Conservation Committee Activities April to October, 2022**

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

Conservation Committee members:

Pearl Mast, chair, 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, agreed to dismiss lawsuit against Army Corps of Engineers and US Fish and Wildlife Service, since no new action has been taken in over a year. Currently Vigneto's Clean Water Act Section 404 permit is suspended, but not vacated. Under terms of the agreement to dismiss the suit, the Corps will provide the Plaintiffs 30-days' notice prior to revoking, modifying, or reinstating the 404 permit.

--EarthJustice currently in negotiations with the defendants for payment of legal fees incurred.

#### **SunZia**

--May-Submitted comments to the Arizona Corporation Commission requesting full hearings about changes SunZia requested to their 2016 Arizona permit. The Commission voted to refer the matter to the Arizona Line Siting Committee for hearings.

--July-Signed on to extensive comments developed by the Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance regarding the inadequacies of the Bureau of Land Management's draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for several changes SunZia sought in their federal permit.

--September-Participated in hearings before the Arizona Line Siting Committee, asking the Committee to not approve the changes SunZia seeks to their Arizona permit. The Committee voted to approve the changes, but SunZia's owners did agree to 2 new conditions that would help to limit disruption on the Cascabel Road during construction.

--October-Currently taking a leading role in organizing public comment to the Arizona Corporation Commission about the Arizona permits SunZia continues to seek.

--Throughout this period, consulted extensively with Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance Chair, Peter Else, who has spearheaded the opposition to SunZia.

#### **Arizona Surface Water Protection Plan/Water of the US**

--Signed on to letters 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. Letters signed: Comments on ADEQ technical papers on Arizona Water Quality Standards and on ADEQ Jurisdictional Evaluations, and on draft rules for the Surface Water Protection Program.

### **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.

### **Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys**

--We were not able to participate in Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys this summer because no volunteers could be found.

## **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. Based on the fence inventory and the map Scott Wilbor created last year, several landowners identified fences that could be removed to improve wildlife movement in the Hot Springs Canyon/Paige Canyon wildlife corridor. The fence removal day planned for September had to be postponed, but plans are being made for that to happen later this fall.

## **IV Collaboration**

### **Lower San Pedro Collaborative**

--Continue to participate in the Collaborative, which includes over 20 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.