

## **CCA Conservation Committee Activities January-April 2025**

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

Conservation Committee members:

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

### **I. Advocacy**

#### **Cochise County Plan 2045**

--Met with Cochise County staff who are creating a 10-year Comprehensive Plan. We described the spiritual basis of our conservation efforts and expressed our concerns regarding water issues, wildlife connectivity issues relative to our road and other infrastructure, land use issues including appropriate entrepreneurship, and in general our desire to keep the valley as undeveloped and ecosystem friendly as we can.

#### **Redhawk/Faraday Copper Creek Mine Exploration**

--Signed on to comments written by the Center for Biological Diversity and signed by 10 other groups, regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment the BLM had developed for exploratory mining on Copper Creek, a downstream tributary of the San Pedro River, near Mammoth. The company is actively advertising the value of the copper deposits in the area as it pursues a buyer to develop a huge copper mine at the north end of the Galiuro Mountains. The comments note the on-going violations of the National Environmental Policy Act in allowing previous exploration, in lack of consultation with the tribes, and in lack of adequate analysis of how the activity and water use could affect wildlife and the wildlife connectivity corridor of which Copper Creek is a part.

#### **SunZia**

--Continue to support the Tohono O'odham Nation and the San Carlos Apache Tribe in their legal challenge of the failure of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to fulfill their responsibilities for coordinating with Native American tribes regarding cultural resources. The appeals court seemed receptive to plaintiffs' oral arguments presented on March 26, but no decision has been handed down.

--Approximately \$2500 remains in the special SunZia legal fund. The [GoFundMe site](#) in support of this fund, is still up, but has not been active. By consensus at the last member's meeting, the money in this fund will be retained for use in support of ASW's pursuit of a Cultural Landscape Study of the San Pedro Valley or future actions against RioSol, the second planned line in the same right-of-way.

#### **Air Force Operation Area expansion**

--Update: The Final Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be released in 2026. As noted in last report, CCA signed on to comments developed by the Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance (LSPWA) regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Regional Special Use Airspace Optimization to Support Air Force Missions in Arizona, a plan to greatly expand both the area of and the intensity of training flights over several areas in the Lower San Pedro Valley, as well as large areas of SE Arizona and SW New Mexico.

## **II. Monitoring/Data Collection**

### **Wildlife Cameras**

--Cameras continue to be serviced by Joe Page when he is in Cascabel. Objectives at this time are: Watch for T&E species, 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.

### **Beaver Survey**

--Watershed Management Group plans the next beaver survey on our reaches of the San Pedro in early December, 2025.

## **III. Collaboration**

### **Archaeology Southwest**

--Collaborating with ASW as they explore information gathering regarding a Cultural Landscape Study of the San Pedro Valley.

### **Lower San Pedro Collaborative**

--Continue to participate in the Collaborative, which includes over 20 organizations and agencies focused on sharing information and working together on non-controversial projects.

--Alex is participating in 3 of the Collaborative working groups under his Meader Fund contract and reports the following:

*--Indicators Group—Collecting data which can serve as on-going indicators of the health of the watershed. Alex is currently working on a parcel analysis and looking into rangeland data.*

*--Landscape Scale Planning—Group planning in response to Collaborative survey that showed a majority of participants want to see this kind of larger scale conservation planning. Group is currently working on applying for a Catalyst Fund grant to support a Values and Threats Assessment for the valley.*

*--Connectivity Group—has been focusing on prioritizing parcels for conservation in the riparian and cross-valley connectivity corridors. Initial focus on Paige Canyon and Galiuros Gap.*