



Friends of the Desert

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A project of the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection in Pima County, Arizona
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In an effort to ensure all Coalition supporters receive regular program updates, we're sending this bi-monthly newsletter relaying information about important activities related to the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) and other Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection efforts. Please contact Sean at Sean@sonorandesert.org or at 520-388-9925 with any questions or comments. Please visit the Coalition website to learn more at www.sonorandesert.org.

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- **Action Alert: PROP. 207 Will Kill Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan – Vote NO!!**

Proposition 207, deceptively titled “Private Property Rights Protection Act,” is a confusing bait-and-switch proposition on this fall’s ballot.

Proposition 207 puts at risk important land protection measures including **Pima County’s Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP)** which helps protect habitat for imperiled species of plants and wildlife. It also would make it impossible to implement plans like this in other communities.

Voters should reject this radical measure. Proposition 207 would either cost taxpayers plenty, draining funds from important public services, or, more likely, result in no enforcement of land use protections. It pretends to guard against eminent domain problems, but only land speculators win if Proposition 207 passes—and neighborhoods lose big because governments would be forced to pay for alleged losses to property values or to waive land protection measures.

If Prop 207 passes what would be at risk:

- **Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan**
- **Preserving archeological sites**
- **Protecting wildlife habitat**
- **Protecting wildlife landscape linkages**
- **Protecting washes**
- **Hillside zoning**

Who pays for costly legal actions? Arizona Taxpayers

Proposition 207 will harm Arizona’s quality of life. By dramatically increasing the cost of basic land use laws, this measure will make it all but impossible for local communities to pass or enforce laws to limit irresponsible development, preserve limited water supplies, protect open space, or preserve their neighborhoods’ character. In effect, Proposition 207 will make it impossible to enact additional planning tools in the future.

You can tell a lot about an initiative by looking at who’s behind it. Follow the money trail behind Prop 207 and you will find it is being bankrolled by wealthy New York City real estate tycoon Howard Rich. Rich funnels money through a number of organizations like the one in Arizona that has spent almost \$1 million to get

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Proposition 207 on the ballot. He has spent millions of dollars putting similar initiatives on the ballot in California, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, and Washington State. He is attempting to radically change the country through state initiatives that take power away from local citizens, preventing them from determining the future of their own communities.

In 2004 Howard Rich put a similar initiative on the ballot in Oregon. The results have been devastating. There are more than \$5 billion in claims against taxpayers. Land-use restrictions have been waived. Community planning has stopped. Conservation efforts have been paralyzed.

Write a letter to the editor today! Here are some talking points:

- Vote no on Prop 207 on Nov. 7
- Prop 207 is a Trojan Horse: This radical measure is being sold to voters as eminent domain reform, but hidden provisions in Prop 207 would rollback basic zoning laws and other safeguards for our neighborhoods and communities. Prop 207 would lead to irresponsible development and harm our clean air and water.
- Out-of-state special interests are behind Prop 207: Howard Rich, a wealthy real estate speculator from New York City is bankrolling Prop 207. He is also funding copycat initiatives in a number of other western states. If Prop 207 passes, those of us who live in Arizona would be left with the devastating consequences.
- Prop 207 would cost Arizona Taxpayers \$ billions: Under Prop 207, taxpayers would be forced to pay speculators and developers just to follow basic zoning and other laws that protect our neighborhoods and communities. If Prop 207 passes, taxpayers would be on the hook for billions of dollars in disputed claims and endless lawsuits.
- Prop 207 is extreme and dangerous: It would take away local decisions about community planning and zoning. Prop 207 would destroy popular projects like the **Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan**.

Tips on Writing Effective Letters to the Editor:

- Get personal: Editors will be much more likely to publish a letter, and the letter will have much more impact, if it demonstrates local relevance.
- Keep it short and simple: *Arizona Daily Star* limits LTEs to 150 words. *Tucson Citizen* limits LTEs to 250 words. Keep your points short and clear, and stick to one or two main points. Stick to commonly used terms. Stay on the campaign's core messages above.
- Urge people to VOTE NO ON 207 ON NOVEMBER 7
- Include your name, phone number, and affiliation/occupation

Submit your letters to: *Tucson Citizen* (letters@tucsoncitizen.com)
Arizona Daily Star (letters@azstarnet.com)

Arizona voters should reject this ill-conceived proposition. Please join the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection and vote No on Proposition 207. To learn more go to www.NoProp207.org

• **Feature Article: Pima County Releases the 4th Draft of the Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP)**

Pima County recently released their latest draft of the Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP). The entire plan can be found at: <http://www.pima.gov/sdcp/>. A 5 page summary (PDF) can be found at: http://www.sonorandesert.org/uploads/files/MSCP_Intro_177.pdf.

The MSCP is one element of the overall Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP), which in addition to protection of species and habitat, also includes the protection and restoration of riparian areas, cultural resource protection, mountain park expansion, and ranch conservation. The SDCP is a county-wide plan that will determine how unincorporated Pima County will grow. The SDCP has been in development for the last eight years and the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection (Coalition) has been at the forefront of the planning



process to ensure that true conservation is achieved. The final plan has not yet been approved, but conservation measures have been adopted by the County Supervisors and County voters, such as the Conservation Lands System and the 2004 Open Space Bond election. Measures such as these ensure that while the SDCP process moves forward we are protecting wildlife and the natural areas they depend upon for survival.

Conservation Lands System (CLS)

- The County, with the recommendations of its Science & Technical Advisory Team, identified the most biologically important lands within Pima County. Through the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, these lands were identified as the Conservation Lands System (CLS). Lands within the identified CLS call for a percentage of the area to be set-aside as natural areas in perpetuity. These percentages range from 95% to 66 2/3% natural undisturbed open space, depending on the classification of the land, which includes riparian areas, biological core, and multiple use management areas. The areas that are set-aside will help build a natural area preserve system throughout Pima County. Visit <http://www.sonorandesert.org/learning-more/conservation-land-system> to learn more.

2004 Open Space Bond Acquisitions

- In 2004 Pima County voters overwhelmingly approved over \$174 million in bond funds for the purchase of natural areas which will also contribute to the preserve system. Through March 2006, the County has spent \$50,791,499 on the purchase of 21,486 acres of private land and now holds leases on 75,000 acres of State Trust Land. The protection of a wildlife landscape linkage under I-10 was achieved with the purchase of the Davidson Canyon property, allowing movement between the Rincon Mountains and the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area to the south. The County has been moving very quickly on purchases to date and we expect them to continue the pace. For a complete list (PDF) of land acquisitions visit: http://www.sonorandesert.org/uploads/files/Acquisition_March_2006_178.pdf

These are a few of the many successes during the planning process of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). However, the Coalition and other members of the community continue to work toward the finalization of the Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP). This is the document that Pima County will be submitting to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for final approval later this year. Once approved by the USFWS and adopted by the Pima County Board of Supervisors, the County will receive a federal permit approving a Plan and County compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). With the recommendations of the Coalition we hope that the County will adopt a final MSCP that goes above and beyond what the USFWS will require for compliance with the ESA.

The MSCP will describe how the county will ensure the continued protection of Sonoran Desert plants and animals and their habitat in the future. This document must include specifics such as management and monitoring of protected lands, goals for the recovery of protected species, an independent review process on the progress of the County implementing the plan, and an assured funding source for all activities contained in the Plan.

A public comment is scheduled for later this year. The Coalition will be submitting comments to both entities and will be asking you to support our efforts and make your voice heard. We will be contacting you soon with details on how to send in your comments and will also provide you with talking points.

It will take the combined effort of the community to ensure that Pima County adopts a plan that will protect the saguaro studded hillsides, rolling grasslands, meandering riparian areas, and the species that call the Sonoran Desert their home. Please feel free to contact Coalition staff or check out our website for more information, 520-388-9925, www.sonorandesert.org.



- **Friends of the Ironwood Forest meeting: Save the Date, October 17th**

The Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) was established in June 2000, through an effort spearheaded by the Coalition. Managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the monument is located 25 miles northwest of Tucson and protects over 129,000 acres of the beautiful and rugged Sonoran Desert. Within the IFNM over 470 species and subspecies of plants thrive. The monument is home to 821 invertebrates and 177 vertebrates, and includes the last remaining heard of Desert bighorn sheep in eastern Pima County.

The IFNM is one of the Southern Arizona's natural treasures. As a community we must work to provide the monument with the highest level of protection possible. To help accomplish this, the Coalition and the Sierra Club are working in conjunction with the BLM to organize a "Friends" group for the IFNM. We are looking for the commitment and support of community members to get involved with the Friends of Ironwood Forest National Monument!

Friends organizations are typically created by citizens interested in a particular unit of public land, who work with the land management agency staff and others to achieve protection of natural resources and native biodiversity, conduct research and restoration work, educate the public and assist visitors to the monument. The BLM only has one ranger for the entire monument, and a friends group could help in many areas. There are opportunities to raise funds for public education and outreach programs; help eradicate the bufflegrass encroachment, stem illegal off road traffic in sensitive areas, prevent cultural site vandalism, and many other issues that a Friends group could effectively address.

The first step to forming a Friends group is to create a board of directors; once formed the board will decide upon the organizational structure the official Friends of Ironwood Forest National Monument; the board will make official decisions and help organize the recruitment of members, build organizational cooperation with the BLM, recruit volunteers, engage in restoration projects, organize hikes, birding walks, archeology tours, and other activities within the monument.

The organizational meeting, open to anyone interested, is scheduled from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 17th at the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation Department headquarters, 3500 W. River Road.

The meeting will cover topics such as the role of a Friends group, how it functions, and what it will take to organize one for the Monument. Guest presenters include representatives from the BLM and Friends organizations of other public land units to share how they got their start and how they function. There will also be a short presentation about the steps necessary to form a self-sustaining organization, including recruiting board members and board positions and duties. There will also be ample time for questions and additional discussion.

If you are interested in participation in the group, please plan on attending! If you are interested but unable to attend this meeting or have any questions please feel free to contact Lori Andersen via e-mail at lori@sonorandesert.org or call the Coalition office at (520)388-9925.

To learn more about the Ironwood Forest National Monument go to:
<http://www.sonorandesert.org/learning-more/learn-more-about-the-ifnm>

- **Badwater Update**

Bruce Gungle finished the 135 mile foot race in 41 and ½ hours and raised over \$4,000 for the Coalition. Visit <http://www.sonorandesert.org/2006/08/07/team-coonhound-completes-the-badwater-135-mile-footrace> to learn about all the details. Thank you Bruce, and thanks to all who contributed!