



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Requested Board Meeting Date: 8/5/2025

*= Mandatory, information must be provided

Click or tap the boxes to enter text. If not applicable, indicate "N/A".

***Title:**

Wildfire Mitigation Plan – Pima County Cooperative Extension (Pima Extension)

***Introduction/Background:**

Pursuant to direction of the Board to create a Wildfire Mitigation Plan, presented on May 6, 2025, Pima County Conservation Land and Resources is proposing to engage Pima County Cooperative Extension to conduct Wildfire Fuels Reduction in Pima County. The Cooperative Extension programs throughout the state utilize an Appropriation of County Funds form that is signed by the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to transfer funds to the Cooperative Extension unit in their county. The Appropriations of County Funds (base funding) for Pima Extension was approved by the Board on June 17, 2025. The attached Appropriations Agreement (Amendment) would provide an additional \$75,000 to Pima Extension from the WMP budget that was also passed June 17, 2025, to conduct the work as outlined in the Wildfire Fuels Reduction Scope of Work. Pima Extension is governed by Article 3 of the Arizona Revised Statutes.

***Discussion:**

See attached scope of work.

***Conclusion:**

The Pima Extension and Pima County Conservation Lands and Resources Department have developed and mutually agreed upon a Scope of Work and Budget for Wildfire Fuels Reduction for FY26. The agreement details work elements that benefit the citizens of Pima County that are aligned with goals identified in the Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

***Recommendation:**

The Conservation Lands and Resources Department recommends approval of the appropriation of funds to allow Pima Extension to provide Wildfire Fuel Reduction and Risk Awareness services to the public.

***Fiscal Impact:**

The wildfire fuels reduction scope of work elements proposed by Pima Extension and approved by the county total \$75,000.

***Board of Supervisor District:**

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☒ All

Department: Conservation Lands and Resources

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Department Director Signature: Krista Bale

Date: 7/21/2025

Deputy County Administrator Signature: [Signature]

Date: 7/21/2025

County Administrator Signature: [Signature]

Date: 7/21/25

Pima County Cooperative Extension

Scope of Work, FY26

Wildfire Fuels Reduction in Pima County

Wildfires are now a year-round concern in Pima County. In response to this threat, Pima County developed a Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP), which was approved by the Pima County Board of Supervisors on May 6, 2025. The plan recognizes that managing vegetation and removing invasive plant species to reduce wildfire fuel loads is a primary concern for the region. This is particularly difficult in Pima County because the urban/rural interface is extensive and requires a diverse toolset to address the issues. The WMP identifies the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension as the entity that will work in concert with Pima County to address wildfire fuel reduction in the region. Cooperative Extension conducts similar work in other Arizona counties and has an institutional track record of implementing wildfire fuels outreach and coordination.

The work elements described below will be conducted by Pima County Cooperative Extension (Pima Extension) under general oversight from Pima County Conservation Lands and Resources (CLR). The attached Appropriations Agreement between the University of Arizona and Pima County complements the FY26 Agreement passed by the Board of Supervisors on June 17, 2025, and likewise, will enable transfer of funds without administrative burden. Deliverables on these activities will be reported quarterly to the CLR staff, with an annual summary report on all PCCE accomplishments provided to the Pima County Board of Supervisors.

Element 1: Wildfire Fuels Reduction Coordination and Education **\$45,000**

Pima Extension will hire a Wildfire Outreach Coordinator to work with local fire departments and districts, the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, federal fire managers, and others to reduce wildfire fuels, promote wildfire-resistant ecology, and increase rural and urban wildfire preparedness. FY26 cost for this element represents hiring in December 2025.

- Task 1. Build coordination among various agencies and organizations that are engaged in fire preparedness and wildfire-risk reduction. These fire-risk management entities will include the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM), federal agencies, local fire departments and fire marshals, Pima County Office of Emergency Management, and Conservation Lands & Resources.
- Task 2. Create and conduct wildfire fuel reduction education focusing on rural and unincorporated areas and towns that have high fire risks, such as Green Valley, Sahuarita, Vail, Tucson foothills, and Summerhaven. Partner with Pima County

CLR to develop outreach materials with consistent messaging. Topics will include mitigation that is in synch with the seasonal wildfire cycle and creating defensible natural spaces around homes and businesses.

- Task 3. Work with Pima County Regional Flood Control District (RFCD), CLR, fire-risk management entities, and homeowners associations to coordinate fuel abatement measures for areas where naturally maintained drainages abut private developments and properties.
- Task 4. Work with the Arizona DFFM to identify pathways to creating Firewise USA communities in Pima County and how to overcome Firewise certification delays currently experienced by Pima County residents and businesses.
- Task 5. Seek grants and create Extension publications to educate the residents, businesses, and municipalities about landscaping and property management to reduce wildfire fuels and increase resilience in Pima County

Element 2: Horticulture Education to Promote Wildfire Resilience

\$18,500

Pima Extension will leverage existing programs to deliver value-added public education on fuel reduction in urban and rural Pima County. In 2024, Pima Extension reached over 50,000 residents in Pima County.

- Task 1. Leverage the Pima Extension Master Gardener program to develop and deliver horticulture education on topics such as fire-prone and fire-resistant plants for the Sonoran desert/mountains and gardens, building wildfire defensible spaces around homes and businesses, and wildfire ecology at different elevations and natural settings.
- Task 2: Extend Master Gardener education to reach rural extension stakeholders engaged with the Pima Extension 4-H club program, ranch and stock assistance programs, and 4-H Tucson Village Farm. Wildfire resilience education will be tailored to these specific audiences.
- Task 3: Coordinate with the Pima Extension Invasives Outreach Coordinator to incorporate fire fuels education into invasives outreach efforts and with statewide Extension personnel working on fire and fire fuels mitigation. Write articles for the Pima Extension bi-monthly e-newsletter (circulation 17,000), create social media posts, and web-based education for the broader public.



Element 3: Smartscape Professional Landscaper Education

\$11,500

Pima Smartscape would build on its work to educate landscape professionals, landscape architects, and City workers about implementing resilient, low-water-use landscapes and maintenance practices. Additional Smartscape modules would be created to teach about landscaping to minimize wildfire fuels and other methods to reduce urban/suburban fire risk in Pima County.

- Task 1. Leverage the Pima Extension Smartscape program to create and deliver a wildfire risk reduction educational module for landscaping professionals. This module would focus on landscaping best practices to reduce fuel load and decrease wildfire risk in a variety of settings, including around residences and businesses, in rights-of-way, along riparian areas, and at various elevations.
- Task 2. Work with the RFCD and CLR to develop a Smartscape municipal worker education module on sustainable landscaping, including how to reduce wildfire risk. Create and deliver educational programs to RFCD outdoor workers as time and funding allow. This would be modeled on a current program that Smartscape delivers to several City of Tucson departments.
- Task 3. Curate a one-hour Smartscape module specifically for HOA and business-employed landscape professionals. The module would focus on fuel abatement measures for areas where naturally maintained drainages abut private developments and properties, such as rights-of-way, drainage areas within subdivisions, vacant lands next to businesses, and multi-family residential areas.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Cooperative Extension

APPROPRIATION OF COUNTY FUNDS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026

In accordance with the provisions of Sections 3-124 and 3-126, Arizona Revised Statutes, The Pima County Extension Board has approved and there is hereby submitted for the approval of the County Board of Supervisors a county cash appropriation in the amount of \$ \$75,000 for Wildfire Fuels Reduction in Pima County as an addendum to the county's share of the proposed budget for the conduct of Extension programs in the county, which was approved on June 17, 2025.

Jacqueline Bruhn

Chairperson, Pima County Extension Board

7/9/2025

Date

Chairperson, Pima Board of Supervisors

Date

[Signature]

Deputy Pima County Attorney

7/16/2025

Date

Associate Vice President and Director, Cooperative Extension

Date

Comptroller, University of Arizona

Date

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Edward C. Martin, Associate Vice President and Director, Extension, Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension, The University of Arizona. The University of Arizona is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information in its programs and activities.

