



Tucson Mountains
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November 16, 2013

Supervisor Ramón Valadez
Chairman
Pima County Board of Supervisors
130 W. Congress St.
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Mr. Valadez,

I write to you concerning item 16 on the agenda for the November 19 meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Comprehensive Plan Amendment Co7-13-08, LANDMARK TITLE TR 18109 - W. SUNSET ROAD PLAN AMENDMENT. The land in question is of very high value for the fulfillment of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Incautious development of this property would greatly degrade its value. The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan emphasizes the need to maintain substantial wildlife corridors in the desert landscape around Tucson. A critical area identified in the plan for wildlife corridors is the region between the north Tucson Mountains and the Tortolita Mountains. The ability for most wildlife to use this region as a corridor is dependent on the SR zoning that currently exists in swaths of this area, and respect for its protected peaks and ridges, and designated riparian zones. This zoning and these various protections maintain the vital porosity of the region to wildlife. However, the ability of this area to act as an effective corridor is under serious threat from continuing intensification of development. Unless, this tendency is halted, before very long, the corridor between the Tucson Mountains and the Tortolita Mountains will be lost, with long-term serious consequences for this region.

The Sunset Road property is located in an especially valuable piece of the existing wildlife corridor. The wash through this property is a major one for the region. It and the area adjacent to it are especially valuable for wildlife movements because they lead directly to the nexus of the Santa Cruz River, the Rillito River and the Cañada del Oro Wash. This property is thus key for biological connectivity in the region. Poor development of this parcel would constitute a major blow to the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. The preliminary plan presented by the developer with 46 units forming dense bands across large stretches of the property would provide significant barriers to wildlife movement and is not to be recommended.

Neither the staff report, nor the report solicited by the owner from RECON consider the critical role of this property in the regional wildlife corridor. Instead, they consider it largely in isolation, missing the point of the Sonoran Desert

Conservation Plan. Thus they are inadequate bases for decisions on this property.

If the Board of Supervisors is to agree to the requested change in the Comprehensive Plan, we urge the developer be required to conform fully to the Conservation Land System in all categories of protections, keep protected peaks and ridges free of development, ensure that none of the development blocks the natural flow of water on the property, and provide passages at least 300 feet wide (east to west) free of development for north-south movement in the eastern, central and western parts of the property. Moreover, the development should be restricted to no more than 33 housing units, which is 50% above the existing SR plat for the property, to ensure adequate open space, fully functional washes, and safeguard wildlife corridors.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ivy Schwartz
President

Cc: Supervisor Sharon Bronson
Supervisor Richard Elias
Supervisor Ally Miller
Supervisor Ray Carroll
Mr. Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator

