



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Requested Board Meeting Date: December 1, 2020

Title: Board of Supervisors Policy C. 3.20 - Protection and Management of County Conservation Lands

Introduction/Background:

Pima County has made significant investments into protecting this region's natural and cultural heritage, and Pima County voters have consistently supported these investments, repeatedly approving open space bond funding to acquire land for the protection of natural areas, biological and cultural resources, and ranchlands.

Discussion:

The policy requires the responsible departments to work collaboratively to manage County Conservation Lands, maintain an accurate inventory of these lands, and periodically evaluate individual properties to determine if specific protections are needed to safeguard their intrinsic natural and cultural values for which they were acquired.

Conclusion:

This Board policy will acknowledge and safeguard the investment of public funds in conservation lands by ensuring the maintenance and protection of the intrinsic values of properties acquired by Pima County and the Regional Flood Control District for the purpose of preserving their natural, biological, riparian, and cultural resources.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board approve Policy C. 3.20 "Protection and Management of County Conservation Lands" to acknowledge and safeguard Pima County's investment in preserving natural areas for the benefit of the public - both residents and visitors alike.

Fiscal Impact:

No additional fiscal impact anticipated.

Board of Supervisor District:

1 2 3 4 5 All

Department: Office of Sustainability & Conservation Telephone: 724-6940

Contact: Linda Mayro Telephone: 724-6451

Department Director Signature/Date: *Linda Mayro* 11/13/2020

Deputy County Administrator Signature/Date: *[Signature]* 11/16/2020

County Administrator Signature/Date: *[Signature]* 11/16/2020

**PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

Subject: Protection and Management of County Conservation Lands

**Policy
Number**

C. 3.20

Page

Page 1 of 2

PURPOSE:

This policy requires the County to maintain an accurate inventory of *County Conservation Lands* and to protect the public's investment in the acquisition of these lands by maintaining and protecting the non-monetary, intrinsic values of properties acquired as open space for purposes of preserving the natural, biological, and cultural resources of these lands.

DEFINITIONS:

County Conservation Lands are lands that:

- 1) Pima County owns in fee or holds a less-than-fee interest, and the property interest is held and managed specifically for the purpose of preserving the open space, natural area character, and the natural, biological, and cultural resources found on those properties; and
- 2) the Pima County Regional Flood Control District owns in fee or holds a less-than-fee interest in certain lands held and managed specifically for the purpose of preserving the open space, natural area character, and the natural, biological, and cultural resources found on those properties, and the property interest is held and managed specifically in accordance with Pima County Code Title 16 Floodplain Management, which states: " The highest and best use of regulatory floodplains within the County is for maintenance of natural hydrologic and hydraulic stream flow processes, with consideration for groundwater recharge, aesthetics, natural open space, recreation areas, and flora, fauna, and other wildlife habitat resources."

Less-than-fee-interest refers to a property interest that is less than full ownership of all the legal rights associated with a property, such as a conservation easement, restrictive covenant, or lease.

BACKGROUND:

Pima County voters have repeatedly approved open space bond funding to acquire land for the protection of natural areas, biological and cultural resources, and ranchlands. These bonds have enabled fee title acquisitions from willing sellers, supplemented by donations from willing owners and acquisition of less-than-fee interests. Bond funds have protected large rural properties such as A-7 Ranch, as well as urban areas such as portions of Tumamoc Hill. Funds for the acquisition of certain flood-prone lands have resulted in conservation of riparian areas such as Cienega Creek Preserve. Collectively, the intrinsic, non-monetary natural and cultural values of these *County Conservation Lands* significantly contribute to implementation of the County's ground-breaking Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). These values include:

- Maintaining regional, national, and international continuity of ecosystems, biological diversity and cultural heritage;
- Mitigating for impacts permitted under the County's Endangered Species Act Section 10 permit;
- Protecting floodplains and riparian habitat areas;

PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY

Subject: Protection and Management of County Conservation Lands	Policy Number	Page
	C. 3.20	Page 2 of 2

- Maintaining natural hydrologic and hydraulic stream flow processes;
- Facilitating groundwater recharge;
- Preserving archaeological, cultural, and historic resources;
- Protecting farm and ranch lands;
- Providing outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors;
- Conserving scenic views; and
- Supporting ecotourism and economic opportunities dependent on natural and cultural areas.

POLICY:

It is Pima County's policy that the responsible departments will work collaboratively to protect and otherwise maintain and manage the intrinsic and non-monetary values of *County Conservation Lands*. *County Conservation Lands* shall be managed in accordance with rules, policies, regulations, procedures, and guidance established by applicable federal, state and county laws, including applicable conservation easements and other property-specific agreements adopted by the Board of Supervisors and/or Flood Control District Board of Directors that govern the protection of natural and cultural resources.

Individual *County Conservation Land* properties will be periodically evaluated to determine whether, or if, specific protections are necessary to protect the property's intrinsic values.

An inventory of *County Conservation Lands* will be maintained in a GIS database and updated as necessary. The inventory will be available on a County website.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:

The County Administrator is directed to develop an Administrative Procedure that addresses the development and maintenance of an inventory of *County Conservation Lands* and interdepartmental coordination procedures as necessary.

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENTS:

Regional Flood Control District, the Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Office of Sustainability and Conservation will be responsible for the implementation of this policy, in coordination with all other County departments.

Effective Date: