AGENDA MATERIAL
DATE 8-5-25 ITEM NO. RA11 & 29

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 6, 2025

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Lesher
County Administrator

Re: **Additional Information for the Board of Supervisors Meeting on August 5, 2025 – Agenda Item Nos. 11 and 29, Rescinding Stage II Fire Restrictions and Declaration of Fire Emergency**

At the August 5, 2025 meeting, members of the Board of Supervisors asked about the process to designate fire restrictions at both the local and state level and asked about the Southeast Zone Board and its role in the declaration of fire emergencies. Attached please find a Memorandum from Office of Emergency Management Director Sandra Espinoza, which provides a response to these questions.

Pima County can adopt restrictions that exceed the State's. On May 20,2025 the Board of Supervisors adopted resolutions that prohibited certain activities on County owned property in unincorporated Pima County. In the future, should the Board desire to do so, it could, by resolution, include more in unincorporated Pima County than County properties and could include other activities such as smoking, welding, and fireworks and the County can limit access to properties.

The process by which fire restrictions are adopted in Pima County is:

1. Conditions warrant the Director of the Office of Emergency Management to recommend restrictions to the County Administrator.
2. The County Administrator recommends, in the form of a resolution for consideration by the Board, that the Board declare a fire emergency and note conditions of fire restrictions.
3. The Board of Supervisors declares a fire emergency and notes the stage of fire restrictions.

The same process is used to request the Board rescind the emergency and restrictions.

Other key points include:

- **Southeast Zone Board (SZB)**: This is a collaborative, interagency group consisting of local, state, and federal land management and fire suppression agencies operating in Southeast Arizona. They provide unified recommendations for fire restrictions across various jurisdictions but hold no regulatory authority. The SZB considers the geographic area of Pima County and portions of abutting areas. (As referenced as Attachment 1)

- **Membership**: The SZB comprises Fire Management Officers from different land management agencies. (As referenced as Attachment 2)
- **Geographic Consideration**: The SZB's recommendations cover all of Pima County and parts of adjacent areas, considering local, statewide, and national conditions.
- **Fire Insurance**: It is uncertain whether fire restrictions influence homeowner insurance underwriting or premiums.
- **Fire Restrictions**: These are categorized into three stages, with Stage 1 being the least restrictive. The implementation aims to reduce wildfire risks by altering human behavior.
- **Authority for Fire Restrictions**: Pima County Board of Supervisors can adopt ordinances prohibiting open fires and campfires in unincorporated areas during emergencies. The Arizona State Forester and the Department of Agriculture also have authority over fire restrictions.

JKL/dym

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Sandra Espinoza, Director, Office of Emergency Management

PIMA COUNTY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 5, 2025

To: Ms. Jan Lesher
County Administrator

From: Sandra Espinoza
Director

Re: **Follow-up to August 5, 2025, Board of Supervisors Meeting – Southeast Zone Board**

At the August 5, 2025, Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting, a request was made to provide additional details for the Southeast Zone Board.

For context, the questions were raised during consideration of items 11 and 29, *Rescinding Stage II Fire Restrictions and Declaration of Fire Emergency*, which were adopted on May 20, 2025, via Resolution No. 2025-16 and 2025-FC3.

What is the Southeast Zone Board?

The Southeast Zone Interagency Fire Board is not a formal federal or state board established by statute. Rather, it is a collaborative, interagency group consisting of local, state and federal land management and fire suppression agencies operating in Southeast Arizona. One of their roles is to provide unified recommendations for fire restrictions across jurisdictions, including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM). While the Southeast Zone Board functions to coordinate consistent public messaging and operational alignment during fire season they hold no regulatory authority.

Who are the members of the Southeast Zone Board?

Membership is comprised of the Fire Management Officers representing each of the land management agencies noted above. Current representatives attached.

Does the Southeast Zone Board recommendation consider Pima County or AZ?

The Southeast Zone Board considers the geographic area (attached) which encompasses all of Pima County and portions of abutting areas. Their recommendation considers local, Statewide and National conditions.

How do recommendations come to the County?

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) maintains great working relationships with federal land managers and DFFM. Recommendations were provided to OEM from Coronado National Forest Fire Chief and Fire Management Officer respectively.

Do we lose any protection around fire insurance?

It is difficult to provide certainty whether the occurrence of fire restrictions influences homeowner insurance underwriting or policy premiums. It is my understanding DCA DeBonis the designated representative to the Arizona Department of Insurance and actively engaged in the issue of fire insurance.

What do we lose by removing Stage II restrictions or gain by keeping Stage II restrictions?

Across the Nation, Fire Authorities in the wildland fire profession have standardized and categorized Fire Restrictions into 3 Stages. Fire restrictions are intended to alter human behavior to reduce wildfire risks when criteria established warrants. Stage 1 is the least restrictive, and as conditions worsen restrictions are elevated to the most restrictive in phases to Stage 3.

The implementation of fire restrictions is focused mainly on affecting human-related activities recognized as a major cause of wildfires. With fire restrictions in place, we decrease our wildfire risk. With the absence of fire restrictions, we continue our efforts to encourage responsible interaction in recreational and natural areas safely by working with a variety of stakeholders to enhance fire safety education.

Can County Fire restrictions exceed the State's?

The statutory authority for fire restrictions in Arizona primarily derives from A.R.S. § 11-251(63), which permits county boards of supervisors to "Adopt and provide for the enforcement of ordinances prohibiting open fires and campfires on designated lands in the unincorporated areas of the county when a determination of emergency is issued by the county emergency management officer and the board deems it necessary to protect public health and safety on those lands."

Additionally, under A.R.S. § 37-1303 and 37-1305, the Arizona State Forester is authorized to coordinate wildfire suppression and prevention efforts and may impose fire restrictions on state-managed lands. These actions often align with regional interagency fire management groups to maintain consistency across jurisdictions (Southeast Zone Board).

Finally, under 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 C.F.R. § 261.50 (a) and (b) the Department of Agriculture derive their authority to protect public health and safety, as well as National Forest System lands, resources, and facilities.

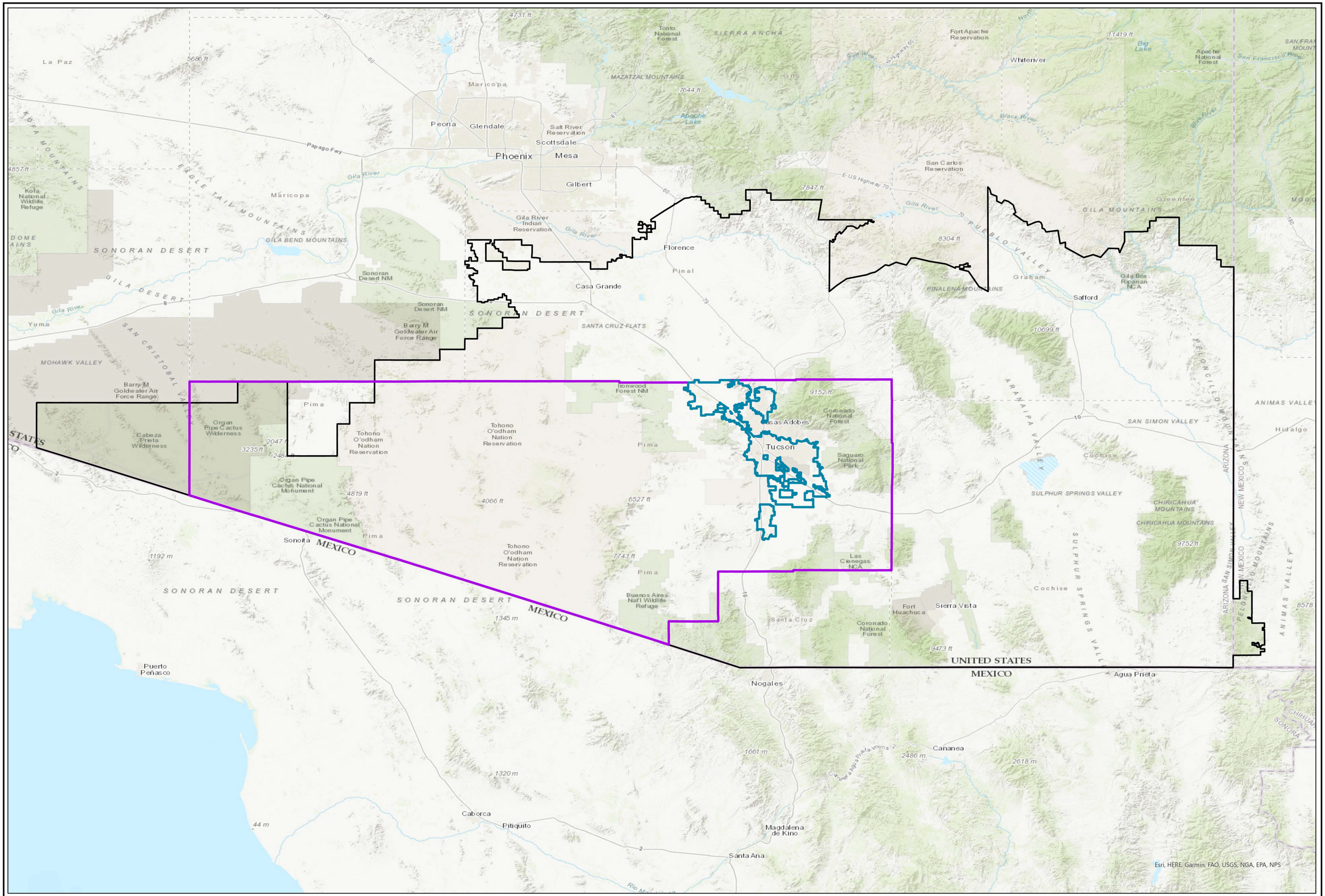
Please let me know if additional information or discussion is needed.

SE/jk

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Joey Kosiorowski, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Management
Amaris Vasquez, Senior Advisor, County Administrator's Office

ATTACHMENT #1


La Paz
Maricopa
Peoria
Glendale
Salt River Reservation
Scottsdale
Phoenix
Mesa
Gilbert
Papago Fwy
Gila River
Gila River Indian Reservation
Florence
Casa Grande
Pinal
Sonoran Desert NM
Barry M Goldwater Air Force Range
Yuma
MOHAWK VALLEY
SAN CRISTOBAL VALLEY
Pima
Organ Pipe Cactus Wilderness
Cabeza Prieta Wilderness
Tohono O'odham Nation Reservation
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument
Sonoita
MEXICO
UNITED STATES
Puerto Peñasco
Caborca
Pitiquito
Magdalena de Kino
Santa Ana
Nogales
Agua Prieta
Cananea
Río Magdalena
Río Asunción
Río Concepción
Río Sonora
Río Bavispe
Río Yaqui
Río Moctezuma
Río Oposura
Río Aros
Río Sonora
Río Bacanuchi
Río Cuchujaqui
Río Cocóspera
Río Altar
Río Asunción
Río Concepción
Río Magdalena

ATTACHMENT #2

PIMA COUNTY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Current Representatives of the Southeast Zone Board

- Steve Miranda – U.S. Forest Service
- Tyler Chesarek – National Park Service
- Damon McRae – Bureau of Land Management
- Chris Ruff – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Tina Juan – Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Lathe Evan – Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management