



Louis Andersen  
County Manager

MEETING DATE: November 18, 2020

TO: PINAL COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

CASE NO.: PZ-PA-005-20, Comprehensive Plan Riparian Amendment

CASE COORDINATOR: Evan Evangelopoulos

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***Executive Summary:***

*This is a request to amend 3 chapters of the 2019 Pinal County Comprehensive Plan--Chapter 3 Land Use, Chapter 6 Open Spaces and Places, and Chapter 7 Environmental Stewardship--by adding goals, objectives, and policies relating to riparian areas, wildlife corridors, and the Pinal County Birding Trail.*

**If This Request is Approved:**

This County-initiated amendment will allow Pinal County to officially adopt and utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) to map opportunities for the protection of riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources--already utilized in projects through staff recommendations and BOS support; will also encourage project proponents to utilize the same tool, ERT, as a resource for the protection of these natural resources and the buffer zones around them, will allow staff to directly consider biological and environmental impacts on a project-by-project basis, and will officially encourage, promote, and recognize the AZ and Pinal County Birding Trails as important bio- tourism components in eastern and southern areas of Pinal County.

**Staff Recommendation/Issues for Consideration/Concern:**

Staff recommends approval of the request.

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LEGAL DESCRIPTION: County-wide

TAX PARCEL: Multiple APN Books, all of unincorporated Pinal County

LANDOWNER/APPLICANT: Pinal County

**PZ-PA-005-20--PUBLIC HEARING/ACTION:** Pinal County, requesting approval of a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment to the 2019 **Pinal County Comprehensive Plan to amend the text of Chapter 3, Sense of Community**, subchapter **Land Use - Goals, Objectives and Policies (pp.91,105)**, Chapter 6, **Open Spaces & Places**, subchapter **Goals, Objectives and Policies**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Planning Division

(p.242), and **Chapter 7, Environmental Stewardship**, subchapter **Environmental Planning (p.267)**. The proposed amendment will modify the referenced chapters by modifying goals objectives and policies relating to riparian areas, wildlife corridors, and foothills, referencing and promoting the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT), and by promoting the Pinal County and Arizona Birding Trails and other watchable wildlife opportunities within Pinal County.

## **STAFF FINDINGS**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Comments have been received from:

- Superstition Area Land Trust Board: in support
- Arizona State Land Department: received critical comments
- Pinal Partnership
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Committee

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Web posting and 60 day review: | 6/12/2020 |
| P&Z Work Session:              | 7/16/2020 |
| BOS Work Session:              | 8/12/2020 |
| Citizen Advisory Committee:    | 9/03/2020 |

### **OTHER REVIEW AGENCY COMMENTS:**

As of the writing of this report no agency comment has been received.

### **PLAN AMENDMENT DISCUSSION:**

The intent of this amendment is to adjust language within the 2019 Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, to more effectively address issues relating to the protection of riparian areas and other natural resources. It is an effort to approach such issues from a County-wide perspective rather than a piecemeal, project-by-project basis and to provide an advisory tool to the Planning Division within the Community Development Department and applicants to visualize and address these issues at the initial stages of a project.

The recommended adjustments will play a more apparent than today, advisory and guiding role in the review of projects, but will not force solutions. In other words, the adjustments are expected to promote a more effective negotiation and mitigation of impacts to increase the possibility of protection of pre-considered natural systems throughout the County early in the process rather than addressing project-submitted late considerations.

To this extent, major role will play the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) which lays out/maps natural resources throughout the County and, based on this mapping, facilitates the within-parcel visibility and mapping of natural resources. Such approach provides a necessary consistency and predictability throughout projects, creating a more predictive development environment which, based on experience, is preferred by the development community.

The ERT is already in use by the County, but the proposed modifications to the Comprehensive Plan, make use of the ERT official and, as a result, consideration of impacts to County-wide natural resources, not just per project.

In addition, the ERT will be available to explore interactions of parcels with natural resources, not just to the county, but to the community as well. To this point, some concerns were initially expressed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Specifically, the concern was that the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, might create the impression of mandatory policy requirements, which does not reflect reality.

Moreover, the Planning and Zoning Commission had expressed concerns about the extent to which small washes could play an inhibitive role to development and questioned their inclusion within the ERT tool. A good reminder, however, is that the ERT and the proposed amendment provide guidance and not direction to design makers on riparian corridor preservation.

Although overwhelming support has been received by the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) and Superstition Area Land Trust Board, the Arizona State Land Department provided some critical points regarding the amendment. The State Land Department promotes the level of certainty County-wide policies within the Comprehensive Plan can offer to the development community but also:

- a. Proposes a parcel-level review and assessment of the proposed guidelines and prioritization of high value ecological corridors,
- b. Consistency in the definition of riparian areas between the Comprehensive Plan and the ERT tool,
- c. Provision of definitions to avoid confusion,
- d. Provision of qualifications for the preservation of recommended areas to avoid unrealistic expectations from the public,
- e. Not to confuse State Land with OpenSpace,
- f. Coordination of Open Space designations with the State Land Department,
- g. Ensure future development does not face a prohibitive financial burden while guiding the protection of the proposed natural areas.

Staff will address the above issues with the ASLD. In particular, the proposed amendment specifically attempts to address this parcel by parcel current approach to planning and provide both developers and planning staff a tool, not only available at the early stages of the process, but also a tool that provides the big picture concerns within Pinal County.

Comments 'c' and 'd' have been addressed by providing definitions and by mitigation measures available in the "Pinal County Riparian Area Guidelines" Pinal County publication; Comments 'e' and 'f' will be coordinated in the future with the ASLD; Comment 'g' is significant and the proposed amendments will allow staff to coordinate with property owners and developers at the site plan level early in the process to find the best approach that fits a project. It is important to note that, often, the presence of a wildlife corridor may provide valuable opportunities to developers and property owners to increase the value of the offered products due to high desirability of wildlife presence to residents.

Pinal Partnership endorsed the usefulness of the ERT in providing insight to potential areas of focus, the critical function of Wildlife corridors in connecting large habitats, the importance of maintaining biological diversity, and the easy visualization of wildlife connections across large areas.

Pinal Partnership also expressed concerns regarding, a parcel-scale review and assessment of the proposed guidelines, more substantive explanation behind the layers within the ERT tool, consistency in the definition of riparian areas between the Comprehensive Plan and the ERT tool, provision of definitions to avoid confusion, and possible prohibitive financial burdens to properties.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee communicated support for the amendment effort and the ERT tool. The Committee considered the effort important and as needed and necessary at this location and time to balance Nature with Human Environment before such resources disappear.

#### CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACTION:

After a detailed discussion and decision, with no public input at the public hearing, the Citizen's Advisory Committee recommended approval of case PZ-PA-005-20 with a recommendation to coordinate with the ASLD on issues of concern.

#### PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION ACTION:

On September 17, 2020, after a detailed discussion, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted a continuance of case PZ-PA-005-20. On October 15, 2020, after a detailed discussion, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted 7-1 to recommend **Denial** of case **PZ-PA-005-20** to the Board of Supervisors. The Minutes of the October 15, 2020 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting have not been transcribed as of November 5, 2020.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

After a detailed review of the request, Pinal County Comprehensive Plan and Pinal County Development Services Code, and recommendations, Staff recommends approval of **PZ-PA-005-20**, and that this Major Comprehensive Plan amendment, needed and necessary at this location and time, will not negatively impact adjacent properties, will promote orderly growth and development of the County and will be compatible and consistent with the applicable goals and policies of the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan

Date Prepared: 11/04/20 EE

When recorded return to:  
Clerk of the Board  
P.O. Box 827  
Florence AZ 85132

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-PZ-PA-005-20**

A RESOLUTION OF THE PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVING A 2019 MAJOR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT BY AMENDING THE MAJOR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEXT OF CHAPTER 3, SENSE OF COMMUNITY, SUBCHAPTER LAND USE - GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES, CHAPTER 6, OPEN SPACES & PLACES, SUBCHAPTER GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES, AND CHAPTER 7, ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, SUBCHAPTER ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING; IN CONNECTION WITH PINAL COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CASE NO. PZ-PA-005-20.

WHEREAS, the Pinal County Board of Supervisors ("Board") is authorized pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes § 11-805 and Pinal County Development Services Code § 2.170.110 to approve Major Comprehensive Plan Amendments; and

WHEREAS, on May 28th, 2020, the Pinal County initiated an application for a Major Comprehensive Plan Text amendment major comprehensive plan text amendment to Chapter 3, Sense of Community, Subchapter Land Use - Goals, Objectives and Policies, Chapter 6, Open Spaces & Places, Subchapter Goals, Objectives and Policies, and Chapter 7, Environmental Stewardship, Subchapter Environmental Planning, of the 2019 Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. The proposed text amendment will modify the referenced Chapters by adding text, goals, objectives, and policies as described in the attached Exhibit A (Case No. PZ-PA-005-20); and

WHEREAS, on September 17, 2020, the Pinal County Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on Case No. PZ-PA-005-20, after providing notice pursuant to statutory requirements, and following the public hearing voted 7 to 1 to recommend denial of case No. PZ-PA-005-20 to the Board; and

WHEREAS, on November 18, 2020, the Board held a public hearing on Case No. PZ-PA-005-20, after providing notice pursuant to statutory requirements, and considered the application for the Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Pinal County Board of Supervisors that the application for the Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment in Case No. PZ-PA-005-20 has hereby approved the text changes described in the attached Exhibit A.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 18th day of November, 2020, by the PINAL COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS.

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Chairman of the Board

ATTEST:

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Clerk/Deputy Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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Deputy County Attorney

**EXHIBIT A  
TO  
RESOLUTION NO. 2020-PZ-PA-005-20**

**[Text Amendment]**

**See following page(s).**

1. On page 91, under the heading Planning Guidelines, the 5<sup>th</sup> checkmark will be amended as follows with the addition of the underlined text:
  - ✓ Recreational amenities, parks, trails and open space should be designed as an integral part of the project.
  - ✓ Open space, parks and recreational areas must be large enough to be usable for the intended purpose.
  - ✓ Open space is encouraged to be part of and connected to a larger, integrated regional system.
  - ✓ The County-wide trails system should be integrated into developments where appropriate.
  - ✓ Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.
  - ✓ Protect and/or minimize impact to historic sites or landmarks, including distinguishable natural features.
2. On page 105, policy 3.1.4.6 will be amended as follows with the addition of the underlined text:

3.1.4.6 Encourage new development projects to preserve significant desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.
3. On page 105, in the right page margin, a yellow box will be added with the following text:

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county. The page can be found here: <http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

4. On page 242, in the left page margin, a yellow box will be added with the following text:

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county. The page can be found here: <http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

5. On page 242, policy 6.1.2.4 will be added with the following text:

6.1.2.4 Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT).

6. On page 253, in the right margin, the existing yellow box with the definition of Riparian Areas will be updated as follows:

Riparian areas are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

7. On page 264, in the left margin, a yellow box will be added with the following text::

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county. The page can be found here: <http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

8. On page 264, Policy 7.1.2.4 will be amended as follows:

7.1.2.4 ~~Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands.~~ Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the



Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Review Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources.

9. On Page 267, Policy 7.1.7.5 will be added with the following text:

7.1.7.5 Encourage and promote The Pinal County Birding Trail, The Arizona Birding Trail, and other watchable wildlife opportunities in Pinal County.

10. On Page 267, Policy 7.1.7.6 will be added with the following text:

7.1.7.6 Partner with environmental organizations that have a strong educational component to their mission, e.g. speakers' series, event tables, tours, interpretive programs and publications designed for the public.

11. On Page 268, Policy 7.1.7.7 will be added with the following text:

7.1.7.7 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscape regional ecosystem, not just specific development sites.

12. Amending Appendix D with the following definitions (replacing current definition of Riparian Areas):

**Desert Habitats:** Desert Habitats such as the Sonoran desert scrub habitats are low-elevation areas that receive less than 10 in (25 cm) of rain each year, mostly in bi-modal pattern (occurring in winter and summer). In these arid habitats, vegetation is generally sparse and represented by cacti and other succulents as well as other vegetative species including mesquite, ironwood, and palo verde, among others.

**Landscape:** Landscape is an area of land composed of an interacting variety of ecosystems with a diversity of physical elements. The configuration of a landscape is defined by the physical character, arrangement, and context of its elements. Combining both their physical origins and the cultural overlay of human presence, often created over millennia, landscapes reflect a living mixture of people and place that is vital to local and national identity.

**Natural Resources:** The naturally occurring assets that provide use benefits through the provision of raw materials and energy used in economic activity (or that may provide such benefits one day) and that are subject primarily to quantitative depletion through human use. They are subdivided into four categories: mineral and energy resources, soil resources, water resources, and biological resources.

**Riparian areas:** Riparian areas are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

**Wildlife Corridors:** Wildlife corridors are pathways or habitats with no or few barriers to wildlife species. These landscape linkages allow for the safe passage of daily, seasonal, or annual wildlife movements. Wildlife corridors often occur in riparian areas, canyons, ridgelines, and other landscape features that constrain wildlife movements into more restricted paths.



Evan Evangelopoulos <[evan.evangelopoulos@pinal.gov](mailto:evan.evangelopoulos@pinal.gov)>

## **Fwd: SALT BOD's Comments and Support for Staff Proposed Changes to Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment**

1 message

**Steve Abraham** <steve.abraham@pinal.gov>

Wed, Aug 12, 2020 at 9:39 AM

To: Evan Evangelopoulos <evan.evangelopoulos@pinal.gov>, Kent Taylor <kent.taylor@pinal.gov>

fyi

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Becky and Charlie Goff** <[hollygoff@yahoo.com](mailto:hollygoff@yahoo.com)>

Date: Tue, Aug 11, 2020 at 10:42 PM

Subject: SALT BOD's Comments and Support for Staff Proposed Changes to Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment

To: Steve Abraham <[steve.abraham@pinal.gov](mailto:steve.abraham@pinal.gov)>

Hi Steve,

Following are the Comments and Support of the SALT (Superstition Area Land Trust) Board relative to proposed changes via a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Charlie Goff, President for the SALT BOD

719-539-6928; [hollygoff@yahoo.com](mailto:hollygoff@yahoo.com)

[illegible]

A number of historical documents have guided Pinal County decisions relative to the interface between nature and development. The Superstition Area Land Plan, Superstition Vistas, and Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan all contributed to the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, in place for over a decade.

As we approach an era of even more intense development and habitat fragmentation, what revisions to the Comprehensive Plan would connect the natural and human environments in a way that preserves and enhances their best aspects and sustainability?

Staff has suggested nominal but important Major Comp Plan Amendment changes pertinent to conservation of interconnected open spaces, trails, biological corridors, and riparian areas. Implemented properly and collaboratively, these changes will improve retention of functional ecosystems with many associated societal benefits. These range from watershed conservation and flood control to preservation of scenic values and increased recreational opportunities with resultant health benefits. The suggested changes also strike a laudable balance that allows both people and the natural world to thrive.

We strongly support staff's recommended changes, with the following suggested additions:

7.1.7.5 Partner with environmental organizations that have a strong educational component to their mission, e.g. speakers' series, event tables, tours, interpretive programs and publications designed for the public.

7.1.1.6 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscape-regional ecosystem, not just specific development sites.

Riparian areas are distinguishable from their surroundings by unique vegetation and soil types that are dependent on the presence of surface or subsurface water.

—

Steve Abraham, AICP, MPA

## Planning Manager

520-866-6442

[www.pinalcounty.gov](http://www.pinalcounty.gov)

## "Wide Open Opportunity"

Douglas A. Ducey  
Governor



Lisa A. Atkins  
Commissioner

## Arizona State Land Department

1616 West Adams, Phoenix, Arizona 85007  
(602) 542-4631

August 17, 2020

Steve Abraham  
Pinal County Community Development Department  
31 North Pinal Street, Building F  
(PO Box 2973)  
Florence, AZ 85132

RE: ASLD Comments to Proposed Pinal County General Plan Text Amendments: PZ-PA-005-20

Mr. Abraham,

Through our valued partnership, Pinal County is aware of the Arizona State Land Department's (ASLD) obligation to maximize the value of the State Trust Land (STL) for 13 designated public service beneficiaries (Beneficiaries), many of which are vital to the economic, social and physical well-being of Pinal County residents. ASLD supports the Comprehensive Plan's efforts to balance economy and the environment and understands that environmental protection and economic growth need not be mutually exclusive. Through clearly stated policies, the Comprehensive Plan can provide a level of certainty that encourages all parties to achieve these mutual goals.

As the steward of approximately two-thirds of the County's undeveloped land, we believe that the proposed text amendments found in PZ-PA-005-20 lack critical qualifiers that could inadvertently compromise the County's multi-faceted goals and responsibilities. Accordingly, ASLD offers the following comments (with underlines and/or strikeouts reflecting changes as proposed in the text amendment):

**Planning Guidelines (Pg. 91), 5<sup>th</sup> Point: Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.**

- These guidelines are quite broad. ASLD recommends revisions to identify the scale of development to which these guidelines should be applied (single lot, subdivision, master planned community, large-scale commercial centers).
- Given the Plan's frequent reference to the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Review Tool (ERT), the definition of **Riparian Areas** (Pg. 253) should be consistent with how they are mapped on the ERT's Pinal County component.

**Section 3.1.4.6: Encourage new development projects to preserve ~~significant~~ desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.**

- Removal of the term “significant” implies that *any* such areas should be preserved. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan does not seem to define “desert habitats,” “wildlife corridors,” “natural resources,” “landscapes” and “cultural resources,” leaving opportunity for others to interpret.
- Recommending preservation of these undefined areas without any qualifications could lead to confusion within the development community and create unrealistic expectations from the public to preserve *all* such areas. Furthermore, broad-brush designation of areas for preservation could ultimately lead to fragmented ecological corridors that do little to benefit wildlife. Prioritization of high-value ecological corridors that ensure connectivity through areas most likely to see development would provide a higher level of certainty for developers and the public, allowing the County to best achieve its diverse goals.

**Section 6.1.2.4: Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT)**

- This tool provides valuable high-level information; however, ASLD is concerned that without clear qualifying statements in the Comprehensive Plan the general public may interpret this information as policy, rather than high-level general guidance. We suggest more substantive information be included within the ERT’s Pinal County platform that clearly defines each category, the original source(s) of its data and substantiates the rationale behind the application of each layer.
- Related to the Open Space layer, while the derivations of this are also undefined, we suspect this may correlate to the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. Please remember that, per ARS 11-804(E):

“In applying an open space element or a growth element of a comprehensive plan a county shall not designate private land or state trust land as open space, recreation, conservation or agriculture unless the county receives the written consent of the landowner or provides an alternative, economically viable designation in the comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance, allowing at least one residential dwelling per acre. If the landowner is the prevailing party in any action brought to enforce this subsection, a court shall award fees and other expenses to the landowner. Each county shall incorporate this subsection into its comprehensive plan and provide a process for a landowner to resolve discrepancies relating to this subsection.”

Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan’s designation of open space on STL should be updated and ASLD requests that this information not be duplicated in the ERT. ASLD’s ability to achieve our mission becomes complicated when STL is confused with public open space.

- Like the Open Space layer, depiction of planned public trails across State Trust Land is not appropriate unless they have been coordinated with and approved by ASLD. As alluded to in ARS 11-804 (E), STL is more akin to private land and presupposing land uses creates difficulty for future land planning efforts. ASLD wishes to be a partner in the protection of significant environmental corridors and be involved in defining possible recreation and conservation elements on the Trust landscape. Until then, planned trail routes should not be depicted on STL within the Comprehensive Plan or the ERT.

- Based on the description provided at the 7/22/2020 Pinal Partnership meeting, the definition of “Riparian” in the Pinal County component of ERT (areas with concentrated vegetation, not necessarily associated with water flow) does not match that provided in the proposed Text Amendment. Preserving both habitat and economic vitality of the community requires a compromise that is best reached by identifying the most critical habitat corridors and ensuring connectivity. Identifying protection areas simply based on a concentration of vegetation could cause developers to face cost-prohibitive requirements that place development and conservation interests at odds, rather than as partners.

**Section 7.1.2.4: Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Environmental Review Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources**

- Based on the mapping of “open space,” “trails,” and “riparian areas” on the ERT, coupled with this loosely defined policy to “protect these natural areas,” future development could face a cost-prohibitive financial burden. Broad statements that do not consider potential impact on future land use, development costs or ongoing maintenance and insurance costs could result in developers deciding to locate outside of the county and place more constraints on affordable housing. Text amendments should reflect these collective factors to ensure one component does not place undue burden on the other.

We believe these are important considerations in moving forward with this and future Comprehensive Plan amendments in order to achieve the diverse needs and interests of Pinal County. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. If you require follow-up, please contact Karen Dada at [kdada@azland.gov](mailto:kdada@azland.gov), or (602) 542-3118.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa A. Atkins".

Lisa A. Atkins, Commissioner  
Arizona State Land Department

Attachment: PZ-PA-005-20

C: Charles Hofer, Arizona Game and Fish Department



**Harold Christ**  
President and CEO  
PO Box 904, Florence, AZ 85132  
Cell: 602.810.7448  
[Harold@PinalPartnership.com](mailto:Harold@PinalPartnership.com)  
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September 1, 2020

Steve Abraham  
Pinal County Community Development Department  
31 North Pinal Street, Building F  
(PO Box 2973)  
Florence, AZ 85132

RE: Pinal Partnership Comments to Proposed Pinal County General Plan Text Amendments: PZ-PA-005-20

Mr. Abraham,

Pinal Partnership, as an organization and on behalf of our Board of Directors and Open Space and Trails Committee, would like to submit comments for your consideration in regard to the Pinal County General Plan proposed text amendments found in PZ-PA-005-02.

Partnership members include public agencies; private interests in business, industry, land ownership and development; conservation, educational and Indian communities; and Pinal County residents. We share a common goal to advocate for a sustainable Pinal County economy through the preservation and creation of employment centers, to support organized economic development efforts throughout the region, and to encourage conditions that foster economic growth. We also believe that these objectives can be met while conserving the interconnected complex of open spaces and desert ecosystems that make this a destination for tourists, businesses and residents, and contributes significantly to the county's economy.

The comments below reflect our recognition of a need for balance, avoiding statements that are too broadly applicable, too vague or too onerous that they stifle development, but recognizing the value of providing developers with knowledge of the existence and importance of ecological features that make their lands and the surrounding region more sustainable. They are submitted with the understanding that the amendments are not rules nor laws but broad guidance.

**Planning Guidelines (page 91), 5th point: Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.**

Developers deciding whether to pursue a given project need to understand the environmental parameters of their property and its surroundings. The Arizona Game and Fish Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a useful third-party reference that can provide insight as to potential areas



of focus. This tool originated in response to Pinal County in collaboration with Pinal Partnerships Open Space and Trails Committee seeking to understand and map the key natural resources. While it does not have regulatory authority over the entitlement process in Pinal County, it can be a helpful resource for discussion. Care should be given to the use of the ERT tool. As with any data set, the accuracy and methodology behind the data should have a thorough and ongoing review and vetting process. It is critical when interpreting the ERT data that consideration be given to context and relevancy. In addition, due to factors such as location, prior urbanization, planned intense land use, and prior disruption to adjacent or upstream natural features, preservation of certain habitats can be ineffective to the overarching goals and unnecessarily costly. We encourage developers to use all relevant resources to review the natural features of their land (including the Arizona Game and Fish Department's online ERT).

Wildlife corridors serve the critical function of connecting large habitats over short or long distances in order to maintain biological diversity and sustainability. In many cases, existing natural drainage features (washes, creeks, flood plains, etc.) present an opportunity to facilitate those connections, a win-win "double dip," so to speak. Typically, nature in its elegant efficiency is doing it that way already. In other cases, identifying a Wildlife corridor across many dozens of miles will present fairness, legal, and logistical challenges similar to the power line siting process. In addition to essential biological and ecological considerations, the legal and cost implications that could occur would need to be considered in the process of identifying the most viable corridor alignment.

**Section 3.1.4.6.: Encourage new development projects to preserve significant desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.**

The word "significant" should not be deleted from the text. While the objective here is to emphasize that even smaller environmental features that might not be considered "significant" can have huge survival value for wild populations, there are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. Removing the qualifier might imply that any such areas should be preserved. Combined with lack of clear definitions for the terms "desert habitats," "wildlife corridors," "natural resources," "landscapes," and "cultural resources," this could lead to confusion within the development community and set unrealistic expectations to preserve all such areas. These deficiencies need to be addressed in either the comprehensive Plan Amendment or the ERT.

While the term "riparian area" in particular has many definitions here and elsewhere, all relate to the general existence of water - either surface or subsurface - which in turn leads to greater density of flora and fauna.

**Section 6.1.2.4: Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT)**

There is critical need for a tool that all users can be assured is scientifically based and fair. Since the Pinal County-specific ERT developed out of a study by the Pinal Partnership's own Open Space



and Trails Committee, we are confident in both the lengthy process of its development and the scientific integrity of its content. The various layers are meant to provide a convenient and workable, visual summation of technical data collected for a given parcel. This information is made available to developers as general guidance.

**Section 7.1.2.4: Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources**

It is crucial that suggested changes to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and use of the ERT not be construed as policy that negatively impacts future land use, raises costs, and turns away development. Pinal County has an enviable history of studies aimed at balancing the societal and economic benefits of development with conservation of open space and views. The Superstition Area Land Plan and subsequently Superstition Vistas have been influential to the evolution of the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. Each sought to find the balance between economic viability and conservation of natural habitats and introduced thoughtful planning concepts to achieve that balance. Conservation of natural habitats and open spaces matters to the future of Pinal County and deserves our focus. Economic development and affordable access to housing, retail, and job centers also matters. While these can be competing objectives, there is a balance to be struck through dialog and thoughtful consideration of all available resources such as the ERT tool. Pinal Partnership demonstrates the level of diversity, organization, dialogue and commitment it will take to bring all voices to the table and make that happen.

Thank you in advance for considering our comments. If we can provide further assistance in any capacity related to the proposed text amendments, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Christ', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Harold Christ

On behalf of Pinal Partnership Board of Directors and Open Space and Trails Committee



PROPOSED AMENDMENTS: Additions in underline text and red circles, deletions in strike through text

**Major Open Space** (or 1 du/ac) indicates lands the County is interested in preserving for recreation purposes or for cultural or ecological reasons. Further study is necessary to determine the most appropriate configuration of open space and to develop a strategy for preserving it. Staff will work closely with owners of development projects to implement Regional Trail Corridors, wildlife and wash corridors as shown in the *Open Space and Trails Plan* and refined through future studies. The owners of development projects will have the opportunity to propose corridor widths that meet the intent of the Comprehensive Plan, while minimizing impacts on the proposed projects. In conformance with State Law, these lands have the right to develop at one residential dwelling per acre.

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## Planning Guidelines

The following “Planning Guidelines” are intended to provide direction and guidance to potential landowners or developers, staff and elected or appointed officials in developing or reviewing the Natural Infrastructure as part of a project.

- ✓ Recreational amenities, parks, trails and open space should be designed as an integral part of the project.
- ✓ Open space, parks and recreational areas must be large enough to be usable for the intended purpose.
- ✓ Open space is encouraged to be part of and connected to a larger, integrated regional system.
- ✓ The County-wide trails system should be integrated into developments where appropriate.
- ✓ Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.
- ✓ Protect and/or minimize impact to historic sites or landmarks, including distinguishable natural features.

3.1.4.5 Encourage development that sensitively integrates natural environment and maintains healthy ecosystems, including the consideration of adjacent parcels, connectivity and wildlife linkages.

3.1.4.6 Encourage new development projects to preserve significant desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.

**3.1.5 Objective:** Coordinate and cooperate with the ASLD planning of state trust lands within Pinal County.

**Policies:**

3.1.5.1 *Encourage an inclusive planning process to ensure the best possible projects on state trust lands in Pinal County.*

3.1.5.2 *Encourage meaningful state trust land reform so that ASLD will be able to dedicate rights of way, preserve open space in appropriate areas, and participate more in the development process, just as developers could, to increase the value of trust lands and achieve Pinal County's vision.*

3.1.5.3 *Preserve in perpetuity unique and sensitive lands as open space to protect wildlife and the natural environment through acquisition or other techniques such as the transfer of development rights to other ASLD holdings.*

**3.1.6 Objective:** Protect Pinal County residents from military and aviation related hazards and nuances.

**Policy:**

3.1.6.1 Discourage residential and other noise-sensitive developments within airport approach and departure zones where increased noise levels will be present as a result of

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county.

<http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

**Public Responsibilities**, those that are primarily incumbent on the County to implement through its policy development and planning, appear *italicized*.

**Private and Public Shared Responsibilities**, all entities, private and public, share the responsibility of implementing these Policies and these policies appear in **plain text**.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county. The page can be found here:  
<http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

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innovative manner to topography, drainage, critical habitats and other land sensitivities.

**6.1.2 Objective:** Preserve, protect, or conserve the existing natural drainage system.

**Policies:**

*6.1.2.1 Identify the significant natural washes and develop a Countywide storm water management plan that preserves the significant natural washes and adopt development regulations to implement the storm water management plan.*

*6.1.2.2. Develop a watershed management plan that protects the County's key contributing areas to promote water quality and conservation for future generations.*

6.1.2.3 Encourage landowners to work through regional and federally-recognized solutions to remove property from floodplains to allow safe development and protection of future homeowners.

6.1.2.4 Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT).

**6.1.3 Objective:** Identify, preserve, and protect cultural resources that have cultural significance and provide a link to historic events.

**Policies:**

*6.1.3.1 Promote and provide incentives for subdivisions to conserve cultural resources within the County.*

6.1.3.2 Enhance community awareness and increase public support of local cultural opportunities.

streams and washes including the Santa Cruz River, Greene Wash, Gila River near Florence and San Pedro River. There are undetermined flood hazard areas in the vicinity of Tonto National Forest, Oracle and the Table Top Mountains. Minimal Flood Hazard Area refers to an area where flood insurance is available but not mandatory by federally regulated lenders. Special Flood Hazard Area refers to an area, which is at a higher risk of flooding. Tonto National Forest, parts of the Coronado National Forest and a small area just north of the Tohono O'odham Indian Community in the Sonoran Desert National Monument lie in an Undetermined Flood Hazard area. These are areas with possible but undetermined flood hazards where no flood hazard analysis has been conducted.

Flooding can result in property damage and be dangerous for people. Given those hazards, areas with the potential to flood require special consideration during the design development process. Floods and floodplain's are unpredictable and understanding the nature of potential flood hazards, such as flood water levels and events, is fundamental in planning development in or near a floodplain. FEMA is the federal agency that maintains and updates flood hazard mapping in the form of Flood Insurance Rate Maps. If development is proposed in or around a flood hazard area, the floodplain can and should be engineered to minimize hazards to people and property.

**Riparian Areas and Wetlands** The habitat zones found immediately adjacent to streams and lakes are called riparian areas. Riparian areas encompass not only the bed or channel of the water body, but the surrounding banks, bars, ponded waters, and floodplain surfaces. There is a great concentration of vegetation, birds and wildlife in these areas, and because the surrounding Sonoran Desert is so arid, these areas are especially distinct and rare in Pinal County. Some of the larger riparian areas are found along the major creeks and rivers in Pinal County, including Queen Creek, Gila River, San Pedro River, Araivapa Creek, and the Santa

**Riparian areas** are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

**Riparian areas** are habitat zones found immediately adjacent to streams and lakes.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county.

<http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

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*databases on wildlife and habitat inventories (from sources such as the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Nature Serve, and The Nature Conservancy), make this data readily available, and encourage land-managing entities to consider those hazards during the design-development process.*

7.1.1.6 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscape, not just specific development sites.

7.1.1.7 Consider maintaining open space on lands that are environmentally sensitive due to steep slopes, floodplains, watersheds, and habitat areas.

**7.1.2 Objective:** Protect Pinal County's vibrant natural ecosystem.

**Policies:**

7.1.2.1 Promote practices that prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

7.1.2.2 Encourage efforts to preserve native vegetation in open space areas.

7.1.2.3 Encourage efforts to integrate areas vegetated with native species into developed areas.

~~7.1.2.4 Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands.~~ Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Review Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources.

*7.1.6.2 Explore new and innovative technologies in solid waste management.*

*7.1.6.3 Promote practices to safely address and dispose of hazardous waste while minimizing its impact to the environment.*

**7.1.7 Objective:** Support efforts that increase public awareness of Pinal County’s valuable natural environment.

**Policies:**

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*7.1.7.1 Support programs at higher education institutions that promote research and awareness of Pinal County’s natural environment.*

*7.1.7.2 Encourage environmental programs that engage young people and students in preservation and conservation of the natural environment.*

*7.1.7.3 Support efforts to establish a network of distinctive interpretive signage, maps and informational displays at recreation and conservation areas.*

*7.1.7.4 Support eco-tourism efforts and venues such as the Boyce Thompson Arboretum and the Biosphere II.*


7.1.7.5 Encourage and promote The Pinal County Birding Trail, The Arizona Birding Trail, and other watchable wildlife opportunities in Pinal County.

7.1.7.6 Partner with environmental organizations that have a strong educational component to their mission, e.g. speakers’ series, event tables, tours, interpretive programs and publications designed for the public.

**Public Responsibilities**, those that are primarily incumbent on the County to implement through its policy development and planning, appear *italicized*.

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7.1.7.7 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscaperegional ecosystem, not just specific development sites.

## **UPDATED DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

### **Desert Habitats**

Desert Habitats such as the Sonoran desert scrub habitats are low-elevation areas that receive less than 10 in (25 cm) of rain each year, mostly in bi-modal pattern (occurring in winter and summer). In these arid habitats, vegetation is generally sparse and represented by cacti and other succulents as well as other vegetative species including mesquite, ironwood, and palo verde, among others.

### **Landscape**

Landscape is an area of land composed of an interacting variety of ecosystems with a diversity of physical elements. The configuration of a landscape is defined by the physical character, arrangement, and context of its elements. Combining both their physical origins and the cultural overlay of human presence, often created over millennia, landscapes reflect a living mixture of people and place that is vital to local and national identity.

### **Natural Resources**

The naturally occurring assets that provide use benefits through the provision of raw materials and energy used in economic activity (or that may provide such benefits one day) and that are subject primarily to quantitative depletion through human use. They are subdivided into four categories: mineral and energy resources, soil resources, water resources, and biological resources.

### **Riparian areas**

Riparian areas are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

### **Wildlife Corridors**

Wildlife corridors are pathways or habitats with no or few barriers to wildlife species. These landscape linkages allow for the safe passage of daily, seasonal, or annual wildlife movements. Wildlife corridors often occur in riparian areas, canyons, ridgelines, and other landscape features that constrain wildlife movements into more restricted paths.

## Appendix D: Glossary

*The terms defined in this glossary are done so for purposes of the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan only and may not be relevant or accurate for use outside of this plan.*

**Acre foot** (ac/ft) is equivalent to the volume of water required to cover 1 acre to a depth of 1 foot.

**Agriculture** includes areas where agri-business activities are permitted, including traditional farming and ranching operations.

**Alluvial plain** is fairly flat, gently sloping landform found at the base of mountain ranges. The geography requires careful planning so that drainage patterns are preserved.

**Airport Reserve** surrounds existing airports to allow for adequate buffering of surrounding land uses, buffering of surrounding land uses, expansion of airport operations and facilities and employment uses compatible with the airport.

**Aviation-Based Commerce Center** is a facility served by passenger service and air freight providers; it should be buffered from incompatible uses and may have surrounding employment-related uses that take advantage of aviation services and allow for expansion of airport operations and facilities.

**Bajadas** are shallow slopes that lie at the base of rocky hills, where materials accumulate from the weathering of the rocks. They typically have a mixture of boulders, stones, gravel, sand, and silt particles, creating a deep and complex soil structure that retains water and supports a rich vegetation.

**Basic activities** bring new dollars into the community.

**Biome** is a major regional or global biotic community, such as a grassland or desert, characterized chiefly by the dominant forms of plant life and the prevailing climate.

**Buildout** is defined as the ultimate development of land in Pinal County with appropriate land uses based on a series of assumptions, including land ownership patterns, topographic and environmental constraints and opportunities, development potential, infrastructure support, and private property rights.

The **Certified Local Government Program** is a preservation partnership between local, state and national governments focused on promoting historic preservation at the grass roots level.

**Community Commercial** is intended to be mid-scale (approximately 20 to 40 acres) of retail, service, and professional office.

**Compendium** is a concise, yet comprehensive, compilation of a body of knowledge.

**Context Sensitive** is defined as an approach by which development fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources.

**Density** is the number of housing units per acre developed or allowed to develop.

**Density Bonus or Incentive** is allowing higher density residential as a trade-off for including in a project a desired need such as open space or affordable housing unit.

**Desert Habitats** such as the Sonoran desert scrub habitats are low-elevation areas that receive less than 10 in (25 cm) of rain each year, mostly in bi-modal pattern (occurring in winter and summer). In these arid habitats, vegetation is generally sparse and represented by cacti and other succulents as well as other vegetative species including mesquite, ironwood, and palo verde, among others.

**Design charrette** is a workshop in which participants work together, collaborating or building off of others work, and present their findings in a public forum.

**Eco-tourism** is about creating and satisfying a hunger for nature, about exploiting tourism's potential for conservation and development, and about averting its negative impact on ecology, culture and aesthetics.

**Employment** is defined as areas that can support a variety of employment-generating business activities such as industrial, office, business park, and warehousing and distribution.

**Endangered species** are those in immediate danger of becoming extinct and in need of protection in order to survive.

**ENERGY STAR** is a joint program of the EPA and the U.S. Department of Energy helping to save Americans money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

**Floor Area Ratio (FAR)** is a formula for determining volume of building as a multiple of the lot area.

**General Commercial** provides locations for commercial development included in adopted municipal general plans. The Pinal County Comprehensive Plan does not make any changes to these locations. This category allows uses in unincorporated areas.

**General Public Facilities/Services** includes large public facilities that require significant space such as landfills, wastewater facilities, water campuses, and concentrations of public buildings.

**Goals** represent the desired outcomes or results that the County hopes to realize over time. Goals will align with Pinal County's Vision.

**High Intensity Activity Centers** are approximately 1,000 or more acres with a mix of professional office, business parks, and industrial often in a campus-like setting, as well as high and medium density residential.

**Hohokam** is a term derived from an O’odham word “Huhugam” that is often used to reference people and things that have gone before.

**Horizontal Mixed Use** combines residential, commercial and employment-type uses on the same site, but in separate buildings.

**Indian Community** indicates a sovereign nation, operating under its own tribal government laws.

**Land use transition** is defined as a gradual change in land use intensities to ensure compatibility.

**Landscape** is an area of land composed of an interacting variety of ecosystems with a diversity of physical elements. The configuration of a landscape is defined by the physical character, arrangement, and context of its elements. Combining both their physical origins and the cultural overlay of human presence, often created over millennia, landscapes reflect a living mixture of people and place that is vital to local and national identity.

**Low Intensity Activity Centers** are approximately 100 acres with a mix of professional office, commercial, tourism and hospitality uses, as well as medium to high density residential.

**Major Open Space** indicates lands preserved for recreational purposes or lands protected for cultural or ecological reasons.

**Mid Intensity Activity Centers** are approximately 500 acres with a mix of clustered professional office, commercial, tourism and hospitality uses, medical, and medium to high density residential.

**Military** represents the Florence Military Reservation, Silver Bell Army Heliport (SBAH) and other ancillary facilities.

**Mining/Extraction** identifies those areas where mineral resources have been identified or are likely to be identified in the future. The intent of this designation is to protect the mineral resources by minimizing conflicts with surrounding land uses. This designation recognizes the rights of exploration, mining, and processing of mineral resources. Copper mining is currently occurring around Superior and Kearny. All mining operations conducted by whatever techniques and technologies employed are required to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws providing for the protection of environmental resources.

**Municipal Planning Areas (MPAs)** are defined as the geographic areas around an incorporated city or town that is influenced by the city’s land use pattern and may be incorporated into the jurisdiction at some point in the future.

**Natural Resources** are the naturally occurring assets that provide use benefits through the provision of raw materials and energy used in economic activity (or that may provide such benefits one day) and that are subject primarily to quantitative depletion through human

use. They are subdivided into four categories: mineral and energy resources, soil resources, water resources, and biological resources.

**Neighborhood Commercial** is defined as less than 20 acres and is not shown on the Land Use Plan, but may be included in all land use designations if it addresses the Comprehensive Plan planning guidelines. Neighborhood commercial includes commercial goods and services and typically serves a surrounding residential population.

**Noise Sensitive** areas include properties that are adjacent to or within the flight path of airports, including Casa Grande, Eloy, Superior, San Manuel, and Coolidge Airports, Pinal Air Park, and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. The area is subject to high noise levels resulting from aircraft arrival and departures. The intent is to encourage land use compatibility with airport activities. The Noise Sensitive Area designation is an overlay designation with additional stipulations to the underlying designations.

**Non-basic activities**, in most cases, circulate existing dollars within the community.

**Objectives** are broad statements of intent to implement the goals and provide framework for the policies.

**Policies** address how the goals will be achieved. Policies should be read as if it is preceded by the words “It is the County’s general policy to...” Some policies may appear to conflict with one another.

**Primary Airport** are those airports that have 10 or more based aircraft and have 2,000 or more annual aircraft operations. These airports offer future economic development opportunities as they grow and expand.

**Private and Public Shared Responsibilities**, all entities, private and public, share the responsibilities of implementing these Policies.

**Public Responsibilities** are primarily incumbent on the County to implement through its policy development and planning.

**Recreation/Conservation** identifies areas under an extra layer of federal protection, meaning that any infrastructure planned to traverse these lands will have to go through a federal permitting process and environmental review.

**Regional Commercial** is intended to be large-scale (over 40 acre) retail centers that draw from a large regional market area. These centers might include malls, power centers, big box retail centers, and auto dealerships.

**Riparian areas** are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

**Scenic vista** is a view of an area that is visually or aesthetically pleasing.

**Secondary Airport** is an airport that does not qualify as a Primary Airport. These airports offer future economic development opportunities as they grow and expand.

**State Shared Revenues** is a portion of revenues Arizona shares with local governments.

**Threatened species** are defined as those likely to become endangered if not protected.

**Time Tax** is the price paid sitting in long commutes that cuts into what we value most – our time with family, friends, home, and community.

**Transit-Oriented Development** is pedestrian-oriented development designed to facilitate access and use of transit facilities including buses, bus stops and light rail stations.

**Vertical Mixed Use** is typified by residential use over commercial uses in the same building or any other potential diversity of land uses within a building.

**Viewshed** is the entire area an individual can see from a given point.

**Wildlife Corridors** are pathways or habitats with no or few barriers to wildlife species. These landscape linkages allow for the safe passage of daily, seasonal, or annual wildlife movements. Wildlife corridors often occur in riparian areas, canyons, ridgelines, and other landscape features that constrain wildlife movements into more restricted paths.

PINAL COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
(PO NUMBER 243360)

Regular Meeting  
9:00 a.m.  
Thursday, September 17, 2020  
BOS Supervisors Chambers Historic Courthouse  
135 N. Pinal St., Florence, Arizona

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ORIGINAL PREPARED FOR:  
PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA



1 LIZARRAGA: Lizarraga, second it.

2 RIGGINS: Commissioner Lizarraga seconds the motion,  
3 all those in favor please signify by saying aye.

4 COLLECTIVE: Aye.

5 RIGGINS: Any opposed? It passes unanimously.

6 Thank you very much. Our next case also brought by the County  
7 for a policy amendment, case PZ-PA-005-20.

8 ABRAHAM: Commissioner Fliss, did you return? Guess  
9 not, okay. So we're still with six members, Mr. Chair.

10 RIGGINS: Six members.

11 PLY: 005-2?

12 RIGGINS: Mm hm.

13 PLY: Okay.

14 RIGGINS: Okay. Please go right ahead.

15 EVANGELOPOULOS: Thank you. Mr. Chair, Planning and  
16 Zoning Commission, good afternoon again. This is the next  
17 case, the next Comprehensive Plan Amendment. It's the PZ-PA-  
18 005-20 Riparian Corridors and Pinal County Birding Trail. The  
19 proposal - you've seen some of these slides again, I'm going  
20 to go through it again. The request is to amend three  
21 chapters of the 2019 Pinal County Comprehensive Plan by adding  
22 goals, objectives and policies relating to riparian areas,  
23 wildlife corridors and the Pinal County Birding Trail. The  
24 chapters are - the changes are in Chapter 3, Land Use; Chapter  
25 6, Open Spaces and Places; and Chapter 7, Environmental

1 Stewardship. This is - I have a map here of Pinal County  
2 showing all the diversity of habitats in Pinal County. This  
3 is also what we presented at the CAC meeting. Natural  
4 corridors, those include areas with all the washes also in the  
5 County. This is what the County looks today in many areas.  
6 This is east of 79. It's pretty pristine still. This is one  
7 of the washes. This is actually west of 79, right next to  
8 the highway. I think this is the Tom Mix Wash. And I have  
9 here some of the photographs of Pinal County, and natural  
10 resources, which is this first photograph is right next to  
11 Florence, actually. It's some sand, verbenas flowering right  
12 next to some barbed wire, which is an example of the  
13 agricultural uses in the County, and one of the raptors flying  
14 above. These are my photographs. Here we have a Gila monster  
15 and a roadrunner. Also the Gila monster was right by the  
16 border of Pinal County and Pima County. I took this  
17 photograph about a couple months ago. And this is what it  
18 could transform to. This is Mesa actually. So you may have  
19 some opportunities here with these amendments. The main goal  
20 is to guide, so we as a County address issues early enough in  
21 the development of the County. Promote a County level  
22 overview of biological resources in relation to development.  
23 Use guidance tools to help both the development community and  
24 Pinal County identify areas of concern. So regarding the  
25 history of this guiding effort, it was initially - it was

1 initiated during the Superstition Vistas Project and the  
2 effort led to the creation of a mapping tool to easily  
3 identify natural areas of concern. So the proposal is to  
4 amend, again, the three chapters, riparian areas, wildlife  
5 corridors, Pinal County Birding Trail. All right, I turn it  
6 down a little bit I hear. So these are the changes. I have  
7 an example of changes here. Objective 3.1.4.6, encourage new  
8 development projects to preserve significant desert habitats.  
9 We're adding "riparian areas, wildlife corridors," and  
10 initially we had crossed out the word "significant." We will  
11 keep the word significant now after recommendations by the  
12 Arizona Land Department. The changes also aim at the official  
13 adaption of the Environmental Review Tool as the official tool  
14 to be used by both Pinal County and project proponents. So  
15 what's the Environmental Review Tool? As a reminder, allows  
16 the mapping of riparian areas and other open spaces and  
17 sensitive areas. It's a mapping tool in essence. It's a  
18 mapping tool that will allow any party to be able to use it  
19 and identify any impacts on their project. It can be used for  
20 preliminary decisions, assessments of issues on any property.  
21 It's actually already in use by Game and Fish. This is what  
22 the ERT looks like online. It requires a login. Anyone can  
23 log into this and create an account. This is what it looks  
24 like inside with all the layers on the left-hand side. This  
25 is an example of the ERT used. This is actually the Boneyards

1 Project we approved earlier today. We recommended for  
2 approval, I should say. And shows some of the layers, not  
3 present actually, but nearby the project. And this is what  
4 the legend looks like, all the possible areas of concern.  
5 Like a wildlife crossing area, wildlife movement area,  
6 connectivity zones. Pinal County riparian, which I'll get to  
7 that. And also only one change regarding the Pinal County  
8 Birding Trail, which is to officially recognize the Birding  
9 Trail as an important bio-tourism component to the eastern  
10 side of Pinal County. And we're adding only one objective in  
11 Chapter 7, and that is to encourage and promote the Pinal  
12 County Birding Trail, the Arizona Birding Trail, and other  
13 watchable wildlife opportunities in Pinal County. I'm not an  
14 avid birder myself, but I am a birder, so that's a good thing.  
15 There is the website of the Pinal County Birding Trail. And  
16 input from SALT, Superstition Area Land Trust strongly  
17 supported the effort, recommending to work with local  
18 communities in education and to consider the original  
19 ecosystem. Planning and Zoning Commission, as we met with you  
20 before, there were some questions on what type of washes would  
21 qualify. The Arizona State Land Trust, their recommendations  
22 were to prioritize high value areas, identify the scale of a  
23 development, retain the term significant which we have already  
24 done, define the terms desert habitats, wildlife corridors,  
25 natural resources, landscapes and cultural resource, which

1 were done. The public may interpret this as policy, not as a  
2 guide, which we'll keep in mind and make sure that everybody  
3 knows is a guide. And also impacts on future land use and  
4 development costs. The Pinal Partnership had similar comments  
5 to ASLD. Added definitions. These are for wildlife  
6 corridors, desert habitat, natural resources and landscape.  
7 If you want me to go through them I will. And riparian  
8 definitions, that was a major issue in our last discussion.  
9 There's a University of Arizona - there's a University of  
10 Arizona publication regarding Arizona's riparian areas. It  
11 was back in 2007 when it was issued and I picked up a few  
12 comments from this publication. Riparian areas are ecosystems  
13 with organisms that includes plants, animals and/or  
14 (inaudible) environment, and the three main characteristics  
15 that define riparian area ecosystems, and those are hydrology,  
16 soils and vegetation. Now, I think one of the most important  
17 comments that I picked up from this publication was that first  
18 on the history of riparian definitions. The word riparian was  
19 not even in use before the early 70s. So it started being  
20 used in the early 70s, and since then there's been several  
21 definitions of the word riparian, and there's no conclusive  
22 definition among the scientific community or different  
23 agencies on the word riparian. So these are some of the  
24 aspects that one researcher has identified. Riparian areas  
25 are adjacent to a body of water and dependent on perennial and

1 intermittent water. They have - they don't have clearly  
2 defined boundaries. Their transitional zones between aquatic  
3 and (inaudible) ecosystems and they're linear in nature. So  
4 we're going to a list of riparian area definitions. The  
5 Webster Dictionary defines riparian as relating to living or  
6 located on the bank of a natural watercourse, such as a river,  
7 or sometimes of a lake or tide water. There's several  
8 definitions by U.S. states agencies. Our discussion was  
9 whether water needs to be present or not. So I can go through  
10 these definitions, but I would like to go to these two by  
11 Arizona agencies and organizations. First is the Tonto  
12 National Forest. Defines riparian areas as land areas which  
13 are directly influenced by water, usually have visible  
14 vegetative or physical characteristics showing this water  
15 influence, stream sides, lake borders or marshes are typical  
16 riparian areas. The definition is from the glossaries of both  
17 the Tonto National Forest and its environmental impact  
18 statement. And by the Arizona Riparian Council where it says  
19 that riparian is defined as vegetation, habitats or ecosystems  
20 that are associated with bodies of water, streams or lakes, or  
21 are dependent on the existence of perennial intermittent or  
22 ephemeral surface or subsurface water drainage. And again,  
23 these are definitions are within the University of Arizona  
24 publication. There's so many other significant publications  
25 and I stuck with the operational definition. I like the word

1 operational. Operational means that we can really test it.  
2 For example, I'll give you a simple example. If I say that  
3 all publications of Pinal County are yellow and have the word  
4 Pinal on top, on the front cover, then you can test it  
5 operationally and say okay, if it's yellow and has the word  
6 Pinal, then it's Pinal County. If it is not yellow if it  
7 doesn't have Pinal doesn't have Pinal, it's not a Pinal County  
8 publication. The same way with operational - we get much more  
9 complicated of course. This is an operational definition that  
10 I can test any word in there to see if it exists, and then I  
11 can define the word riparian. Now, the issue with this  
12 definition, however, is from Georgia, is the Chattahoochee  
13 River. It's between Georgia and Alabama and receives about 52  
14 inches of rain. So this definition requires presence of  
15 water. Arizona, we receive only 7 inches of rain, so my guess  
16 is we might have to adjust this operational definition to  
17 reflect issues in Arizona.

18 RIGGINS: And I'm going to have to jump in a little  
19 bit right now. You know, you started this discussion  
20 concerning definitions of the word riparian by stating that  
21 riparian is a new word, and it is not a new word. Riparian  
22 zones have been recognized as biomes for a couple of hundred  
23 years at least. I can show you things from the early 1800s in  
24 Arizona that referred to riparian areas. This is not a new  
25 word. But at the bottom of your definition right here, gets

1 right down to the concept of a riparian area, and that is the  
2 presence of hydrophytic species, water loving plants. It  
3 takes water loving plants. Anything that you've shown here  
4 that gets out of that are basically from organizations that  
5 wish to use a very environmentally friendly and liked word  
6 like riparian, sounds good, and it engage its definition to  
7 include upland features that have nothing to do whatsoever  
8 with a land water interface and hydrophytic water loving  
9 plants. And that's a fact. You can discuss this all you want  
10 to with various definitions, but what is going on with this  
11 proposition to our policies is the attempt to expand authority  
12 with a changed definition over a great deal more land  
13 features. Now, if we did this and didn't change the existing  
14 definition of riparian, I don't think I would have a problem  
15 with it. But changing the definition of riparian to include  
16 any ephemeral stream in Pinal County, which means any small  
17 insignificant desert wash - and one of the problems with  
18 keeping the word significant or insignificant in, is it's not  
19 defined. Is the wash 3 feet wide? Is it 5 feet wide? Is it  
20 8 feet wide? Is it 12 feet wide? It doesn't do anything.  
21 But the fact of the issue is you have something that is a  
22 desert wash, it's not riparian. A slightly larger  
23 concentration of mesquite trees next to a wash because there  
24 is some more water running down that at some periods of time  
25 in the year, do not make a riparian zone. Also in this, even



1    though I haven't got the chance to find out how many times  
2    that it has been used, we have a new instance where we have  
3    brought up the concept of a definition of landscape, and we  
4    say in this definition that these - this definition changes  
5    over time, and which are made known by people's evolving  
6    perceptions and associations. In other words, it means  
7    nothing at all, and there's not going to be a defined term in  
8    a policy that means nothing at all. It can't. All that does  
9    is lead to dissention and trouble. Now, I am all for building  
10   protections in where they're just and right. I see that the  
11   Arizona State Land Department basically agrees in the very  
12   same places that I am disagreeing with. I also see that the  
13   Pinal Partnership also agrees in the same places that I'm  
14   agreeing with. I am absolutely, unequivocally opposed to  
15   changing the definition of riparian to suit a purpose that is  
16   not transparent and is just trying to reach to control more  
17   areas. If you want to control more areas, say I want to  
18   control more areas. I want this tool to apply to a lot more  
19   stuff than it ever did. But don't try to change the  
20   definition of riparian to expand this into places that the  
21   landowners of this County don't want. They don't want to be  
22   told we have a planning tool that goes over the top of you, if  
23   you happen to have a four foot desert wash that runs through  
24   your land that may have water in it once every three years.  
25   But that's what you're proposing, and I can't be a part of it.

1 I just think it's wrong. And we're at a point to where  
2 there's a proposition to vote on this, well I know exactly how  
3 I'm going to vote.

4 EVANGELOPOULOS: May I?

5 RIGGINS: You go right ahead.

6 EVANGELOPOULOS: Okay. I understand what I'm  
7 hearing and I agree with you on many points. I have no reason  
8 to disagree with you. Now, this is my question. Two  
9 questions. Should we have exactly the same definition of  
10 riparian as Georgia and Alabama has, where they have 52 inches  
11 of rain, where we have only 7 inches? That's one question.  
12 Another question is, should we leave all the washes, basically  
13 southern Arizona just washes pretty much, should we leave  
14 those out of any possible protection? Open question.

15 RIGGINS: I will be willing to jump into both. The  
16 Grand Canyon, in most of its expanse, is in a very arid area.  
17 Very, very little rainfall that occurs there. Mount Everest  
18 is covered with snow. But do the two areas have a different  
19 definition for rock? Just because Georgia has 52 inches of  
20 rain and Arizona has 7, there's still plenty of areas in  
21 Arizona where there are perennial flows that have riparian  
22 areas, there's just less of them than you have in Georgia. Do  
23 you want to change the definition of riparian so we have as  
24 many areas as Georgia? Because that's what it sounds to me  
25 like you're trying to do. And, what possible motive for an

1 ephemeral stream that is no different whatsoever than the  
2 uplands that are between the two of them, does that ephemeral  
3 stream need more protection than the land between the two  
4 ephemeral streams? I don't see it. I don't understand the  
5 need for this, I'm seeing nothing but overreach. That's all  
6 I'm seeing. I'm saying it a bit more boldly than the State  
7 Land Department said it, and I'm saying it a bit more boldly  
8 than the Pinal Partnership said it, but I'm saying the same  
9 thing. What is the point in this overreach?

10 EVANGELOPOULOS: May I?

11 RIGGINS: Yes, please.

12 EVANGELOPOULOS: The effort is an effort in trying  
13 to, first of all, have a more global approach to Pinal County,  
14 instead of going on a project by project basis. So if a  
15 stream - if a wash for example is decided as significant, is  
16 seen - I shouldn't say decide - is seen as significant, then  
17 let's consider protecting the whole stretch of the wash, the  
18 corridor in a way, from the beginning to as long as we can,  
19 instead of going and prevent - it's somehow protected somehow  
20 before it gets - the whole Pinal County gets - becomes like a  
21 new Los Angeles. So that's part of the argument. The goal -  
22 again this is a guide - the goal is not to stop development,  
23 the goal is to prevent the Los Angeles-ization, if I can use  
24 that term, of Pinal County. And so that's, that's the main  
25 point. Obviously we're not going to protect everything. We

1 are going to protect - to make sure that Pinal County and the  
2 natural resources in Pinal County are developed in a way that  
3 create a healthy environment for humans, because in the end  
4 it's about us. It's about humans. Do we want to pave  
5 everything or not? Can we protect any - some things? Yes we  
6 can. If we just protected the Gila River and the -

7 RIGGINS: Santa Cruz.

8 EVANGELOPOULOS: Thank you so much. Then we'll  
9 leave everything else - the Santa Cruz and the San Pedro -  
10 then we leave everything else up for grabs and everything else  
11 becomes Los Angeles.

12 RIGGINS: Well I disagree with you on that, because  
13 in Pinal County, east of here, there are a number of areas  
14 that would qualify as riparian. It isn't just the major river  
15 courses. There are stream courses in the desert that run for  
16 a pretty good amount of the year in places, and they would be  
17 riparian. But what you are promoting here is a concept that  
18 anybody that has a 40 acre parcel out in the desert anywhere  
19 in Pinal County, there'll be at least three or four streams  
20 going across it, at least. Little, dry, desert washes. There  
21 are already a great number of regulations required for  
22 somebody to develop a piece of land. This puts a incredible  
23 new regulatory overreach over the top of every single person  
24 under the guise of the protection of a valuable environmental  
25 resource, when indeed it's a desert wash that has very little

1 difference than the land that's 50 feet outside it. This is  
2 overreach that shouldn't happen. If there is a stream system  
3 that needs to be protected, identify it. We can talk about  
4 it. But don't purport to put this tool over the top of every  
5 single person. And of course this isn't going to apply to the  
6 agricultural grounds mostly here in Pinal County, because  
7 there's no visage of streams left. They've been eradicated.  
8 So the flatland won't be really taken in by this. We could,  
9 like we had in our first case, we can have a commentary that  
10 good, you know, our tool shows that there's no streams going  
11 across this. Well no, wouldn't expect there to be. But now  
12 we're saying that's going to be in every single case we look  
13 at. Well, again, I think that this is a solution in search of  
14 a problem. This problem doesn't exist and we're going too far  
15 with this. We need to leave the definitions of riparian to  
16 being what they truly mean, and that is a water-land  
17 interface. That is what riparian is, of the water. That's  
18 what it means. It doesn't mean things that may collect a  
19 little tiny bit of extra water so there's an extra desert tree  
20 or two on it now and then. Requires phreatophytes. Requires  
21 water loving plants. So I would suggest to this Commission  
22 that they look at this for what it is. I believe that this is  
23 not a good solution, I don't believe we should go this  
24 direction.

25 EVANGELOPOULOS: May I?

1 RIGGINS: Sure, please.

2 EVANGELOPOULOS: I understand your fears and - but  
3 with that statement, in a way, we are ignoring the Arizona  
4 definitions of riparian areas and we're accepting definitions  
5 by states that have plenty of water. So for example, I have  
6 the two definitions from Arizona agencies and organizations  
7 here, so in a way we should reject the definitions of riparian  
8 areas created here in Arizona and we should accept the  
9 definitions that were created in Georgia where they received -  
10 where they receive 52 inches of rain a year.

11 RIGGINS: You selected definitions of two entities  
12 in Arizona that gave that definition.

13 EVANGELOPOULOS: I didn't -

14 RIGGINS: Well they're - you showed them to us here.

15 EVANGELOPOULOS: That's the University of Arizona.

16 RIGGINS: Well no, but you selected them to present  
17 to us.

18 EVANGELOPOULOS: That's what they had -

19 RIGGINS: I guarantee you I can find entities in  
20 Arizona that wouldn't define it this way. Just because you  
21 show these two, doesn't mean there's plenty of others that  
22 don't define it that way. I would assume that the Arizona  
23 Riparian Council might have a bona fide interest in expanding  
24 riparian areas to as many places as they possibly could. This  
25 is getting to be very political and changing the definitions

1 of words for political purposes is somewhat odoriferous.  
2 Riparian means by the water. If you want to put a lot of  
3 regulations on people's land, tell them about it, don't do it  
4 through trickery. And that's what this is. We have no  
5 business changing the definition of riparian to encompass  
6 every ephemeral dry stream in the desert of Pinal County and  
7 propose that we are doing something that's marvelous to  
8 protect the environment, because we're not. So do you have  
9 anything else you'd wish to say to it?

10 EVANGELOPOULOS: That's all I have to say, and this  
11 is a publication by the University of Arizona. We both  
12 graduated from the University of Arizona Natural Resources, so  
13 this is the publication endorsed by the University of Arizona.  
14 These are the definitions, we know there's conflicts, and all  
15 I have to say is leaving out every wash in Arizona, that kind  
16 of seems a little bit - that we're not - sounds like we're not  
17 taking care of things, so maybe I can propose identifying  
18 maybe - providing a definition of the word significant, which  
19 is not provided right now. We are including the word  
20 significant, but we're not defining the word significant,  
21 maybe that could clarify things.

22 RIGGINS: We also are re-defining against proper  
23 usage that you would find virtually anywhere of the word  
24 riparian, and for you to state that we are doing away with  
25 protection on any wash in Pinal County, you're wrong. Because

1 there are washes in Pinal County that meet the standard of a  
2 riparian area. Beyond the shadow of a doubt. I know dozens  
3 of them that are east of here, between here and the San Pedro  
4 River, that flow for a good portion of the year that would  
5 qualify as riparian streams. They are limited in nature,  
6 washes come up and down, but to say that we are not protecting  
7 anything, you're wrong.

8 EVANGELOPOULOS: Okay, I misunderstood you then.  
9 Because I thought you were rejecting any intermittent stream.  
10 No.

11 RIGGINS: There is a difference - I'm talking about  
12 an intermittent stream that has enough water in it to where it  
13 will promote and sustain phreatophytic vegetation. That's  
14 water loving vegetation. It's not a mesquite tree. It's not  
15 an extra growth of agave. It's not an extra growth of prickly  
16 pear. Okay? It is a phreatophyte. No phreatophyte, no  
17 riparian. That's science. Don't redefine things like this.  
18 You're trying to bring things in that are not correct. The  
19 landowners of Pinal County don't want this definition used to  
20 put an extra burden on them for something that is not worthy  
21 of an extra level of consideration. So many of these desert  
22 streams are no different than the upland in between them. You  
23 don't need to have protection of those in a new and expanded  
24 fashion.

25 EVANGELOPOULOS: I have to disagree with you -



1 RIGGINS: Okay.

2 EVANGELOPOULOS: - on the way it's phrased,  
3 actually. I'm not disagreeing with you on the (inaudible),  
4 but I'm disagreeing with you on the way it's phrased, because  
5 in this instance the ERT considers every stream above 200 -

6 ABRAHAM: CFS.

7 EVANGELOPOULOS: CFS, which is about - how wide  
8 would that be?

9 ABRAHAM: About 10 to 12, maybe 6 to 7, 8 feet deep.

10 EVANGELOPOULOS: 10 to 12 width of a stream, of a  
11 bed, and again I'm going to have to say that there is nothing  
12 - although there are differences in the definition of  
13 riparian, there's no set definition of riparian. There are  
14 some disagreements in the scientific community on what  
15 riparian is, so we're not trying to change the definition of  
16 riparian, we're just using the definitions that adapt to the  
17 Arizona -

18 RIGGINS: Well in this policy you certainly are  
19 changing the definition of riparian. There was a definition  
20 there, you've struck it and put a new definition there.  
21 That's what this is all about is changing the definition of  
22 riparian in this policy - both in your little explanation  
23 yellow boxes next to the text, and indeed in the definitions  
24 on D4, riparian areas, which were habitat zones found  
25 immediately adjacent to streams and lakes. That's what this

1 policy said before. Now you want to make it, are the natural  
2 areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water.  
3 Rivers, other bodies of water, okay understand that. Washes.  
4 So there's many, many more washes in the Pinal County area  
5 than there are the other two. So basically you've made this  
6 go from a 1, 2, 3 percent land area situation, to anybody that  
7 has a parcel with enough size, this affects them now. You've  
8 taken this onto almost everyone. So it's huge. And I would  
9 suggest at this point in time, I do believe that we've  
10 established beyond a shadow of a doubt that you and I don't  
11 disagree - that we disagree with each other totally. I  
12 believe we've established that. So probably it serves no  
13 further purpose to sit up here and to continue to pound on  
14 this. So the presenter is up, does the Board - or does the  
15 Commission have any questions or comments of our Pinal County  
16 representative?

17 PLY: Not at this time.

18 RIGGINS: Anybody on the phone? Thank you, very  
19 much.

20 HARTMAN: Chair Riggins?

21 RIGGINS: Oh, I'm sorry. Vice Chair.

22 HARTMAN: I just decided I'd say something. All  
23 right, I'll turn my mic on. Any drainage area in Arizona  
24 could be called a riparian area because it turns into a wash.  
25 Whenever - I have rows in my area that my flatlands drain upon

1 the low elevation of the road and it becomes a riparian area.

2 EVANGELOPOULOS: So we will be relying on the ERT

3 tool that identifies critical areas, significant areas. So

4 it's not going to be every little trickle of - that feels like

5 a - that seems like a wash. It definitely - will definitely

6 not be looking for willows and cottonwoods, because washes and

7 riparian - washes in Arizona have a higher concentration of

8 trees and plants and they're linear in nature, and they have a

9 sandy bottom. Those are clear features along washes. So it's

10 not going to be every little trickle that feels like a stream,

11 it has to have above 200 CFS and so - and it has to be

12 identified as a corridor within the ERT tool. So we are

13 relying in a way in the ERT tool, the Environmental Review

14 Tool, to identify the areas. Now the word significant, I

15 would like to define it to be honest with you, just to know

16 what is significant and what is not more clearly. The way it

17 is right now, significant to me it seems everything that is

18 identified within the ERT tool, and it also to me would be

19 significant if there were two or three layers on top of one

20 corridor, and that would definitely seem something to

21 consider. And also, I have to repeat that this effort is a

22 goal to have a more global approach to this issue instead of

23 going project by project. So if something's identified as a

24 corridor within the ERT tool, then it seems like we have to

25 protect it from Black Mountain, which I think that's where the

1 Tom Mix Wash is, all the way to the Santa Cruz River. Protect  
2 it. Again, it's a guideline. It doesn't mean prohibit  
3 development. It's a guide. There's no regulation here.  
4 That's what I wanted to clarify. This is not a regulation.  
5 This is a guide. So it says okay, if you want to have 500  
6 lots here in this area and Tom Mix Wash is going through,  
7 okay, let's see how we can protect this area. I'm not going  
8 to call it riparian - this wash area and let's figure out how  
9 it can be useful, both for wildlife and for humans. Because  
10 to me what's left out of here, and I think it's a very  
11 important conversation to have, human habitat. These are not  
12 just important for wildlife habitat, this is very important  
13 for human habitat also, because by doing this we're also  
14 taking care of human habitat, creating open spaces for  
15 recreation and enjoyment of nature.

16 HARTMAN: All right, I have another kind of comment.  
17 We use mesquites in riparian areas, but mesquites don't have  
18 to be in a riparian area.

19 EVANGELOPOULOS: Exactly.

20 HARTMAN: My farm in the 30s was covered with  
21 mesquite trees and that's why my relatives purchased the  
22 property because they knew that there was subterranean waters  
23 there and that those mesquites were living off of that water.  
24 But it wasn't surface water coming on, it was the subterranean  
25 water. So this riparian area doesn't just - to me doesn't - I

1 don't know, it's not just a stream, it's other things. But  
2 you can't use just the vegetation that's growing there.

3 EVANGELOPOULOS: I understand your argument, and the  
4 question I'm going to ask you right now is where are those  
5 mesquites right now?

6 HARTMAN: Where were they were?

7 EVANGELOPOULOS: No, do those mesquites exist right  
8 now?

9 HARTMAN: No, absolutely not.

10 EVANGELOPOULOS: No, because the water table has  
11 lowered so much.

12 HARTMAN: No, because we cleared them off.

13 EVANGELOPOULOS: But also the water table has gone  
14 so low right now, right?

15 HARTMAN: Oh yeah, definitely, but it's been doing  
16 that. My farm probably was covered with water at one era in  
17 this civilization.

18 EVANGELOPOULOS: Exactly. So that's - because there  
19 was no protection, nothing in the past, so that was part of  
20 the issue in a way.

21 HARTMAN: Yeah, but that (inaudible) our Chair  
22 related to the Grand Canyon. Well that's the way the Grand  
23 Canyon was formed is when the ice age melted and all the flows  
24 concentrated in one area. So anyway.

25 POLLARD: Commissioner Pollard here.

1 RIGGINS: Commissioner Pollard.

2 POLLARD: As I sit and listen to both sides, the  
3 applicant made a comment that we're all doing this for humans.  
4 We're doing this for humans, but I'd like to point out that if  
5 we didn't have any plants or aquatic life or anything that  
6 lives off water, there would be no humans. So we have to  
7 protect our County as we see fit, and get the right  
8 information to protect our County. Right now we're not  
9 thinking globally, we're thinking our County. We want to  
10 protect our County. We are County electives - and we - not  
11 electives, but we are County instruments, that we are looking  
12 out for what's best for our County. We don't care what  
13 happens in Georgia, and without water, you have nothing, not  
14 even humans.

15 RIGGINS: Okay.

16 EVANGELOPOULOS: May I say something about the  
17 mesquites?

18 RIGGINS: Comment, comment first. I'll go ahead and  
19 address mesquites first. We're a County that will 100 percent  
20 forever as long as human beings are still here, need  
21 groundwater out of the aquifers that are in this basin. There  
22 well never be a time, ever again, where groundwater raises up  
23 to the point that it will allow mesquite coverage of a general  
24 nature in the center of these basins, and indeed even pre-  
25 human contact mesquites were not that common because they

1 actually were brought in by cattle. The original land masses  
2 in Arizona did not have mesquites. It's an introduced  
3 species, just like we are. Things come, they go, they change.  
4 So what a mesquite will do in this area because the ground  
5 water is too deep, is permanent. It never changes. But by  
6 the same token, in the uplands that are physically  
7 disconnected by bedrock from these deep aquifers, mesquites  
8 will live just like they always have. There'll be no change  
9 in it. Because we don't dewater those areas because they're  
10 not deep enough to be dewatered. The water runs off those and  
11 come in and are stored in these basins. So we're not talking  
12 about anything that makes things better or worse for a  
13 mesquite. And also we have a total false flag when we make a  
14 concept that well this is only going to cover washes that flow  
15 200 -

16 HARTMAN: CFS.

17 RIGGINS: CFS. Well you know something? I've lived  
18 in this desert my whole life and the only thing that requires  
19 any wash there is here to run 200 CFS is if the 6 inch cloud  
20 burst happens to fall upstream of it. It doesn't matter how  
21 small it is. 600 CFS is totally dependent on the extreme  
22 weather event that happens to hit the spot. So again, we're  
23 doing things here that don't really make any sense and we're  
24 trying to define them in such a way to make them seem  
25 reasonable, but they're not. They're not reasonable. We have

1   protections in this policy already for riparian areas.  What  
2   we're trying to do is we're trying to take this outside of  
3   riparian areas.  We want to take this to a whole lot more  
4   places.  Let's say it the way it is, because that's what we're  
5   trying to do.

6               HARTMAN:  Scott when -

7               RIGGINS:  Go right ahead.  Vice Chair Hartman.

8               HARTMAN:  Okay, thank you Scott.  To define 200 CFS,  
9   if I'm not mistaken, I remember in my irrigation and  
10  everything it was 10 gallons per minute is 1 CFS, so you're  
11  talking 2,000 gallon - you're talking a wash of 2,000 gallons  
12  per minute.  Is that right?

13              RIGGINS:  Mm mm.  No.

14              HARTMAN:  10 times 200.

15              RIGGINS:  CFS is more than 10.

16              HARTMAN:  It's more than 10?

17              RIGGINS:  Yeah, it's quite a bit more than 10.

18              HARTMAN:  Okay.

19              EVANGELOPOULOS:  It's cubic feet per second.

20              HARTMAN:  Evan, what's CFS?

21              EVANGELOPOULOS:  It's cubic feet -

22              HARTMAN:  I know, but how many gallons per minute?

23              RIGGINS:  One cubic foot is 11 gallons, so if you  
24  had one CFS, that's one cubic foot per second, so it's 11.56  
25  gallons per second.



1 HARTMAN: Per second, not per minute.

2 RIGGINS: Yeah, per second. So take that by 60, so  
3 it's more like, it's more like 600. No a 200 CFS flow is a  
4 large flow, but you know what happens when you have a cloud  
5 burst. You have easily over 200 CFS. So that doesn't mean  
6 that now there's places that it won't happen, because it can  
7 happen anywhere. It just depends.

8 EVANGELOPOULOS: And I'm going to be honest with  
9 you, I said 200 CFS and that is correct, but I did not know on  
10 what timeframe that has to happen.

11 RIGGINS: It's a second, it's cubic feet per second.

12 EVANGELOPOULOS: No, I mean for how long. If it's  
13 for one day or two days or how many.

14 RIGGINS: Well we're defining a whole lot of things  
15 now.

16 EVANGELOPOULOS: Yes, and that's very important.

17 RIGGINS: And if we're going to say 200 CFS for four  
18 days, well then we're easy because none of it works. Nothing  
19 will happen then.

20 EVANGELOPOULOS: I have to say that maybe our  
21 natural resources people can answer that, be more specific on  
22 that.

23 RIGGINS: Well, and I disagree with you again.  
24 Because this isn't a natural resources question, this is a  
25 political question. We're trying to put another layer of

1 regulatory prohibitions and things that we're tying into over  
2 a whole bunch more land. That isn't resource-based, that's  
3 politically based. Go ahead.

4 EVANGELOPOULOS: I have to clarify that the words  
5 regulatory prohibition may not necessarily fit in here,  
6 because it's neither regulatory - it's nor prohibitive. If  
7 someone disagrees with what they find on their land, they can  
8 go ahead and grade the whole thing if the Board of Supervisors  
9 is agrees with it.

10 RIGGINS: If, that's a big caveat. That's a big  
11 caveat.

12 EVANGELOPOULOS: Generally, based on my experience -  
13 and I'm sure with your experience also - we work with  
14 developers to try to find the best solution. So we're not  
15 trying to prohibit development, but we are trying to help  
16 development and help other aspects of Pinal County that will  
17 help both humans and animals. So our goal is not to say don't  
18 do this. This is not prohibitive, and it's not regulatory.  
19 I'm going to have to emphasize that, because this came up  
20 several times during this process by others also. It's  
21 neither prohibitive nor regulatory. It's guidance, and that's  
22 all it is. It's a guide. Neither prohibitive nor regulatory.  
23 And we want to work with property owners and developers to  
24 make sure that the development of Pinal County is friendly to  
25 both humans and wildlife.

1           RIGGINS: Evan, I just sat here through a case where  
2 an applicant recorded verbatim a great number of policies that  
3 made their request for a general plan amendment sound. These  
4 policies will totally impact what someone can do with their  
5 private property. What you think is best for that private  
6 property might not be the same as the person who owns it.  
7 They may have a little bit different opinion than you do, and  
8 they may not want your opinion to be weighed further at this  
9 point. I know I don't. Not over this. There's plenty of  
10 things that need to be protected and reflected at this level.  
11 To go out and try to make this grab, I don't think so. In  
12 fact I'm sure I don't think so.

13           EVANGELOPOULOS: May I?

14           RIGGINS: Go right ahead. And this - this is - this  
15 is - we need to stop.

16           ABRAHAM: Yeah, Evan we'll go ahead and - we have to  
17 talk about the Birding Trail a little too here, so -

18           EVANGELOPOULOS: That's the easy part.

19           ABRAHAM: Yeah, so go ahead and finish, wrap up with  
20 the Birding Trail.

21           EVANGELOPOULOS: Okay. I've already mentioned the  
22 Birding Trail.

23           ABRAHAM: Okay. Was there any questions on the  
24 Birding Trail, I guess, is probably a better look.

25           RIGGINS: Pretty limited.

1 EVANGELOPOULOS: It's straightforward and limited.

2 Yeah, you're right.

3 RIGGINS: Yeah.

4 EVANGELOPOULOS: I was going to say, if I may,  
5 regarding the previous case where we had the natural open  
6 space defined, we would use it to 300 feet. That was part of  
7 a negotiation that happened between the applicant and the  
8 staff, and the Commission. So that shows that I think that  
9 it's not a regulation or prohibition, it's more of a  
10 negotiation.

11 RIGGINS: If I was a very large person I would leave  
12 it at that and not say one other thing, but sometimes I'm not  
13 large enough. If we had a room filled here to capacity of  
14 desert landowners and we asked them would you like another  
15 regulatory and policy tool to be in place to say what you can  
16 or cannot do with your property, would you like to have that?  
17 Would you tell me what your opinion is on how many of those  
18 people would hold their hand up? And by the way, they happen  
19 to be the taxpayers. So let's agree to disagree and  
20 Commission, do we have any other discussions that we would  
21 like Evan to address? Any questions for Evan? Okay, thank  
22 you. Very much. I'll turn it back for discussion to the  
23 Commission. Questions? Motions? Wherever we are.

24 DEL COTTO: If I could.

25 RIGGINS: And this is?

1 DEL COTTO: Commissioner Del Cotto.

2 RIGGINS: Yes, Commissioner Del Cotto.

3 DEL COTTO: I was just (inaudible) through the 7.1  
4 blah blah, and what are the - what are we lining stuff out  
5 for? We want to take those things away (inaudible) what's  
6 already been etched in stone here?

7 ABRAHAM: Commissioner Del Cotto, so in the  
8 attachment that's in your staff report, the items that are  
9 line itemed are deletions. Things that are underlined would  
10 be additions. So like for example, the definition section, we  
11 would be like removing the definition that is currently exists  
12 and then replacing it with another. Anything that's been  
13 circled in red would be a new - I don't know what you call  
14 those things, a little text box, and then other information.  
15 And there's - there's several changes across three different  
16 chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, so that's kind of how you  
17 interpret that.

18 DEL COTTO: I was just wondering, I'm trying to find  
19 it again, but it talks about there's a line item and it talks  
20 about collecting rainwater, and then you've got that lined  
21 out, and I just wondered why.

22 ABRAHAM: Let me see if we can find that.

23 DEL COTTO: I'm trying find it again and I'm having  
24 a hard time on my little - my little laptop thing or whatever.  
25 I think it was 7-something.

1 RIGGINS: I think that was in the prior case.

2 Collecting water I think was in the prior case.

3 ABRAHAM: That was on the prior case.

4 DEL COTTO: Okay. All right.

5 HARTMAN: And Chair Riggins?

6 RIGGINS: Vice Chair Hartman.

7 HARTMAN: And that was scratched out because it - in  
8 today's economy and everything, that wasn't practical. Is  
9 that not right?

10 RIGGINS: But it was the last case.

11 HARTMAN: Yeah, it was the last case, but the reason  
12 it was crossed out is because it's not practical. Water  
13 collection.

14 RIGGINS: Actually I think it had some legal  
15 ramifications as far as the way it was expressed, if I  
16 remember correctly. But I'm onto this one now.

17 HARTMAN: Well if I remember some comments that were  
18 made, the economic benefit wasn't really resourceful. I mean  
19 to put the barrels or containers and the duct work from your  
20 roof to the underground system, the overall cost of that  
21 wasn't - it wasn't effective. If I remember right, in the  
22 comments that were said.

23 DEL COTTO: Okay.

24 ABRAHAM: Yeah, we're kind of talking about the  
25 previous case, but yeah the reason why it was collected is

1 that the amount of water that's actually gathered from those  
2 methodologies is relatively minimal.

3 HARTMAN: Minimal.

4 ABRAHAM: Yeah. That if someone on their own would  
5 like to do that out of the goodness of their heart, that's  
6 perfectly okay, but that type of requirement wouldn't make its  
7 way into some sort of drought management strategy.

8 HARTMAN: Exactly.

9 RIGGINS: Okay.

10 HARTMAN: Thank you.

11 RIGGINS: Any other questions among the Commission  
12 concerning this case? Do we have a motion from anyone on this  
13 case?

14 HARTMAN: Chair Riggins?

15 RIGGINS: Vice Chair Hartman.

16 HARTMAN: I think on the water policy one, the only  
17 thing that was changed was the addition of the Tohono O'odham.

18 RIGGINS: That was the last case.

19 HARTMAN: Yeah, that was on the last case. So are  
20 you looking for a motion or what are you doing?

21 RIGGINS: Well the last case we've already passed.

22 HARTMAN: Okay.

23 RIGGINS: The last case has passed. We're on this  
24 case now.

25 HARTMAN: The riparian one.

1 ABRAHAM: Yeah, and Commissioners also in your  
2 motion, it's not a deny the whole thing, approve the whole  
3 thing. If there's a recommendation you'd like to forward to  
4 the Board of Supervisors which would be along the lines of  
5 everything is okay except the definition of riparian, that's  
6 certainly an acceptable motion that we can move forward with.

7 RIGGINS: Another acceptable motion to go forward  
8 would be to encourage a reworking of three or four places in  
9 this that would be, in my opinion, best not done on the fly  
10 sitting here, and so a motion for a continuance to take this  
11 forward so we can rework it another time after this plethora  
12 of discussion has given some direction, potentially, to  
13 potential ways to change it.

14 HARTMAN: So move. I'll let you make that motion.

15 RIGGINS: I can't make the motion.

16 HARTMAN: Well I know, well I will accept your  
17 motion and so move.

18 RIGGINS: So you move, you move for a continuance.

19 HARTMAN: Yes.

20 RIGGINS: Okay, I have a motion for a continuance,  
21 and I have Commissioner Ply seconds the motion. All those in  
22 favor, please signify by stating aye.

23 COLLECTIVE: Aye.

24 RIGGINS: Any opposed? Thank you very much.

25 ABRAHAM: Mr. Chair.



1           RIGGINS: Generally a continuance has a date  
2 certain, was your motion to have it at the next meeting, Vice  
3 Chair?

4           HARTMAN: I would. I don't know that date, but  
5 Steve would you tell us the next date of our meeting?

6           ABRAHAM: October 15<sup>th</sup>.

7           HARTMAN: October 15<sup>th</sup>.

8           RIGGINS: Okay, date certain October 15<sup>th</sup> we will  
9 rediscuss this and again, I will say just for some guidance  
10 from what I believe we've said, some of the things that were  
11 put in here are fine. They're good. The overreach that has  
12 been put in here through changes and definitions is not going  
13 to be acceptable, and I'll also please state to not put any  
14 kind of definition like landscape into a policy of this County  
15 and say that it basically means whatever somebody wants it to  
16 say at that time, because that's what this says. Okay, thank  
17 you very much. I believe we're on to a work session, are we  
18 not?

19          ABRAHAM: Oh, Mr. Chair, we have to take care of  
20 that tentative plat.

21          RIGGINS: Oh my. Did the gentleman show up?

22          ABRAHAM: No he didn't, but we were able to get in  
23 touch with him and he is available on the telephone.

24          RIGGINS: That should be acceptable.

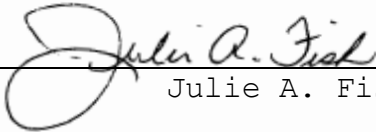
25          ABRAHAM: Yeah, perfect for a tentative plat because

1 I, Julie A. Fish, Transcriptionist, do hereby  
2 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a full, true, and  
3 accurate transcript in the foregoing matter, and that said  
4 transcription was done to the best of my skill and ability.

5 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not related to nor  
6 employed by any of the parties hereto, and have no interest in  
7 the outcome hereof.

8

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Julie A. Fish

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MEETING DATE: September 17, 2020

TO: PINAL COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

CASE NO.: **PZ-PA-005-20, Comprehensive Plan Riparian Amendment**

CASE COORDINATOR: Evan Evangelopoulos

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***Executive Summary:***

*This is a request to amend 3 chapters of the 2019 Pinal County Comprehensive Plan--Chapter 3 Land Use, Chapter 6 Open Spaces and Places, and Chapter 7 Environmental Stewardship--by adding goals, objectives, and policies relating to riparian areas, wildlife corridors, and the Pinal County Birding Trail.*

**If This Request is Approved:**

This County-initiated amendment will allow Pinal County to officially adopt and utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) to map opportunities for the protection of riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources--already utilized in projects through staff recommendations and BOS support--will encourage project proponents to utilize the same tool, ERT, as a resource for the protection of these natural resources and the buffer zones around them, will allow staff to directly consider biological and environmental impacts on a project-by-project basis, and will officially encourage, promote, and recognize the AZ and Pinal County Birding Trails as important bio-tourism components in eastern and southern areas of Pinal County.

**Staff Recommendation/Issues for Consideration/Concern:**

Staff recommends approval of the request.

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LEGAL DESCRIPTION: County-wide

TAX PARCEL: Multiple APN Books, all of unincorporated Pinal County

LANDOWNER/APPLICANT: Pinal County

**PZ-PA-005-20--PUBLIC HEARING/ACTION:** Pinal County, requesting approval of a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment to the 2019 **Pinal County Comprehensive Plan to amend the text of Chapter 3, Sense of Community, subchapter Land Use - Goals, Objectives and Policies (pp.91,105), Chapter 6, Open Spaces & Places, subchapter Goals, Objectives and Policies (p.242), and Chapter 7, Environmental Stewardship, subchapter Environmental Planning (p.267).** The proposed amendment will modify the referenced chapters by modifying goals objectives and policies relating to riparian areas, wildlife corridors, and foothills, referencing and promoting the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT), and by promoting the Pinal County and Arizona Birding Trails and other watchable wildlife opportunities within Pinal County.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Planning Division

STAFF FINDINGS-

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Comments have been received from:

- Superstition Area Land Trust Board: in support
- Arizona State Land Department: received critical comments
- Pinal Partnership
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Committee

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Web posting and 60 day review: | 6/12/2020 |
| P&Z Work Session:              | 7/16/2020 |
| BOS Work Session:              | 8/12/2020 |
| Citizen Advisory Committee:    | 9/03/2020 |

OTHER REVIEW AGENCY COMMENTS:

As of the writing of this report no agency comment has been received.

PLAN AMENDMENT DISCUSSION:

The intent of this amendment is to adjust language within the 2019 Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, to more effectively address issues relating to the protection of riparian areas and other natural resources. The goal is to approach such issues from a County-wide perspective rather than a piecemeal, project-by-project basis. The recommended adjustments will play a more obvious than today advisory and recommendation role in the review of projects but not into forcing solutions. In other words, the adjustments are expected to promote a more effective negotiation and mitigation of impacts to increase the possibility of protection of pre-considered natural systems throughout the County rather than project-submitted late considerations.

To this extent, major role will play the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) which lays out/maps natural resources throughout the County and, based on this mapping, facilitates the within-parcel visibility and mapping of natural resources. Such approach provides a necessary consistency and predictability throughout projects, creating a more predictive development environment which, based on experience, is preferred by the development community.

The Tool is already in use by the County, but the proposed modifications to the Comprehensive Plan, make use of the tool official and, as a result, a consideration of impacts to County-wide natural resources and not just on a project-by-project basis.

In addition, the Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is and will be available to not just the County, but to the community as well, to explore interactions of parcels with natural resources. To this point, some concerns were initially expressed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Specifically, the concern was that the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, will create the impression of mandatory policy requirements, a point that needs to be addressed.

Moreover, the Planning and Zoning Commission had expressed concerns about the extent to which small washes will play an inhibitive role to development and whether it is wise to be included in the ERT tool. Here, a good reminder is that the ERT tool and the proposed amendments are guidance tools and not to inform design makers on riparian corridor preservation. This response ties to the previous concern and needs to address the perception of such changes to the community.

Although overwhelming support has been received by the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) and Superstition Area Land Trust Board, the Arizona State Land Department provided some critical points regarding the amendment. The State Land Department promotes the level of certainty County-wide policies within the Comprehensive Plan can offer to the development community but also:

- a. Proposes a parcel-scale review and assessment of the proposed guidelines and prioritization of high value ecological corridors.
- b. Consistency in the definition of riparian areas between the Comprehensive Plan and the ERT tool
- c. Provision of definitions to avoid confusion
- d. Provision of qualifications for the preservation of recommended areas to avoid unrealistic expectations from the public.
- e. Not to confuse State Land with Open Space
- f. Coordination of Open Space designations with the State Land Department
- g. Ensure future development does not face a prohibitive financial burden while guiding the protection of the proposed natural areas.

Staff will address the above issues with the ASLD. Specifically, 'a' through 'd' are important comments to incorporate; 'e' and 'f' will be coordinated with the ASLD; 'g' is significant and relates to the Planning Commission's concern as not to create unrealistic perceptions to the public.

Pinal Partnership expressed similar concerns regarding, a parcel-scale review and assessment of the proposed guidelines, more substantive explanation behind the layers within the ERT tool, consistency in the definition of riparian areas between the Comprehensive Plan and the ERT tool, provision of definitions to avoid confusion, and possible prohibitive financial burdens to properties.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee expressed support for the effort, the ERT tool, and their importance as needed and necessary at this location and time to balance Nature with Human Environment before such resources disappear, with a recommendation to coordinate with the ASLD on the issues of concern.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

After a detailed review of the request, Pinal County Comprehensive Plan and Pinal County Development Services Code, and recommendations, staff recommends approval of this request, and that this Major Comprehensive Plan amendment is needed and necessary at this location and time, will not negatively impact adjacent properties, will promote orderly growth and development of the County and will be compatible and consistent with the applicable goals and policies of the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, then staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission forward **PZ-PA-005-20**, to the Board of Supervisors with a favorable recommendation. If the Planning and Zoning Commission cannot find for all of the factors listed above, then staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission forward this case to the Board of supervisors with recommendation of denial.

Date Prepared: 09/9/20 EE



Evan Evangelopoulos <evan.evangelopoulos@pinal.gov>

## **Fwd: SALT BOD's Comments and Support for Staff Proposed Changes to Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment**

1 message

**Steve Abraham** <steve.abraham@pinal.gov>

Wed, Aug 12, 2020 at 9:39 AM

To: Evan Evangelopoulos <evan.evangelopoulos@pinal.gov>, Kent Taylor <kent.taylor@pinal.gov>

fyi

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Becky and Charlie Goff** <[hollygoff@yahoo.com](mailto:hollygoff@yahoo.com)>

Date: Tue, Aug 11, 2020 at 10:42 PM

Subject: SALT BOD's Comments and Support for Staff Proposed Changes to Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment

To: Steve Abraham <[steve.abraham@pinal.gov](mailto:steve.abraham@pinal.gov)>

Hi Steve,

Following are the Comments and Support of the SALT (Superstition Area Land Trust) Board relative to proposed changes via a Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Charlie Goff, President for the SALT BOD

719-539-6928; [hollygoff@yahoo.com](mailto:hollygoff@yahoo.com)

[illegible]

A number of historical documents have guided Pinal County decisions relative to the interface between nature and development. The Superstition Area Land Plan, Superstition Vistas, and Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan all contributed to the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan, in place for over a decade.

As we approach an era of even more intense development and habitat fragmentation, what revisions to the Comprehensive Plan would connect the natural and human environments in a way that preserves and enhances their best aspects and sustainability?

Staff has suggested nominal but important Major Comp Plan Amendment changes pertinent to conservation of interconnected open spaces, trails, biological corridors, and riparian areas. Implemented properly and collaboratively, these changes will improve retention of functional ecosystems with many associated societal benefits. These range from watershed conservation and flood control to preservation of scenic values and increased recreational opportunities with resultant health benefits. The suggested changes also strike a laudable balance that allows both people and the natural world to thrive.

We strongly support staff's recommended changes, with the following suggested additions:

7.1.7.5 Partner with environmental organizations that have a strong educational component to their mission, e.g. speakers' series, event tables, tours, interpretive programs and publications designed for the public.

7.1.1.6 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscape-regional ecosystem, not just specific development sites.

Riparian areas are distinguishable from their surroundings by unique vegetation and soil types that are dependent on the presence of surface or subsurface water.

—

Steve Abraham, AICP, MPA

## Planning Manager

520-866-6442

[www.pinalcounty.gov](http://www.pinalcounty.gov)

## "Wide Open Opportunity"

Douglas A. Ducey  
Governor



Lisa A. Atkins  
Commissioner

## Arizona State Land Department

1616 West Adams, Phoenix, Arizona 85007  
(602) 542-4631

August 17, 2020

Steve Abraham  
Pinal County Community Development Department  
31 North Pinal Street, Building F  
(PO Box 2973)  
Florence, AZ 85132

RE: ASLD Comments to Proposed Pinal County General Plan Text Amendments: PZ-PA-005-20

Mr. Abraham,

Through our valued partnership, Pinal County is aware of the Arizona State Land Department's (ASLD) obligation to maximize the value of the State Trust Land (STL) for 13 designated public service beneficiaries (Beneficiaries), many of which are vital to the economic, social and physical well-being of Pinal County residents. ASLD supports the Comprehensive Plan's efforts to balance economy and the environment and understands that environmental protection and economic growth need not be mutually exclusive. Through clearly stated policies, the Comprehensive Plan can provide a level of certainty that encourages all parties to achieve these mutual goals.

As the steward of approximately two-thirds of the County's undeveloped land, we believe that the proposed text amendments found in PZ-PA-005-20 lack critical qualifiers that could inadvertently compromise the County's multi-faceted goals and responsibilities. Accordingly, ASLD offers the following comments (with underlines and/or strikeouts reflecting changes as proposed in the text amendment):

**Planning Guidelines (Pg. 91), 5<sup>th</sup> Point: Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.**

- These guidelines are quite broad. ASLD recommends revisions to identify the scale of development to which these guidelines should be applied (single lot, subdivision, master planned community, large-scale commercial centers).
- Given the Plan's frequent reference to the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Review Tool (ERT), the definition of **Riparian Areas** (Pg. 253) should be consistent with how they are mapped on the ERT's Pinal County component.

**Section 3.1.4.6: Encourage new development projects to preserve ~~significant~~ desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.**

- Removal of the term “significant” implies that *any* such areas should be preserved. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan does not seem to define “desert habitats,” “wildlife corridors,” “natural resources,” “landscapes” and “cultural resources,” leaving opportunity for others to interpret.
- Recommending preservation of these undefined areas without any qualifications could lead to confusion within the development community and create unrealistic expectations from the public to preserve *all* such areas. Furthermore, broad-brush designation of areas for preservation could ultimately lead to fragmented ecological corridors that do little to benefit wildlife. Prioritization of high-value ecological corridors that ensure connectivity through areas most likely to see development would provide a higher level of certainty for developers and the public, allowing the County to best achieve its diverse goals.

**Section 6.1.2.4: Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT)**

- This tool provides valuable high-level information; however, ASLD is concerned that without clear qualifying statements in the Comprehensive Plan the general public may interpret this information as policy, rather than high-level general guidance. We suggest more substantive information be included within the ERT’s Pinal County platform that clearly defines each category, the original source(s) of its data and substantiates the rationale behind the application of each layer.
- Related to the Open Space layer, while the derivations of this are also undefined, we suspect this may correlate to the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. Please remember that, per ARS 11-804(E):

“In applying an open space element or a growth element of a comprehensive plan a county shall not designate private land or state trust land as open space, recreation, conservation or agriculture unless the county receives the written consent of the landowner or provides an alternative, economically viable designation in the comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance, allowing at least one residential dwelling per acre. If the landowner is the prevailing party in any action brought to enforce this subsection, a court shall award fees and other expenses to the landowner. Each county shall incorporate this subsection into its comprehensive plan and provide a process for a landowner to resolve discrepancies relating to this subsection.”

Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan’s designation of open space on STL should be updated and ASLD requests that this information not be duplicated in the ERT. ASLD’s ability to achieve our mission becomes complicated when STL is confused with public open space.

- Like the Open Space layer, depiction of planned public trails across State Trust Land is not appropriate unless they have been coordinated with and approved by ASLD. As alluded to in ARS 11-804 (E), STL is more akin to private land and presupposing land uses creates difficulty for future land planning efforts. ASLD wishes to be a partner in the protection of significant environmental corridors and be involved in defining possible recreation and conservation elements on the Trust landscape. Until then, planned trail routes should not be depicted on STL within the Comprehensive Plan or the ERT.



- Based on the description provided at the 7/22/2020 Pinal Partnership meeting, the definition of “Riparian” in the Pinal County component of ERT (areas with concentrated vegetation, not necessarily associated with water flow) does not match that provided in the proposed Text Amendment. Preserving both habitat and economic vitality of the community requires a compromise that is best reached by identifying the most critical habitat corridors and ensuring connectivity. Identifying protection areas simply based on a concentration of vegetation could cause developers to face cost-prohibitive requirements that place development and conservation interests at odds, rather than as partners.

**Section 7.1.2.4: Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Environmental Review Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources**

- Based on the mapping of “open space,” “trails,” and “riparian areas” on the ERT, coupled with this loosely defined policy to “protect these natural areas,” future development could face a cost-prohibitive financial burden. Broad statements that do not consider potential impact on future land use, development costs or ongoing maintenance and insurance costs could result in developers deciding to locate outside of the county and place more constraints on affordable housing. Text amendments should reflect these collective factors to ensure one component does not place undue burden on the other.

We believe these are important considerations in moving forward with this and future Comprehensive Plan amendments in order to achieve the diverse needs and interests of Pinal County. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. If you require follow-up, please contact Karen Dada at [kdada@azland.gov](mailto:kdada@azland.gov), or (602) 542-3118.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa A. Atkins".

Lisa A. Atkins, Commissioner  
Arizona State Land Department

Attachment: PZ-PA-005-20

C: Charles Hofer, Arizona Game and Fish Department



Harold Christ  
President and CEO  
PO Box 904, Florence, AZ 85132  
Cell: 602.810.7448  
[Harold@PinalPartnership.com](mailto:Harold@PinalPartnership.com)  
[www.pinalpartnership.com](http://www.pinalpartnership.com)

August 20, 2020

Steve Abraham  
Pinal County Community Development Department  
31 North Pinal Street, Building F  
(PO Box 2973)  
Florence, AZ 85132

RE: Pinal Partnership Comments to Proposed Pinal County General Plan Text Amendments: PZ-PA-005-20

Mr. Abraham,

Pinal Partnership, as an organization and on behalf of our Board of Directors, would like to submit comments for your consideration regarding the Pinal County General Plan proposed text amendments found in PZ-PA-005-02.

Our Partnership consists of public agencies throughout Pinal County as well private interests in business and industry, land ownership, development, etc. We share a goal to advocate for a sustainable Pinal County economy through the preservation and creation of employment centers, to support organized economic development efforts throughout the region, and to encourage conditions that foster economic growth. We are very supportive of open space and trails as a part of our core mission.

Collective efforts of those involved with Pinal Partnership, and our direct work, support good open space planning, especially in the most sensitive areas. Our comments below are very much in line with comments submitted by ASLD, also applying caution to avoid being too broad either in location or interpretation to prevent onerous requirements for Pinal County development at a broader level.

**Planning Guidelines (page 91), 5<sup>th</sup> point: Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.**

- Narrow guidelines to identify the scale of development in which underlined guidelines should be applied.

**Section 3.1.4.6.: Encourage new development projects to preserve ~~significant~~ desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.**

- Removing the term "significant" implies that any such areas should be preserved and without a clear definition in the Comprehensive Plan of the terms "desert habitats," "wildlife corridors," "natural resources," "landscapes," and "cultural resources," could lead to confusion within the development community and set unrealistic expectations to preserve all such areas.

**Section 6.1.2.4: Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT)**

- More substantive information included within the ERT's Pinal County platform that clearly defines categories, original sources of data and substantiates the rationale behind the application of each layer will help the information be understood as general guidance rather than policy.
- Ensure the definition of "riparian" is consistent in the Pinal County component of the ERT as well as in the proposed Text Amendment, as they do not match currently.

**Section 7.1.2.4: Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources**

- Mapping on the ERT along with broadly defined policy could impact future land use and development costs that ultimately could turn developers away from Pinal County. Text amendments should be consistent in order to encourage development and collaboration while not placing undue burden on other components of the General Plan.

Thank you in advance for considering our comments. If we can provide further assistance in any capacity related to the proposed text amendments, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harold Christ', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Harold Christ

*On behalf of Pinal Partnership Board of Directors*



**Harold Christ**  
President and CEO  
PO Box 904, Florence, AZ 85132  
Cell: 602.810.7448  
[Harold@PinalPartnership.com](mailto:Harold@PinalPartnership.com)  
[www.pinalpartnership.com](http://www.pinalpartnership.com)

September 1, 2020

Steve Abraham  
Pinal County Community Development Department  
31 North Pinal Street, Building F  
(PO Box 2973)  
Florence, AZ 85132

RE: Pinal Partnership Comments to Proposed Pinal County General Plan Text Amendments: PZ-PA-005-20

Mr. Abraham,

Pinal Partnership, as an organization and on behalf of our Board of Directors and Open Space and Trails Committee, would like to submit comments for your consideration in regard to the Pinal County General Plan proposed text amendments found in PZ-PA-005-02.

Partnership members include public agencies; private interests in business, industry, land ownership and development; conservation, educational and Indian communities; and Pinal County residents. We share a common goal to advocate for a sustainable Pinal County economy through the preservation and creation of employment centers, to support organized economic development efforts throughout the region, and to encourage conditions that foster economic growth. We also believe that these objectives can be met while conserving the interconnected complex of open spaces and desert ecosystems that make this a destination for tourists, businesses and residents, and contributes significantly to the county's economy.

The comments below reflect our recognition of a need for balance, avoiding statements that are too broadly applicable, too vague or too onerous that they stifle development, but recognizing the value of providing developers with knowledge of the existence and importance of ecological features that make their lands and the surrounding region more sustainable. They are submitted with the understanding that the amendments are not rules nor laws but broad guidance.

**Planning Guidelines (page 91), 5th point: Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.**

Developers deciding whether to pursue a given project need to understand the environmental parameters of their property and its surroundings. The Arizona Game and Fish Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a useful third-party reference that can provide insight as to potential areas

of focus. This tool originated in response to Pinal County in collaboration with Pinal Partnerships Open Space and Trails Committee seeking to understand and map the key natural resources. While it does not have regulatory authority over the entitlement process in Pinal County, it can be a helpful resource for discussion. Care should be given to the use of the ERT tool. As with any data set, the accuracy and methodology behind the data should have a thorough and ongoing review and vetting process. It is critical when interpreting the ERT data that consideration be given to context and relevancy. In addition, due to factors such as location, prior urbanization, planned intense land use, and prior disruption to adjacent or upstream natural features, preservation of certain habitats can be ineffective to the overarching goals and unnecessarily costly. We encourage developers to use all relevant resources to review the natural features of their land (including the Arizona Game and Fish Department's online ERT).

Wildlife corridors serve the critical function of connecting large habitats over short or long distances in order to maintain biological diversity and sustainability. In many cases, existing natural drainage features (washes, creeks, flood plains, etc.) present an opportunity to facilitate those connections, a win-win "double dip," so to speak. Typically, nature in its elegant efficiency is doing it that way already. In other cases, identifying a Wildlife corridor across many dozens of miles will present fairness, legal, and logistical challenges similar to the power line siting process. In addition to essential biological and ecological considerations, the legal and cost implications that could occur would need to be considered in the process of identifying the most viable corridor alignment.

**Section 3.1.4.6.: Encourage new development projects to preserve significant desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.**

The word "significant" should not be deleted from the text. While the objective here is to emphasize that even smaller environmental features that might not be considered "significant" can have huge survival value for wild populations, there are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. Removing the qualifier might imply that any such areas should be preserved. Combined with lack of clear definitions for the terms "desert habitats," "wildlife corridors," "natural resources," "landscapes," and "cultural resources," this could lead to confusion within the development community and set unrealistic expectations to preserve all such areas. These deficiencies need to be addressed in either the comprehensive Plan Amendment or the ERT.

While the term "riparian area" in particular has many definitions here and elsewhere, all relate to the general existence of water - either surface or subsurface - which in turn leads to greater density of flora and fauna.

**Section 6.1.2.4: Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT)**

There is critical need for a tool that all users can be assured is scientifically based and fair. Since the Pinal County-specific ERT developed out of a study by the Pinal Partnership's own Open Space



and Trails Committee, we are confident in both the lengthy process of its development and the scientific integrity of its content. The various layers are meant to provide a convenient and workable, visual summation of technical data collected for a given parcel. This information is made available to developers as general guidance.

**Section 7.1.2.4: Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources**

It is crucial that suggested changes to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and use of the ERT not be construed as policy that negatively impacts future land use, raises costs, and turns away development. Pinal County has an enviable history of studies aimed at balancing the societal and economic benefits of development with conservation of open space and views. The Superstition Area Land Plan and subsequently Superstition Vistas have been influential to the evolution of the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. Each sought to find the balance between economic viability and conservation of natural habitats and introduced thoughtful planning concepts to achieve that balance. Conservation of natural habitats and open spaces matters to the future of Pinal County and deserves our focus. Economic development and affordable access to housing, retail, and job centers also matters. While these can be competing objectives, there is a balance to be struck through dialog and thoughtful consideration of all available resources such as the ERT tool. Pinal Partnership demonstrates the level of diversity, organization, dialogue and commitment it will take to bring all voices to the table and make that happen.

Thank you in advance for considering our comments. If we can provide further assistance in any capacity related to the proposed text amendments, please feel free to reach out to me.

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Harold Christ

On behalf of Pinal Partnership Board of Directors and Open Space and Trails Committee

**Major Open Space** (or 1 du/ac) indicates lands the County is interested in preserving for recreation purposes or for cultural or ecological reasons. Further study is necessary to determine the most appropriate configuration of open space and to develop a strategy for preserving it. Staff will work closely with owners of development projects to implement Regional Trail Corridors, wildlife and wash corridors as shown in the *Open Space and Trails Plan* and refined through future studies. The owners of development projects will have the opportunity to propose corridor widths that meet the intent of the Comprehensive Plan, while minimizing impacts on the proposed projects. In conformance with State Law, these lands have the right to develop at one residential dwelling per acre.

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## Planning Guidelines

The following “Planning Guidelines” are intended to provide direction and guidance to potential landowners or developers, staff and elected or appointed officials in developing or reviewing the Natural Infrastructure as part of a project.

- ✓ Recreational amenities, parks, trails and open space should be designed as an integral part of the project.
- ✓ Open space, parks and recreational areas must be large enough to be usable for the intended purpose.
- ✓ Open space is encouraged to be part of and connected to a larger, integrated regional system.
- ✓ The County-wide trails system should be integrated into developments where appropriate.
- ✓ Integrate the natural terrain, habitats, drainageways, foothills, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, foothills and other natural features into project design where possible.
- ✓ Protect and/or minimize impact to historic sites or landmarks, including distinguishable natural features.

3.1.4.5 Encourage development that sensitively integrates natural environment and maintains healthy ecosystems, including the consideration of adjacent parcels, connectivity and wildlife linkages.

3.1.4.6 Encourage new development projects to preserve significant desert habitats, riparian areas, wildlife corridors, natural resources, landscapes and cultural resources where feasible.

**3.1.5 Objective:** Coordinate and cooperate with the ASLD planning of state trust lands within Pinal County.

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**Policies:**

*3.1.5.1 Encourage an inclusive planning process to ensure the best possible projects on state trust lands in Pinal County.*

*3.1.5.2 Encourage meaningful state trust land reform so that ASLD will be able to dedicate rights of way, preserve open space in appropriate areas, and participate more in the development process, just as developers could, to increase the value of trust lands and achieve Pinal County's vision.*

*3.1.5.3 Preserve in perpetuity unique and sensitive lands as open space to protect wildlife and the natural environment through acquisition or other techniques such as the transfer of development rights to other ASLD holdings.*

**3.1.6 Objective:** Protect Pinal County residents from military and aviation related hazards and nuances.

**Policy:**

3.1.6.1 Discourage residential and other noise-sensitive developments within airport approach and departure zones where increased noise levels will be present as a result of

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The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county.  
<http://azhgis2.esri.com/content/map>

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innovative manner to topography, drainage, critical habitats and other land sensitivities.

**6.1.2 Objective:** Preserve, protect, or conserve the existing natural drainage system.

**Policies:**

*6.1.2.1 Identify the significant natural washes and develop a Countywide storm water management plan that preserves the significant natural washes and adopt development regulations to implement the storm water management plan.*

*6.1.2.2. Develop a watershed management plan that protects the County's key contributing areas to promote water quality and conservation for future generations.*

6.1.2.3 Encourage landowners to work through regional and federally-recognized solutions to remove property from floodplains to allow safe development and protection of future homeowners.

6.1.2.4 Utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT).

**6.1.3 Objective:** Identify, preserve, and protect cultural resources that have cultural significance and provide a link to historic events.

**Policies:**

*6.1.3.1 Promote and provide incentives for subdivisions to conserve cultural resources within the County.*

6.1.3.2 Enhance community awareness and increase public support of local cultural opportunities.

streams and washes including the Santa Cruz River, Greene Wash, Gila River near Florence and San Pedro River. There are undetermined flood hazard areas in the vicinity of Tonto National Forest, Oracle and the Table Top Mountains. Minimal Flood Hazard Area refers to an area where flood insurance is available but not mandatory by federally regulated lenders. Special Flood Hazard Area refers to an area, which is at a higher risk of flooding. Tonto National Forest, parts of the Coronado National Forest and a small area just north of the Tohono O'odham Indian Community in the Sonoran Desert National Monument lie in an Undetermined Flood Hazard area. These are areas with possible but undetermined flood hazards where no flood hazard analysis has been conducted.

Flooding can result in property damage and be dangerous for people. Given those hazards, areas with the potential to flood require special consideration during the design development process. Floods and floodplain's are unpredictable and understanding the nature of potential flood hazards, such as flood water levels and events, is fundamental in planning development in or near a floodplain. FEMA is the federal agency that maintains and updates flood hazard mapping in the form of Flood Insurance Rate Maps. If development is proposed in or around a flood hazard area, the floodplain can and should be engineered to minimize hazards to people and property.

**Riparian Areas and Wetlands** The habitat zones found immediately adjacent to streams and lakes are called riparian areas. Riparian areas encompass not only the bed or channel of the water body, but the surrounding banks, bars, ponded waters, and floodplain surfaces. There is a great concentration of vegetation, birds and wildlife in these areas, and because the surrounding Sonoran Desert is so arid, these areas are especially distinct and rare in Pinal County. Some of the larger riparian areas are found along the major creeks and rivers in Pinal County, including Queen Creek, Gila River, San Pedro River, Araivapa Creek, and the Santa

**Riparian areas** are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

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The Arizona Game and Fish Department's on-line Environmental Review Tool (ERT) is a project evaluation tool specifically designed for Pinal County. The ERT can help identify opportunities to protect riparian areas, open spaces, and other natural resources throughout the county.

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*databases on wildlife and habitat inventories (from sources such as the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Nature Serve, and The Nature Conservancy), make this data readily available, and encourage land-managing entities to consider those hazards during the design-development process.*

7.1.1.6 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscape, not just specific development sites.

7.1.1.7 Consider maintaining open space on lands that are environmentally sensitive due to steep slopes, floodplains, watersheds, and habitat areas.

**7.1.2 Objective:** Protect Pinal County's vibrant natural ecosystem.

**Policies:**

7.1.2.1 Promote practices that prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

7.1.2.2 Encourage efforts to preserve native vegetation in open space areas.

7.1.2.3 Encourage efforts to integrate areas vegetated with native species into developed areas.

~~7.1.2.4 Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands.~~ Promote planning and decision-making that minimize disturbance to riparian areas and wetlands and encourage project proponents to utilize the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Environmental Review Tool (ERT) as a resource to identify opportunities to protect these natural resources.

*7.1.6.2 Explore new and innovative technologies in solid waste management.*

*7.1.6.3 Promote practices to safely address and dispose of hazardous waste while minimizing its impact to the environment.*

**7.1.7 Objective:** Support efforts that increase public awareness of Pinal County’s valuable natural environment.

**Policies:**

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*7.1.7.1 Support programs at higher education institutions that promote research and awareness of Pinal County’s natural environment.*

*7.1.7.2 Encourage environmental programs that engage young people and students in preservation and conservation of the natural environment.*

*7.1.7.3 Support efforts to establish a network of distinctive interpretive signage, maps and informational displays at recreation and conservation areas.*


*7.1.7.4 Support eco-tourism efforts and venues such as the Boyce Thompson Arboretum and the Biosphere II.*

7.1.7.5 Encourage and promote The Pinal County Birding Trail, The Arizona Birding Trail, and other watchable wildlife opportunities in Pinal County.

7.1.7.6 Partner with environmental organizations that have a strong educational component to their mission, e.g. speakers’ series, event tables, tours, interpretive programs and publications designed for the public.

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7.1.1.6 Promote planning and decision-making that consider impacts to the entire landscaperegional ecosystem, not just specific development sites.

**Objectives** are broad statements of intent to implement the goals and provide framework for the policies.

**Policies** address how the goals will be achieved. Policies should be read as if it is preceded by the words “It is the County’s general policy to...” Some policies may appear to conflict with one another.

**Primary Airport** are those airports that have 10 or more based aircraft and have 2,000 or more annual aircraft operations. These airports offer future economic development opportunities as they grow and expand.

**Private and Public Shared Responsibilities**, all entities, private and public, share the responsibilities of implementing these Policies.

**Public Responsibilities** are primarily incumbent on the County to implement through its policy development and planning.

**Recreation/Conservation** identifies areas under an extra layer of federal protection, meaning that any infrastructure planned to traverse these lands will have to go through a federal permitting process and environmental review.

**Regional Commercial** is intended to be large-scale (over 40 acre) retail centers that draw from a large regional market area. These centers might include malls, power centers, big box retail centers, and auto dealerships.

**Riparian areas** ~~are habitat zones found immediately adjacent to streams and lakes.~~ are the natural areas around rivers, washes, and other bodies of water. These areas include channel itself as well as the vegetation that acts as a transition zone between the riparian and upland area.

**Scenic vista** is a view of an area that is visually or aesthetically pleasing.

**Secondary Airport** is an airport that does not qualify as a Primary Airport. These airports offer future economic development opportunities as they grow and expand.

**State Shared Revenues** is a portion of revenues Arizona shares with local governments.

**Threatened species** are defined as those likely to become endangered if not protected.

**Time Tax** is the price paid sitting in long commutes that cuts into what we value most – our time with family, friends, home, and community.

**Transit-Oriented Development** is pedestrian-oriented development designed to facilitate access and use of transit facilities including buses, bus stops and light rail stations.

**Vertical Mixed Use** is typified by residential use over commercial uses in the same building or any other potential diversity of land uses within a building.

**Viewshed** is the entire area an individual can see from a given point.

## **UPDATED DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

### **Wildlife Corridors**

Wildlife corridors are pathways or habitats with no or few barriers to wildlife species. These landscape linkages allow for the safe passage of daily, seasonal, or annual wildlife movements. Wildlife corridors often occur in riparian areas, canyons, ridgelines, and other landscape features that constrain wildlife movements into more restricted paths.

### **Desert Habitat**

Sonoran desert scrub habitats are low-elevation areas that receive less than 10 in (25 cm) of rain each year, mostly in bi-modal pattern (occurring in winter and summer). In these arid habitats, vegetation is generally sparse and represented by cacti and other succulents as well as other vegetative species including mesquite, ironwood, and palo verde, among others.

### **Natural Resources**

The naturally occurring assets that provide use benefits through the provision of raw materials and energy used in economic activity (or that may provide such benefits one day) and that are subject primarily to quantitative depletion through human use. They are subdivided into four categories: mineral and energy resources, soil resources, water resources, and biological resources.

### **Landscape**

Landscape is an area of land composed of an interacting variety of ecosystems with a diversity of physical elements. The configuration of a landscape is defined by the physical character, arrangement, and context of its elements. Combining both their physical origins and the cultural overlay of human presence, often created over millennia, landscapes reflect a living mixture of people and place that is vital to local and national identity.