

SANTA CRUZ RIVER

URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



Presentation to EPAC
October 3, 2024

SANTA CRUZ RIVER

90-mile riverbed from border to Pinal County

- Santa Cruz County: 15 miles flowing
- Pima County/Tucson: 25 miles flowing

3 major wastewater treatment plants

A vital and rare wildlife corridor

- Vital migration corridor and north–south flyway for hundreds of species of birds and other native wildlife
- Critical jaguar habitat
- Threatened and endangered species:
 - Gila topminnow, Mexican Spotted Owl, Chiricahua Leopard Frog, Pima Pineapple Cactus...

EFFLUENT-DEPENDENT REACHES
OF THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER



URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

is:

- Federal public land **owned or managed by Fish and Wildlife Service within 25 miles of a major city.**
- Can be **co-stewarded** (with Tribe or public entity).
- The **highest standard when it comes to permanent federal protection for wildlife.**
- Eligible for **major federal funding.**
- A **“community asset,”** as determined by their founding purposes. Priorities are environmental education and nature-based recreation.

isn't:

- Necessarily **owned in fee-title by the federal government.**
- A water quality or quantity protection, **nor does it impose regulations or limitations on upstream or downstream activities.**
- An **all-encompassing land protection** designation. Refuge status only applies to land directly within the refuge, **not the broader acquisition boundary.**
- Exclusive to flora and fauna. Refuges **maintain traditional and outdoor access.**

Refuge designation is an **administrative action**.

– Meaning: No Congressional bill needed (though one can help).

The Biden Administration—**specifically Sec. Deb Haaland**—has the authority to designate a refuge.

To authorize a refuge, Administration leadership must see **community desire and acquirable land**.

- Adelita S. Grijalva, Pima County Board of Supervisors, Chair, District 5
- Alisha Vasquez
- Antonio Ramirez
- Anthony Nelson
- Arizona Land and Water Trust
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- Barrio Neighborhood Coalition
- Calabasas Alliance
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Cienega Watershed Partnership
- Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
- Corazón Latino Inc.
- Diana Hadley
- Favor Celestial
- Friends of the Santa Cruz River
- Gloria Fenner
- Ironwood Tree Experience
- Joanie Sawyer
- Reconciliación en el Río
- Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area
- Sloane Haywood
- Sky Island Alliance
- Sonoran Institute
- The Arizona Native Plant Society
- The Sierra Club
- The Wilderness Society
- Trust for Public Land
- Jose Maria Menendez
- Josefina Cardenas
- Kathleen G. Williamson, J.D.,LL.M., Ph.D.
- Kara Harter
- Kelly Badeau
- Kevin Dahl, Vice Mayor and Ward 3 Councilmember
- Laiken Jordahl
- Lane Santa Cruz, Ward 1 Councilmember
- Leigh Sontheimer
- Logan Phillips
- Los Desendientes de Tucson
- Luis Alfredo Salgado
- Mauro Trejo
- Maxie Adler
- Menlo Park Neighborhood Association
- Mexican American Heritage and History Museum Mission Garden
- Raul Ramirez
- Tucson Audubon Society
- Tucson Birthplace Open Space Coalition (TBOSC)
- Tucson Herpetological Society
- Tucson Mountains Association
- University of Arizona
- Watershed Management Group
- YWCA of Southern Arizona

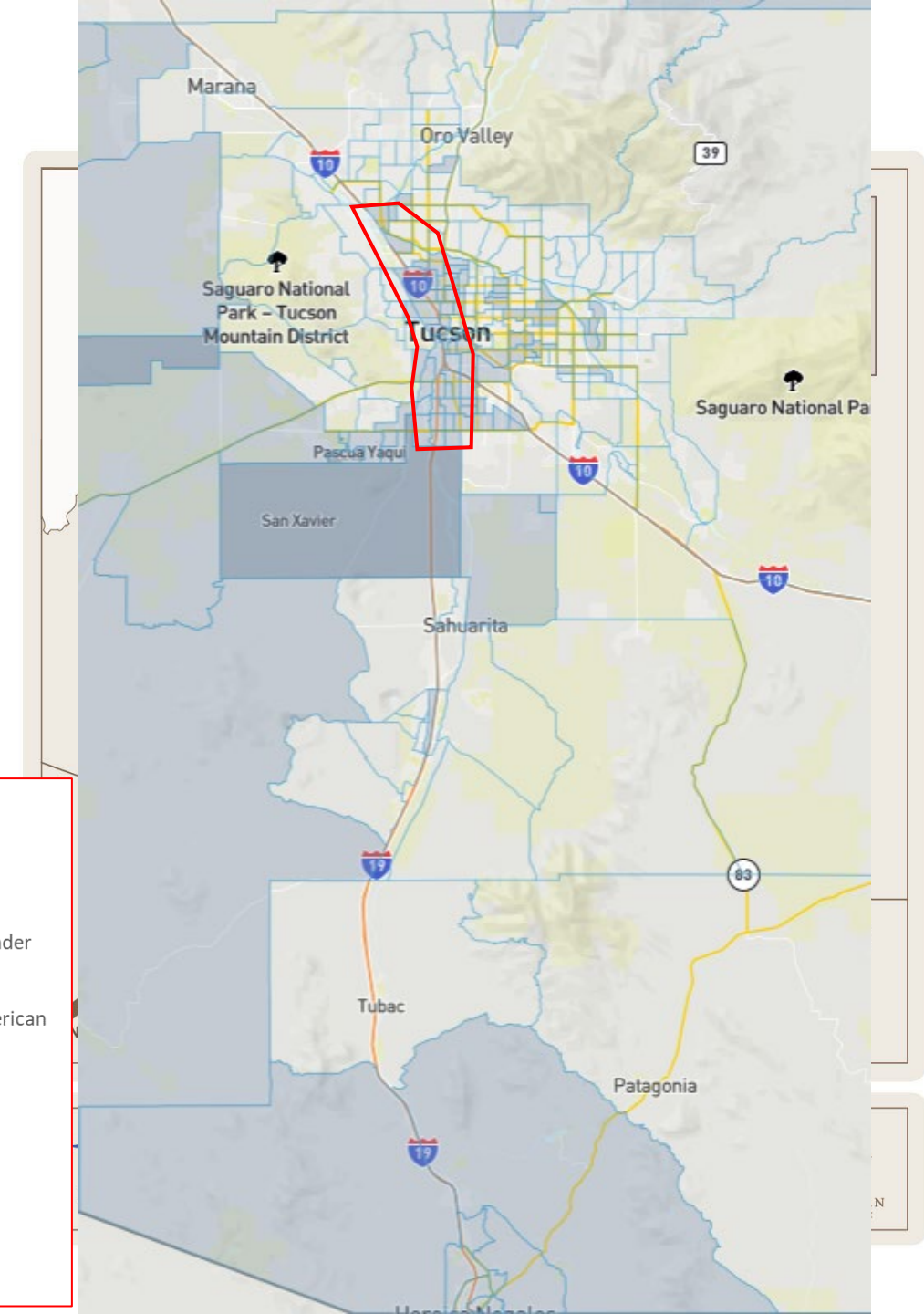
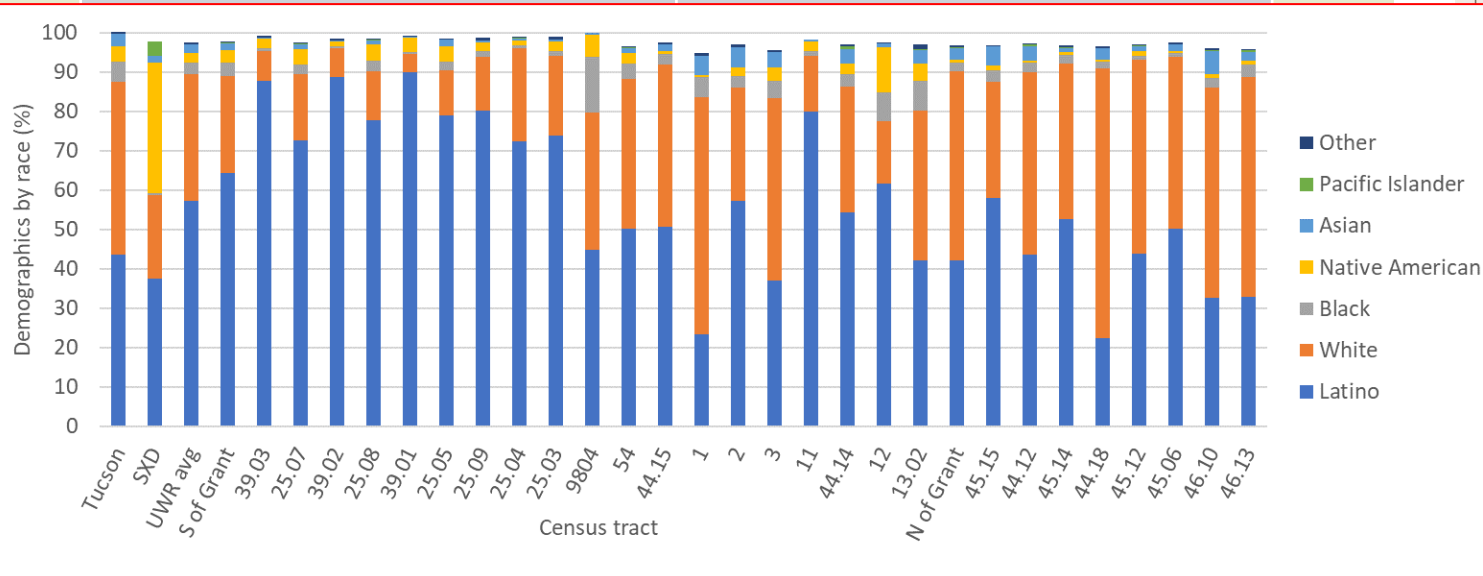


Santa Cruz River Refuge Coalition

SANTA CRUZ RIVER

Nearly 40 Justice40 census tracts within 1 mile of the Santa Cruz River

| Pima County | Santa Cruz County |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| White: 82.4% | White: 91% |
| Latino: 38% | Latino: 83% |
| Black: 4% | Native American: 2% |
| Native American: 3.6% | Black: <1% |
| Asian: 3% | Asian <1% |

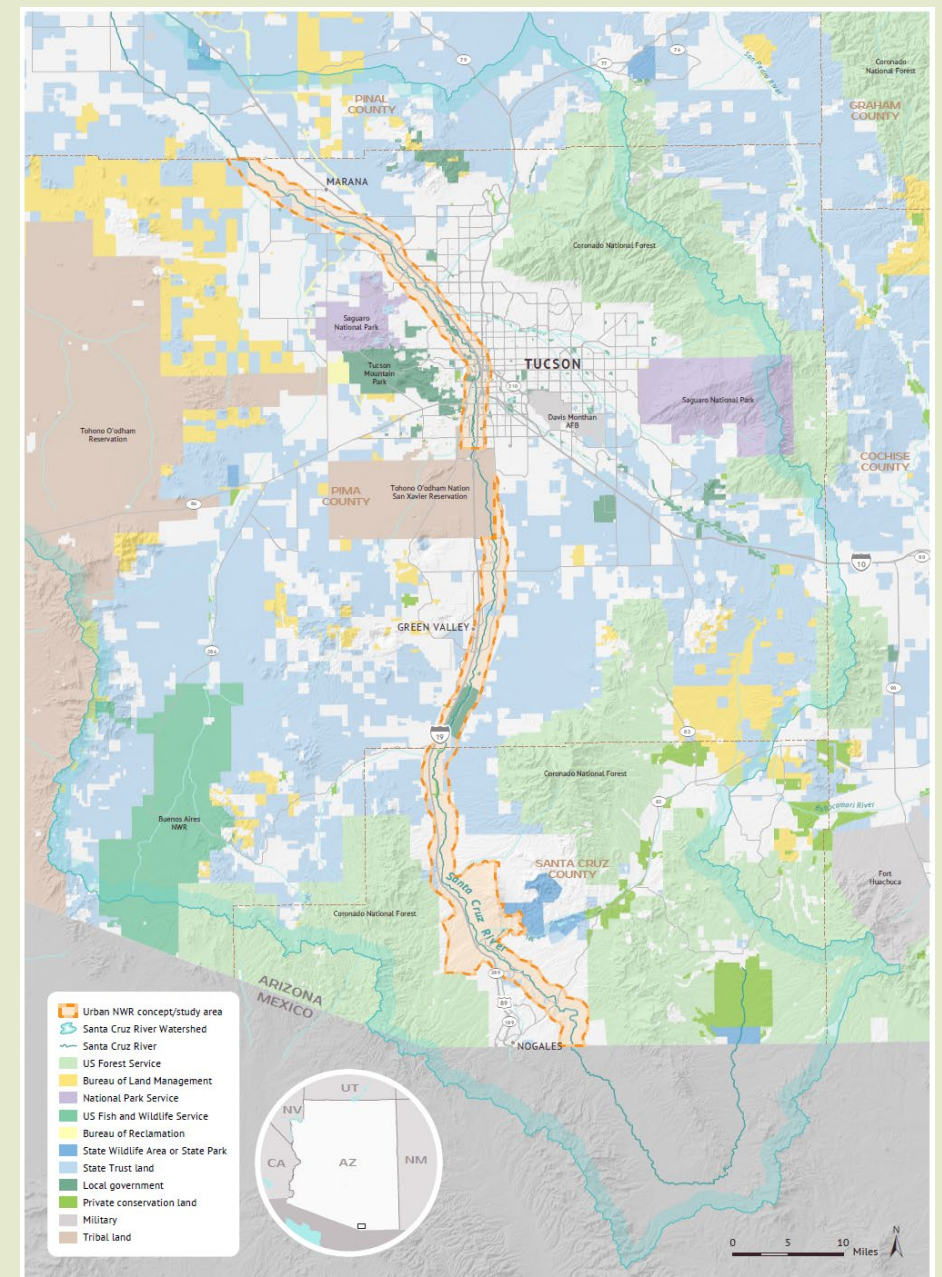


Process:

- This is a *proposed* map
- U.S. FWS makes final decision **alongside community partners, including city, counties, and advocates**
- **Proposed border is:**
 - ½ mile on either side of river
 - Adjustable over time
 - Responsive to San Xavier District Council
 - Delineated to indicate geography in which U.S. FWS is willing to acquire land

Land acquisition being considered:

- 7,500+ acres in Santa Cruz County
- 570 acres in Pima County



Santa Cruz River Proposed Urban National Wildlife Refuge

PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA

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URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Action and successes to date:

- Dec 2023:** Established the Santa Cruz River Urban National Wildlife Refuge Coalition
- 2023+2024:** Site visits from U.S. FWS and DOI leadership
- April 2024:** Santa Cruz County BOS unanimously pass resolution
- May 2024:** Pima County BOS unanimously pass proclamation
- May 2024:** Landscape Conservation Design submitted to U.S. FWS
- June 2024:** San Xavier District Council unanimously pass resolution



RESOLUTION NO. 2024-05

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CALLING ON SECRETARY DEB HAALAND TO CREATE THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA



Adelita S. Grijalva, Chair, District 5

WHEREAS, dozens of Pima and Santa Cruz County organizations have united to encourage the designation of an urban national wildlife refuge along the Santa Cruz River.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Pima County Board of Supervisors hereby proclaims Friday, May 10, 2024 to be:

"SANTA CRUZ RIVER DAY"

and encourages the community to support the designation of the country's newest national urban wildlife refuge in southern Arizona as the Santa Cruz River Urban National Wildlife Refuge.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 7th day of May 2024.



SAN XAVIER DISTRICT OF THE TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION

2018 WEST SAN XAVIER ROAD • TUCSON, ARIZONA 85746
TELEPHONE: (520) 573-4000 • FAX: (520) 573-4089

RESOLUTION OF THE SAN XAVIER DISTRICT COUNCIL

(A RESOLUTION OF THE TRIBAL COUNCIL OF THE SAN XAVIER DISTRICT OF THE TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION CALLING ON SECRETARY DEB HAALAND TO CREATE THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA)

RESOLUTION NO. SXDC 06-23-06

URBAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Next steps for the Refuge:

- October 8: City of Tucson votes on resolution
- Partners to encourage U.S. FWS and elected officials to take action
- Regional municipalities sign MOU to establish Urban Partnership



NEW AND UPCOMING

LEEME en español VISITE www.theyes/leemeapp

a living river

SANTA CRUZ RIVER 2024 DOWNTOWN TUCSON TO MARANA

TEN

un río vivo

RÍO SANTA CRUZ 2024 DESDE EL CENTRO DE TUCSÓN A MARANA

DIEZ AÑOS DE AGUAS LIMPIAS

Santa Cruz River in Marana

Santa Cruz River in Marana

SONORAN INSTITUTE PIMA COUNTY

SONORAN INSTITUTE PIMA COUNTY TUCSON TUCSON WATER

SATURDAY **12** OCTOBER 9:00-NOON

SANTA CRUZ RIVER CLEANUP DAY

QR CODE

VIRI VIRI BOMB BOMB

ENSENADA STREET FOOD

PARKING AT 2301 FORBES BLVD
FOOD, DJ, AND PRIZES!
GO GREEN! LSA BIKE VALET
\$1 PINT AT DRAGOON AFTER

SONORAN INSTITUTE

PIMA COUNTY TEP

SANTA CRUZ VALLEY

The Wilderness Society

TUCSON CLEAN & BEAUTIFUL

DRAGOON BREWING CO.

living streets alliance

Thank you for your interest and consideration

Luke Cole

Sonoran Institute

Santa Cruz River program director

LCOLE@sonoraninstitute.org