

Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) Meeting

At or after 9:30 a.m., Thursday, May 1, 2025

Public Access to Meeting Audio/Presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/live/qauns4bd9m4>

Notice is hereby given to the public and to the Committee members that the Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) of Pima Association of Governments (PAG) will meet at the above stated time and date.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Members of the EPAC will attend the meeting remotely. The meeting room will not be open to the public. However, members of the public are invited to attend the meeting via the public access link above. Committee members will be provided with a separate link to participate. Members of the public may submit written comments relating to this meeting to info@pagregion.com within twenty-four hours of the meeting's posted start time. These comments will be filed with the committee's records.

EPAC is a technical advisory committee established by PAG to make regional environmental planning recommendations to the PAG Executive Director. EPAC provides technical review and develops recommendations on studies, reports, plans, programs and submittals in support of continuous, comprehensive and cooperative planning and programming within the PAG planning area and in full compliance with PAG policies and procedures. Committee members are prohibited from interfering with the administrative functions of the organization.

Pima Association of Governments is committed to maintaining high standards of conduct and prohibits harassment and retaliation against all employees pursuant to PAG's Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation. It is the responsibility of all committee members to comply with and to report violations or suspected violations of the Rules of Conduct, PAG policies, federal or state laws and regulations.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Introductions

2. In-kind Form

The participants will be asked to confirm their estimated in-kind time so that the meeting can count as a local match to PAG's federally funded programs.

This is an information item.

3. Approval of EPAC Feb. 6, 2025, Meeting Summary

Action: Approval of the Meeting Summary.

4. EPAC Top Environmental Issues List for 2025

PAG staff will present the updated final draft of EPAC's Top Environmental Issues List for 2025, which will serve as a guide for discussion and coordination topics in the upcoming year. This list

has been revised based on information gathered from 2024 presentations, the fall update process by members and PAG staff, and the goals where EPAC members reached a consensus during the meetings on Dec. 12, 2024, and Feb. 6, 2025. Items that need further review will be discussed for the 2026 list and explored through future presentations for enhanced education and discussion on the topics if needed.

Action: Recommend approval of the final draft of EPAC's Top Environmental Issues List for 2025.

5. Wildlife Corridors and Crossing Infrastructure in Pima County Overview

Representatives from the Arizona Game and Fish, Town of Marana, Pima County, Tohono O'odham Nation, ADOT and the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection will present on studies, infrastructure investments, upcoming projects and remaining barriers related to maintaining regional wildlife linkages.

This is an information item

6. Future Agenda Items

Speaker suggestions for future agenda topics to be considered by PAG may be suggested by committee members.

****Pursuant to open meeting laws, the committee cannot discuss or act on any matters raised that are not listed on this agenda.*

7. Adjournment

The EPAC meeting packet containing materials related to the meeting is available at www.PAGregion.com for public review. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), those requiring special assistance, such as large typeface print, sign language or other reasonable accommodations, may request those through the administrative offices at: (520) 792-1093 at least two business days before the meeting.

PAG operates its programs without regard to race, color and national origin in compliance with [Title VI](#) of the Civil Rights Act. We invite you to complete our voluntary self-identification survey ([English/Spanish](#)).

If you need translation assistance, please contact Zonia Kelley at (520) 792-1093. Si necesita ayuda con traducción, llame por favor al (520) 792-1093 y comuníquese con Zonia Kelley.

Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) Meeting Summary

Summary of 9:30 a.m., Thursday, February 6, 2025, Meeting

Full Video Recording (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVSWg_d793M

ATTENDEES

Voting Members

Abigail Okrent, PDEQ
Aidelis Moyet, Town of Sahuarita
Alexandra Chavez, Town of Oro Valley
Andrew Agnew, City of Tucson Citizen
Becca Cammack, Tucson Airport Authority
Brendon Lyons, SAHBA
Charles Stack, Oro Valley citizen
Christina McVie, Tucson Audubon
Jessica Rodriguez, City of Tucson
Luke Cole, Sonoran Institute
Lyn Loveless, League of Women Voters
Michael Catanzaro, City of Tucson

Natalie Shepp, PDEQ
Paula Bluemer, Town of Marana
Camden Walsh, Tohono O'odham Nation
San Xavier District

Non-Voting Members

Katie Predick, Arizona Sonora Desert Museum
Nancy Nesky, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base

Staff Lead

Hannah Oden

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 a.m.

2. In-kind Form

PAG Planning Coordinator Hannah Oden informed participants of the in-kind form, and members were asked to confirm their estimated in-kind time for the meeting.

3. Approval of December 12, 2024, EPAC Meeting Summary

Action: A motion to approve the December 12, 2024, EPAC meeting summary was made by Abigail Okrent, Pima County Department of Environmental Quality, and seconded by Christina McVie, Tucson Audubon Society. The motion passed unanimously.

4. City of Tucson Storm to Shade Program

Video Timestamp: [9:45](#)

Blue Baldwin, City of Tucson, provided members with a brief introduction and overview of the Storm to Shade Program. Members were informed of the program's purpose, goals, implementation, and impacts, including discussing existing data for the region's green stormwater infrastructure (GSI).

Ms. Baldwin answered questions about the program.

The presentation can be found [HERE](#).

This item was for information only.

5. EPAC Top Environmental Issues List for 2025

Video Timestamp: [1:16:28](#)

PAG Planning Coordinator Hannah Oden provided a brief presentation of the EPAC Top Environmental Issues List for 2025 including a summary of the development process and updates made to the list since the last meeting. The committee discussed the list and provided additional feedback. Committee members representing SAHBA and the Tucson Airport Authority expressed concerns with the inclusion of issues that pertain to their industry.

The committee did not act on the EPAC Top Issues List.

The presentation can be found [HERE](#).

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m. due to loss of quorum and to avoid open meeting law violations.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EPAC)

Top Environmental Issues List 2025

The Top Environmental Issues List is compiled by Pima Association of Governments (PAG) in coordination with its Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) and its subcommittees.

Pima Association of Governments operates under federal or state designations and its resources are strictly limited to allowable activities based on the specific criteria established by its grant agreements. Content on this list shall align with federal or state laws, rules, or regulations and their intended purpose of protecting human and environmental health. Any provision on this list found to be in conflict with laws, rules and regulations will not be advanced by PAG.

EPAC is a standing technical committee and provides technical review and develops recommendations on environmental studies, reports, plans and programs within the PAG planning area, but it is not a policy setting body. EPAC, as an advisory group of regional representatives, is in a unique position to coordinate a focused list of shared objectives and top issues from a multi-faceted lens and collaborate to leverage planning efforts and multiply results. EPAC also hears updates and may provide feedback on PAG programs or advise on issues for PAG and/or regional consideration.

This coordinated list of top issues can be used to leverage planning efforts and multiply results. These top issues will be used to develop EPAC and its subcommittee meetings agendas for 2025. PAG staff, together with EPAC, will utilize the list to find common ground, track accomplishments, integrate diverse planning efforts, provide inclusive regional coordination and may create or advise on measurable initiatives that address regional issues, such as plans, resolutions, best practice inventories and partnerships, to increase awareness and improve the health and livability of our community. While this list covers a range of topics, PAG may only provide resources and address issues consistent with the Overall Work Program (OWP) and as allowed by grant funding sources.

This list supports EPAC's intention to share information, commit to coordinated activities, track and encourage regional collaboration efforts, gather feedback, transmit recommendations when directed by PAG, provide learning opportunities, and address gaps in environmental planning.

EPAC encourages the integration of affordability, innovative solutions, predictable regulatory frameworks, and collaborative engagement among diverse interests. Additionally, EPAC seeks to weigh the immediate impacts on stakeholders across various sectors alongside the long-term benefits to public safety, health and environmental well-being.

Each header below names a priority category and is followed by a description of top issues and highlights strategies to address specific concerns. EPAC aims to hold discussions to further refine key issues, determine where there may be shared objectives, specify desired outcomes, and evaluate efforts that are most relevant and timely for decision makers.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In the context of regional environmental planning, over many years federal and state partners and member jurisdictions have been placing emphasis on ensuring that underserved and overburdened communities are prioritized to improve their environmental conditions and, ultimately, the health of individuals who historically have suffered disproportionately from environmental degradation. As they pertain to PAG's program and funding requirements, PAG follows any applicable updates to state and federal laws, as well as Presidential Executive Orders, while also recognizing the necessity of local

jurisdictions and other stakeholders to shape their individual priorities for environmental health and well-being.

Efforts locally and nationally have included engaging underserved and overburdened communities in transportation and environmental planning efforts from the beginning planning stages, listening closely to how they are being impacted by local environmental degradation, incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, and prioritizing investments within these communities based on the residents' lived experiences. Engaging with human services, local native nations, nongovernmental organizations, and the government sector is essential to achieve a vision of equity. Environmental stakeholders would benefit from sharing lessons and resources to ensure compliance with environmental regulations, including environmental justice, such as data analytics and engagement methods. Specific issues may be found in each section below.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Clean Air – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated the region in attainment with air quality standards, except for the Rillito PM₁₀ nonattainment area.

Prioritizing regional coordination to increase alternate modes of transportation, including active transportation, public transit and carpooling and decreasing subsequent single-occupancy vehicle travel will reduce air pollution and help ensure continued attainment of the national ozone air quality standard. Increased use of alternate transportation also reduces greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

Regional collaboration is key to promoting public education about the links between motor vehicle travel, air pollution and climate change, and advancing alternate transportation. This can include public education about methods to improve fuel economy, including proper tire inflation. Improved geographic datasets of infrastructure assets, needs, and gaps will aid regional transportation planning efforts to prioritize infrastructure improvements focused on the safety and availability of alternate modes of transportation. To facilitate transitioning to lower carbon emitting transportation fuels, new funding sources to increase transportation electrification, including infrastructure development, will be discussed.

Planning projects are underway to achieve broader regionwide sustainability including active transportation planning, microtransit feasibility, and advance modeling capabilities. Overlaying investments, opportunities, available data, and needs will allow the committee to help inform regional priorities for air quality mitigation and leverage opportunities of greatest impact.

Clean Water – The *PAG Areawide Water Quality Management Plan's (208 Plan)* action items name issues for regional coordination including stormwater pollution mitigation, industrial waste, groundwater contaminants, surface water quality impairments, and aging septic systems. Regional collaboration is key as water quality issues cross watersheds and aquifers, and the solutions, such as wastewater reclamation, are regional in scale. Water quality impacts of historic landfills were shared at EPAC and due to a lack of contamination hazard, open space uses are now being pursued locally.

Planning that occurs in isolation from other disciplines risks higher costs and lost opportunities for increased co-benefits. Multi-benefit projects, such as recharge of high-quality treated effluent within rivers and streams, have created riparian habitat and restored community access to a natural heritage of flowing rivers while also cost-effectively improving water table levels.

EPAC aims to hold collaborative discussions to learn of shared interests in additional in-channel recharge projects. For example, PAG has worked recently through the 208 program and SCWC partners to assist regional partners in assessing stakeholder support for new in-channel recharge of effluent in the Green Valley area.

EPAC has applauded the local precautionary efforts to fund clean ups and prevent delivery of water with emerging contaminants. With the EPA's newly adopted National Primary Drinking Water Regulations (NPDWR) for six per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the strategies and technologies to treat, mitigate and incentivize alternatives to PFAS and other contaminants of emerging concern will continue to be tracked and resources will be shared. Regional coordination and information sharing will help to support implementation of the NPDWR and prepare for other upcoming regulations to control these contaminants in water supplies, wastewater, and discharges. Health impacts of past Superfund sites have been discussed at EPAC and can continue to be explored.

Solid Waste Reduction – Regionally coordinated solid waste planning efforts help to improve critical local needs such as efficiently using resources, sustaining resiliency of recycling infrastructure, reducing landfill costs and water quality impacts, contamination issues impacting recycling economies, and improving environmental quality. PAG's designation in solid waste planning enables staff to support regional inventories, discussions, and solutions.

EPAC may hold discussions to refine key issues, clarify options and objectives, define opportunities for collaboration between diverse entities for solid waste reduction, and explore effective models of reuse, recycling, and related contamination mitigation. Recent discussions include efforts to eliminate contaminated plastics from landfills with public/private partnerships. EPAC is also interested in more robust glass recycling, such as for street materials, and facilities with anaerobic digestion facilities of food waste for cleaner air. Incentives for technological development are known to help address issues, and regionally impactful innovative projects are encouraged by EPAC. Recent monitoring of litter sources, testing concepts of litter capture in washes, and pilot recycling programs will continue to be collaborated upon and encouraged. Reduction and reuse of materials that would otherwise be discarded in landfills are central issues to address.

Stewardship and Enhancement – With the *Sackett* decision and subsequent rulemaking revising the definition of "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS) leaving many ephemeral and intermittent waterways unprotected at the federal level, new chemicals entering the market, and worsening drought on the Colorado River, the local land use and state decision makers are faced with considering the impacts of uncontrolled pollutant discharges on water supplies, water uses and riparian land protection. Increase of wildfire intensity, frequency and size has impacts on air quality, erosion, habitat, safety, water quality, recharge, and flooding, which will be tracked. Efforts by EPAC members and partners region-wide to encourage the establishment and persistence of native species and manage invasive species, especially fire-prone species such as stinknet and buffelgrass, are important given the ongoing risk to natural resources, urban infrastructure, and our cultural and environmental identity.

PAG continues to encourage riparian stewardship efforts for ephemeral, intermittent and perennial streams as stated in *PAG's 208 Plan* and *2017 Resolution Supporting our Heritage of Desert Waters*. This includes local support for PAG's *Priority Waterbodies* and the state's *Outstanding Arizona Waters*, with monitoring, preservation and restoration should land-use changes impact water quality or resources. Together with the San Xavier District, EPAC strives to provide information about priority waterbodies on the Tohono O'odham Nation and investigate effective regional ways to protect them.

EPAC recommends that stakeholders coordinate to pursue funding sources, such as federal grants, for

invasive species removal and fire protection planning and interagency collaboration to protect transportation infrastructure and travel safety. Upland, river and floodplain management efforts aim to bring environmental, aquifer recharge, safety, watershed health and economic enhancements to the region.

Noise pollution is a growing and underestimated danger that includes any unwanted or disturbing sound that affects the health and well-being of humans and other organisms, caused by factors such as street traffic. EPAC members will investigate the local significance and share information about the abatement of noise pollution through practicable and balanced solutions, such as sensitively placed sound wall projects.

Regionally, the amount of artificial light at night (ALAN) and its geographic extent continue to increase causing light pollution and worsening impacts on human and ecological health, energy use and emissions, and astronomy and ecotourism - both regional economic drivers. EPAC members will explore how education, careful design, and appropriate use of technology to limit unnecessary harms, such as amber downward street lighting, can ensure that we retain the benefits of artificial light at night, such as safety, while minimizing light pollution and its harmful effects.

Wildlife Connectivity - A primary threat to native wildlife populations in Pima County is habitat fragmentation. Wildlife relies on connected, undeveloped natural regional corridors, both potential and identified, to migrate through, rest, forage for food sources, and maintain genetic diversity, as corridors reduce isolated populations. However, human-caused barriers such as buildings, roads, fences, energy facilities, and more negatively impact the ability of wildlife to safely move and thrive throughout their range.

Efforts to support wildlife-sensitive design in transportation development processes, including roadways and interstates, are an EPAC member priority for both wildlife and human safety. This includes incorporating connectivity into new projects and implementing wildlife-friendly designs, such as wildlife crossings and wildlife fencing, into new roadway projects in areas with high wildlife movement. These measures can also be incorporated into existing roadway projects in critical wildlife corridors. The latest data related to regional wildlife movement, mortality, and habitat fragmentation will improve the planning and decision-making process.

Moreover, land and watershed stewardship for regional and riparian habitat protection can help keep wildlife corridors intact. The growing collaboration on the Santa Cruz Urban National Wildlife Refuge is an example of progress made on this issue. PAG and EPAC can assist with information sharing and coordination among jurisdictional partners to address connectivity during regional transportation planning processes.

REGIONAL RESILIENCY

Resilient Infrastructure – EPAC addresses climate adaptation concerns for our regional landscape and investments by integrating diverse experts in discussions about resilience, sustainability, mobility, and livability. The integration of planning, infrastructure building, and maintenance leads to more efficient use of limited resources and capital by recognizing opportunities for shared and equitable benefits.

For example, the multi-benefit approach of green stormwater infrastructure to manage surface drainage can also reduce flood nuisance and increase bike and walking safety when used along roads. This nature-based solution for heat issues, carbon reduction, stormwater pollutants and air quality, also has the co-benefits of improved wildlife linkages, offset consumptive water use, increased access to green space, and tree shade resilience. High priority has been placed regionally on preserving existing

trees, planting more drought resilient tree infrastructure, and encouraging additional shade infrastructure. PAG's Resiliency Planning Maps feature cooling centers, urban heat issues, park access, flooding concerns, social vulnerabilities, and canopy data to support the assessment of environmental hazards and distribution of infrastructure to where it is most impactful. Discussions about PAG's metrics and data at EPAC have led to enhanced planning and decision-making tools among the members. PAG has recently invested in ortho feature extraction to provide active transportation infrastructure GIS data and 3D vegetation data. Heat management strategies can be explored that assist with heat preparedness, mitigation, warnings and responses. EPAC has learned about progress on tree campaigns and can help investigate partnerships to support existing vegetation with green stormwater infrastructure.

Modernized transportation systems that provide social, health and environmental benefits can be highlighted, as they critically influence our urban design and resilience. Examples include multimodal solutions, local stormwater design and detail updates, electric vehicle infrastructure and broadband infrastructure.

Resilient Economy – The Sonoran Desert's unique natural heritage resources contribute to the region's economic vitality and sense of place is valued by our region, visitors, and prospective businesses. A changing climate makes the protection of these natural resources increasingly critical.

Environmentally friendly modes of transportation and street design enhance travel and tourism, livability, safety, equity, recreation and business attraction while reducing pollution and dangerous wildlife collisions with traffic. Studies on the economic and social value of watchable wildlife such as birding, bike-friendly communities, open space and healthy waterways are increasingly available and demonstrate the region's unique assets. Restoration efforts such as cleanup and reuse planning for the decommissioned Roger Road Water Reclamation Facility is an example of integrating these elements to support the local economy. However, it is important to balance the benefits of ecotourism with the local economy considering impacts to wildlife and environmentally sensitive areas. Public/private partnerships with local businesses, educators and additional diverse stakeholders can encourage tourism, strategic talent alignment and business opportunities.

Water Reliability – In 2024, the Colorado River returned to a Tier 1 shortage after reaching Tier 2a in 2023. In 2025, Lake Powell will operate in a Mid-Elevation Release Tier and Lake Mead will operate in a Level 1 Shortage Condition. While this will provide short-term relief to many communities reliant on Colorado River water and our region has prepared by storing CAP water, the shortage is projected to intensify quickly in future years and will impact each subregion differently. EPAC has learned how PAG is working on a multi-year initiative with Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative partners and water managers to continue to develop and implement responses to the drought. Regionally cohesive messaging will be key to building community familiarity, and drought response planning could include local drought conditions to uniquely benefit shallow groundwater-dependent wells and ecosystems. Broader water reliability needs include long-term planning, water use and delivery efficiency, infrastructure investments, and incentives. Given the nexus of water resources with water quality, street runoff, and designated environmental water uses, an integrated planning approach is beneficial to creating a reliable water future.

Regional collaboration between water providers, wastewater reclamation, industry including mining operations, agriculture, indigenous communities, and academia is key to creating a secure and clean water supply and reliable conveyance, especially as we face prolonged severe drought, climate extremes and aridification. Reuse of water for the environment, such as the Conservation Effluent Pool, can multiply benefits and sustain year-round river flows. Advanced water purification for potable reuse

is making local and statewide movements forward. As mining impacts the water supply, EPAC may discuss related technologies for water efficiency and mitigation for communities vulnerable to groundwater overdraft and subsidence. Resilience of infrastructure is an important component to protecting the region's limited water supply and distribution. This includes evaporation from the CAP channel, recharge basins, and mining, and municipal leak detection technologies can be explored. EPAC and local partners have explored both accomplishments and found additional funding opportunities to address key issues identified in the Lower Santa Cruz River Basin Study, including the disconnect between groundwater withdrawal and recharge locations that cause physical supply risks for people and the environment, such as the SCWC collaborative drought responses grant and Oro Valley's Northwest Recharge and Recovery Delivery System. Further Basin Study strategies included pursuing subregional public wastewater treatment and regional-scale stormwater capture and could be supported by an update to PAG's 208 positions.

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation – Changing weather patterns including extreme heat, drought and increased storm intensity continually impact the environment, infrastructure and economy of the greater Tucson region.

Resources, regulation updates, changing funding requirements, and methods for climate variability planning will be shared at EPAC meetings including adaptation measures that equitably address interconnected public health and welfare issues, such as extreme heat, wildfires, flooding, and additional priorities, through coordinated regional actions. Jurisdictional collaboration on these efforts will be critical to reduce greenhouse gas emissions most effectively from both mobile and stationary sources as well as to prepare for more extreme weather conditions through mitigation and adaptation.

PAG's *2016 Resolution for Regional Resilience to Climate and Weather Variability* continues to guide regional efforts related to climate and weather variability. Several actions were taken in 2023 that will help the region implement strategies to address climate-related risks including the approved City of Tucson's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (Tucson Resilient Together). EPAC was presented with information about Pima County's \$1 million Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) award to create a regional climate action plan, and PAG shared the completed update to PAG's biennial greenhouse gas emissions inventory. Data-driven studies and planning efforts are underway to inform regional partners on reducing carbon emissions from the transportation system. Regionally impactful mitigation measures would include increasing renewable energy sources and transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, encouraging and protecting alternate modes of travel, and improving electric vehicle infrastructure.

Data-driven cross-sector strategies should be implemented quickly if we are to avoid reaching a critical threshold, with goals to strengthen the region's clean energy economy, enhance the necessary workforce training opportunities, and address environmental, safety and health impacts that are most often felt by disadvantaged communities. Incentives for landlords to invest in renewable energy and conservation measures to make resilience benefits more equitable can be encouraged and may be impactful. Coordinated regional collaboration on these efforts also will be essential to efficiently use, increase and effectively utilize financial resources such as those that were accomplished through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for the greatest benefit to community resilience.