Pima Association of Governments

Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) Meeting

At or after 9:30 a.m., Thursday, December 3, 2026

Virtual Meeting

Public Access to Meeting Audio/Presentation: https://www.youtube.com/live/MTfCixg7hxk

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Pursuant to A.R.S. 38-431.02, 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.

In compliance with open meeting laws, PAG-RTA meeting agendas requiring public notice are posted at the official address referenced above and are available for public review during official PAG/RTA business hours, excluding weekends and legal holidays.

***SPECIAL NOTICE**: Members of the EPAC may 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 link above. EPAC 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 24 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 Management Committee and 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.

PAG is committed to maintaining high standards of conduct and prohibits harassment and retaliation against all employees pursuant to Pima Association of Governments' 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/RTA policies, or state laws.

PAG's Rules of Conduct require committee members to observe high standards of conduct and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. Committee members are prohibited from interfering with the administrative functions of the organization and must comply with the open meeting law and all other applicable laws, regulations and policies.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Introductions

2. In-kind Form

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

This is an information item.

3. Approval of EPAC September 3, 2026, Meeting Summary

Action: Approval of the Meeting Summary.

4. Tucson Electric Power 2026 Integrated Resource Plan

A representative from TEP will present an update on the new 2026 IRP.

This is an information item.

5. PAG 2026 Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Results

A representative from PAG will present an overview of the results from PAG's 2026 Bicycle and Pedestrian count conducted in October.

This is an information item.

6. PAG 208 Program Update

A representative from PAG will present an update of the 208 program activities.

This is an information item.

7. 2027 Top Environmental Issues List

The committee will discuss the proposed draft Top Environmental Issues List for 2027 for consideration of approval and dissemination to the Management Committee and Regional Council.

Action: Approval of Top Environmental Issues List for 2027 and distribution to PAG Management Committee, Regional Council and Executive Director.

8. Announcements and Request for Future Agenda Items

Committee members will be given the opportunity to share announcements from their organizations that are relevant to the business of the committee. PAG staff may share updates relevant to the business of the committee.

Members of the committee may request agenda topics to be considered for discussion at a future meeting.

****Pursuant to Arizona open meeting laws, the committee cannot discuss or take action today on any matters raised under this agenda item. Under this agenda item, committee members are also prohibited from returning to other agenda items which have been previously discussed and concluded earlier in this meeting.*

9. 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.

Pima Association of Governments

Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) Meeting Summary

Summary of 9:30 a.m., Thursday, September 3, 2026, Meeting

Full Video Recording (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/live/J2YY-KUZ6fU

ATTENDEES

Voting Members

Adrianna Castro, The Chamber of Southern Arizona
Alexander Ball, Town of Oro Valley Citizen Representative
Andrew Agnew, City of Tucson Citizen Rep.
Chad Lapora, City of Tucson
Christina McVie, Tucson Bird Alliance
David McAllister Romo, Pima County Citizen Representative
Galo Galovale, Town of Sahuarita
Howard Myers, SAHBA
Jared Suydam, Pima County
Josué Licea, City of South Tucson
Kimberly Baeza, Pima County
Luke Cole, Sonoran Institute
Lyn Loveless, League of Women Voters
Michael Garcia, Town of Oro Valley
Mike Ortiz, Town of Oro Valley
Natalie Shepp, Pima County
Nicole Gillette, City of Tucson
Paula Bluemer, Town of Marana

Non-Voting Members

Katie Predick, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
Janice Hughes, Pima County

Presenters

Kris Gade, Pima County
Jenny Neeley, Pima County

Staff Lead

Dustin Fitzpatrick, Environmental Planning Administrator

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was conducted in a hybrid format and called to order at 9:31 a.m. by vice-chair, Kimberly Baeza.

2. In-kind Form

PAG Environmental Planning Administrator Dustin Fitzpatrick informed participants of the in-kind form, and members were asked to confirm their estimated in-kind time for the meeting.

3. Approval of EPAC May 7, 2026, Meeting Summary

Action: A motion to approve the May 7, 2026, meeting summary was made by Lyn Loveless, League of Woman Voters, and was seconded by Paula Bluemer, Town of Marana. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Colorado River allocations and impacts to the Central Arizona Project (CAP)

Video Timestamp: 7:51

After a brief introduction, Linsday Capito, Central Arizona Project Planning Analyst, provided the members with a review of the Colorado River allocations and impacts to the Central Arizona Project (CAP), which included an overall review of the allocation process, restrictions, and projections.

Members reviewed a variety of data and graphs, including maps of service areas, supply reports, and unregulated inflow historical and projected levels. Additionally, members were informed of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decisions from the Bureau of Reclamation. This included its 10-year decision framework, storage and delivery framework, and any other additional activities.

Kimberly Baeza inquired on the possible impacts and implications of the San Diego water exchange agreement. Ms. Capito informed the members that the San Diego water exchange agreement has not been fully executed and is current in a developmental draft phase. Additionally, Ms. Baeza inquired about the reduction percentages comparison between California and Arizona. Ms. Capito informed the members that Arizona does receive a larger percentage of reductions.

Ms. Baeza inquired about Mexico's involvement in the Colorado river allocations. Ms. Capito informed the members that any discussion with Mexico is through the federal government.

Lyn Loveless inquired how the Nevada lawsuit might impact the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decisions. Ms. Capito informed the members that any impact has yet to be determined.

The presentation can be found HERE.

This was an information only item.

5. Pima County Santa Cruz River Wildlife Ramp

Video Timestamp: 35:56

After a brief introduction, Matthew Lutheran, Pima County Professional Landscape Architect and ISA Certifier, provided the members with a review of the Pima County Santa

Cruz River Wildlife Ramp, which included an overall review of the project's purpose, design, and implementation.

Members were informed of the project's location significance, including wildlife sight counts and anticipated impact. Additionally, members reviewed the project's design process, including project stakeholder engagement and involvement and landscape and wildlife considerations. Members were also informed of the project's construction process, which included milestone photographs and impact as of current.

Jared Suydam inquired about the survey process for the project in terms of nearby cultural sites. Mr. Lutheran informed members that the project did not include any groundbreaking or excavation and that there was collaboration with cultural resource teams.

Lyn Loveless inquired about the ground disturbance and procedures used to mitigate stinknet. Mr. Lutheran informed the members that any stinknet that was identified was removed and equipment cleaning stations were enforced.

The presentation can be found HERE.

This was an information only item.

6. Santa Cruz River Refuge

Video Timestamp: 1:09:36

After a brief introduction, Luke Cole, Sonoran Institute Santa Cruz River Program Director, provided the members with an update of the National Wildlife Refuge efforts, resolutions, and proclamations in across southern Arizona cities and counties.

Additionally, David Certain, consultant for Sonoran Institute, provided the members with a review of the Santa Cruz River Refuge plan, including an overall review of the plan's administrative process, land acquisition, and future efforts.

Members reviewed the overall Santa Cruz River refuge boundaries, including proposed acquisitions and urban acquisitions. Additionally, members were informed of key characteristics and identifiers for proposed land acquisition, including wildlife statistics, ecosystems, and conservation easements.

Kimberly Baeza inquired about the significance of the proposed land acquisition and its impact on the community. Mr. Cole informed the members that land acquisition for the boundary would improve the overall conservation efforts for the community.

DRAFT

The presentation can be found HERE.

This was an information only item.

7. Announcements and Request for Future Agenda Items

The following announcements were made:

- Clean up efforts on Roger Road are underway and expected to be completed by October.
- The annual Dragonfly festival has begun.
- December 12 marks the 25th anniversary of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and the tenth anniversary of the Multispecies Conservation Plan.
- The Watershed Planning Subcommittee is scheduled for October 1.
- The PAG 208 Plan can be updated administratively as needed.
- The EPAC Committee Bylaws are currently in review with the PAG Regional Council.
- The Greenhouse Gas Emissions report will be delayed until 2027.
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality is currently working on the Rillito Nonattainment Area PM10 SIP update.
- The 2027 Top Environmental Issues list draft will be distributed for review and be on the agenda at the December EPAC meeting

Members requested the following items:

- EPAC committee bylaws review updates
- Environmental impact of data centers

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

8. Adjournment

Action: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Christina McVie, Tucson Bird Alliance, and was seconded by Luke Cole, Sonoran Institute. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EPAC)
Top Environmental Issues List 2027

Pima Association of Governments (PAG) compiles the Top Environmental Issues List in oordination with its Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) and subcommittees.

This list of top issues can be used to develop EPAC and its subcommittee meeting agendas for 2027. 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 practices 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.

EPAC encourages the integration of affordable and innovative solutions, predictable regulatory frameworks, and collaborative engagement among diverse members and 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.

ISSUE 1: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Many underserved and overburdened communities have suffered disproportionately from environmental degradation. Federal regulations have varied in the application of requirements for programs. Topics addressing the issue of environmental justice include:

- Lessons and resources to ensure compliance with environmental regulations, including environmental justice, such as data analytics and engagement methods
- Health impacts and health outcomes for communities affected by environmental degradation
- Efforts to engage with underserved and overburdened communities
- Data to aid decision making, such as tracking areas with the highest densities of underserved and overburdened populations

ISSUE 2: 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. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) updates the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the Rillito area with PAG's assistance. As the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), PAG is responsible for evaluating and demonstrating air quality transportation conformity for transportation programs and plans and amendments (Transportation Improvement Program and Regional Mobility and Accessibility Plan).

Prioritizing regional coordination to reduce air pollution and help ensure continued attainment of the national ozone air quality standard is paramount for the sustained health of our region. Topics addressing the issue of clean air include:

- Rillito area SIP planning and conformity analysis
- Ozone research of formation and precursor pollutants (oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds), mitigation strategies, transport and wildfires, status of federal regulations/standards

- Increasing use of alternative modes of transportation to single occupancy vehicles, including active transportation and transit
- Advancing travel reduction through transit, active transportation, ridesharing, telework, and flexible work schedules
- Alternative energy and fuel in transportation, prioritizing overall air pollutant reduction benefits of electrification
- Links between travel modes, air pollution, and climate change
- Methods to improve fuel economy and reduce transportation air pollutants
- Improved geographic datasets of alternative fuel and active mode infrastructure assets, needs, and gaps
- Leveraging investments, opportunities, and available data to inform regional priorities for air quality improvement
- Regional haze and particulate matter mitigation including dust control measures for construction activity, disturbed land, and transportation sources
- Regional greenhouse gas inventory

Clean Water – Under Section 208 of the Clean Water Act, PAG is the Designated Planning Agency (DPA) for Pima County, excluding Native American lands, and implements the *PAG Areawide Water Quality Management Plan (208 Plan)*. The 208 Plan primarily focuses on maintaining consistency for water reclamation facilities, but also addresses other potential pollutant sources, including solid waste disposal and urban stormwater runoff.

Regional watershed planning concerns both the quality and quantity of water resources and addresses contamination and scarcity. Topics addressing the issue of clean water include:

- Wastewater reclamation
- Stormwater pollution prevention and mitigation
- Industrial waste disposal and mitigation
- Impacts and remediation of groundwater contaminants
- Surface water quality impairments
- Aging septic systems
- Regional collaboration on water quality issues that cross watersheds and aquifers
- Impacts of historic landfills on water quality
- Impacts of and potential opportunities for multi-benefit in-channel recharge projects, such as the use of high-quality treated effluent to return flows to rivers and streams, which creates riparian habitat and restores access to flowing waterways while also cost-effectively improving water table levels
- Funding for the study, monitoring, control, and cleanup of emerging contaminants
- Tracking strategies and technologies to treat, mitigate and incentivize alternatives to PFAS and other emerging contaminants
- Regional coordination to support implementation of National Primary Drinking Water Regulations and prepare for other alternative methods to limit regulated contaminants in water supplies, wastewater, and discharges
- Health impacts of Superfund sites

Solid Waste Reduction – Regionally coordinated solid waste planning efforts help to improve critical local needs. Regional inventories, discussion and solutions are integral to the management of solid waste regionwide. Topics addressing solid waste challenges and solutions include:

- Efficiently using resources

- Reduction and reuse of materials that would otherwise be discarded into landfills
- Finding opportunities for collaboration between diverse entities for solid waste reduction
- Sustaining resiliency of recycling infrastructure
- Recycling economies
- Exploring effective models of reuse, recycling, and related contamination mitigation
- Efforts to eliminate contaminated plastics from landfills with public/private partnerships
- Robust glass recycling for reuse as building materials
- Development of anaerobic digestion facilities of food waste to support cleaner air
- Reducing landfill costs and water quality impacts
- Continued collaboration to monitor litter sources, test concepts of litter capture in washes, and pilot recycling programs
- Utilizing landfill generated methane as a source of renewable biogas

Stewardship and Enhancement – With changes to the definition of "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS), new chemicals entering the market, worsening drought both locally and on the Colorado River, increasing wildfire intensity, frequency and size, and shifts in seasonal weather patterns posing environmental and livability concerns and creating management challenges for decision makers, it is important to address environmental stewardship and enhancement in an integrated and holistic manner. Topics addressing stewardship and enhancement include:

- Impact of uncontrolled pollutant discharges on water supplies
- Water uses and riparian land protection
- Upland, river and floodplain management efforts aiming to bring environmental, aquifer recharge, safety, watershed health and economic enhancements to the region
- Impacts of wildfires on air quality, erosion, habitat, safety, water quality, recharge, and flooding
- Stakeholder coordination to pursue funding sources, such as federal grants, for invasive species removal and fire protection planning
- Management of invasive species, especially fire-prone species such as stinknet and buffelgrass
- Establishment and persistence of native species
- Ongoing risks to natural resources, urban infrastructure, and our cultural and environmental identity
- Riparian stewardship efforts for ephemeral, intermittent and perennial streams, including *Priority Waterbodies* in PAG's *208 Plan* and the state's *Outstanding Arizona Waters*, as supported by *PAG's 208 Plan* and *2017 Resolution Supporting our Heritage of Desert Waters*
- Effective regional strategies to protect priority waterbodies in the Tohono O'odham Nation
- Monitoring, preservation, and restoration plans to address the impacts of land use changes to water quality and other natural resources
- Interagency collaboration to protect transportation infrastructure and travel safety
- Long-term impacts of sustained or increased noise and light pollution on the health and well-being of humans, wildlife, and quality of life
- Practical and balanced solutions for the abatement of noise and light pollution
- Design, and appropriate use of technology to limit unnecessary harm to the environment

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. Topics addressing wildlife connectivity include:

- Supporting wildlife-sensitive design in transportation development processes, including roadways and interstates
- Incorporating connectivity into new projects and implementing wildlife-friendly designs, such as wildlife crossings and wildlife fencing
- Inventorying data related to regional wildlife movement, mortality, and habitat fragmentation

ISSUE 3: REGIONAL RESILIENCY

Resilient Infrastructure – EPAC addresses climate adaptation concerns for our regional landscape and investments by engaging 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. PAG's *2016 Resolution for Regional Resilience to Climate and Weather Variability* encourages proactive regional collaboration on climate resilience activities. Topics addressing resilient infrastructure include:

- Expanding green stormwater infrastructure to manage surface drainage, reduce flood nuisance and stormwater pollutants, increase bicycle and pedestrian safety along roads, improve air quality and wildlife linkages, offset consumptive water use, increase access to green space, and support tree shade to reduce heat
- Evaluating Sonoran Corridor (State Route 410) proposal
- Mapping and tracking of resiliency planning elements such as cooling centers, urban heat issues, park access, flooding concerns, social vulnerabilities, and tree canopy data
- Exploring heat management strategies that assist with heat preparedness, mitigation, warnings and responses
- Evaluating social, health, and environmental benefits of multimodal solutions, electric vehicle infrastructure, and broadband infrastructure
- Exploring uses of Ecopia infrastructure and land cover GIS data to advance regional resiliency planning efforts

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

- Evaluating environmentally friendly modes of transportation and street design that enhance travel and tourism, livability, safety, equity, recreation and business attraction while reducing pollution and dangerous and costly human and wildlife collisions with traffic
- Exploring studies on the economic and social value of watchable wildlife and outdoor recreation opportunities such as birding, bike-friendly communities, open space and trails, and healthy waterways
- Expanding accountable public/private partnerships with local businesses, educators and additional diverse stakeholders to encourage tourism, strategic talent alignment and business opportunities
- Integrating restoration efforts with support of the local economy while balancing benefits of ecotourism with impacts to wildlife and environmentally sensitive areas
- Considering strategies to balance the need for affordable housing with environmental and risk management needs
- Considering the environmental impacts of large-scale economic development projects, such as data centers

Water Reliability – Potential for worsening future water shortages on the Colorado River, current extreme to exceptional local long-term drought conditions, potential for recurring local short-term drought conditions, and the high probability of increased variability for precipitation identified in the Lower Santa Cruz River Basin Study impact water reliability within the Tucson region. Topics addressing water reliability include:

- Tracking shortage conditions on the Colorado River and potential impacts to CAP allocations
- Discussing water reclamation and reuse projects and strategies
- Collaborating with Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative partners and water managers to continue to develop and implement responses to the drought
- Evaluating long-term planning for water use and delivery efficiency, infrastructure investments, and incentives while integrating water quality, street runoff, and designated environmental water uses into planning efforts
- Collaborating efforts between water providers, wastewater reclamation departments, industry including mining operations, agriculture, indigenous communities, and academia
- Addressing 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, and pursuing subregional public wastewater treatment and regional-scale stormwater capture

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. Topics addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation include:

- Evaluating findings and recommendations of the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality's Priority Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan
- Sharing resources, regulation updates, changing funding requirements, and methods for climate variability planning, including jurisdictional climate plans
- Coordinating adaptation measures that equitably address interconnected public health and welfare issues, such as extreme heat, wildfires, flooding, and additional priorities