



Forest Legacy Project

San Pedro River Ecosystem, Cascabel (Cochise County), Arizona

FUNDING HISTORY

<i>Forest Legacy Program FY 2010 Funding</i>	\$ 900,000
<i>FY 2010 Non-Federal Cost Share</i>	\$ 420,000
<i>FY 2010 Project Costs</i>	\$ 1,320,000
<i>FY 2010 Project Acres</i>	694
<i>Forest Legacy Funding to Date</i>	\$ 0
<i>Total Project Costs</i>	\$ 1,320,000
<i>Total Project Acres</i>	694



<i>Tract Name</i>	<i>Size (acres)</i>	<i>Tract Cost</i>	<i>FLP Funding</i>	<i>Non-Fed Cost Share</i>	<i>Status</i>
Cascabel 1	40	\$ 71,500	\$ 48,750	\$ 22,750	President's Request 2010
Cascabel 2	480	\$ 935,000	\$ 637,500	\$ 297,500	President's Request 2010
Cascabel 3	51	\$ 93,500	\$ 63,750	\$ 29,750	President's Request 2010
Cascabel 4	75	\$ 137,500	\$ 93,750	\$ 43,750	President's Request 2010
Cascabel 5	48	\$ 82,500	\$ 56,250	\$ 26,250	President's Request 2010
Total	694	\$ 1,320,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 420,000	

General Description – The San Pedro River Ecosystem Forest Legacy project will permanently protect 694 acres of riparian forest along the San Pedro River through conservation easements. The importance of the San Pedro River to wildlife and people is recognized through World Heritage Natural Area, Globally Important Bird Area and National Conservation Area designations. Its riparian forests support nearly half of all US bird species and one of the most diverse faunas in North America, including federally-listed species. Riparian forest is one of the most rare and important forest types in the West. The Arizona Assessment of Need identifies it as the highest protection priority due to the critical importance for wildlife and extreme threat of conversion (90% has been lost or degraded since statehood). This project contributes to the success of a larger landscape-level collaborative effort that has protected over 65,000 acres of riparian forest in the San Pedro River Watershed.

PROJECT FEATURES

Important:

- A. The Assessment of Need for the Arizona Forest Legacy Program identifies riparian forest as the highest priority forest type needing protection in the state (90% of Arizona's wildlife depends on riparian forest during some point in their life cycle).
- B. Products of riparian forests include water, wildlife habitat, specialty lumber and charcoal. Management is aimed at protecting water supplies and wildlife habitat and maintaining small woodlots which supply a niche market for specialty products.
- C. The proposed project will protect approximately 694 acres of valuable riparian forest along the San Pedro River near Cascabel.
- D. The San Pedro River is a ribbon of life, an oasis in the desert. The 140-mile river is one of the longest undammed, free-flowing rivers in the southwestern United States. Its importance to wildlife and people is widely recognized.
- E. The United Nations World Heritage Program has designated this desert oasis as a World Heritage Natural Area.
- F. The National Audubon Society has recognized the San Pedro River as a Globally Important Bird Area.
- G. A 40-mile stretch of the San Pedro has been congressionally designated as a Riparian National Conservation Area (RNCA).
- H. According to Carothers, et al. (1974) mesquite bosque riparian forest, when found in a mosaic with cottonwood-willow riparian forest such as occurs along the San Pedro River, supports the highest breeding bird density of any habitat in the US.
- I. The San Pedro River supports nearly half of all bird species found in the United States, including 100 resident breeding species and 250 species that use the river as a migratory corridor (BLM San Pedro RNCA website).
- J. Several federally-protected and sensitive bird species, including southwestern willow flycatcher (Endangered), yellow-billed cuckoo (Candidate), and Bell's vireo (USFWS Species of Conservation Concern) nest in riparian forest along the river.
- K. The San Pedro River Valley has one of the most diverse vertebrate faunas found anywhere in North America, with 14 fish, 41 reptiles and amphibians, and 84 mammal species (BLM San Pedro RNCA website).



San Pedro River Riparian Forest



Mesquite Bosque Riparian Forest in Winter



Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Endangered)

- L. Mammals include the elusive jaguar, mountain lion, bobcat, coati mundi, foxes, bears, bats (including the Endangered lesser long-nosed bat), mule deer, javelina, bighorn sheep, and keystone aquatic species such as beaver.
- M. Conservation work in the San Pedro River basin has contributed to the return of the magnificent jaguar, believed to have been extirpated from the southwestern United States in the 1990s (TNC & Northern Jaguar Project web pages).
- N. Federally-protected and sensitive aquatic species that depend on the river corridor include Gila chub (Endangered fish species), long-fin dace (USFWS fish Species of Conservation Concern: SCC) and lowland leopard frog (USFWS SCC).
- O. The San Pedro River is also extremely important for people. The watershed currently supplies water to US Army Fort Huachuca and the growing communities of Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Benson, San Manuel, Mammoth and Winkelman.
- P. The San Pedro River Valley was the historical crossroads of the Southwest. The first Europeans traveled north from Mexico via the San Pedro River corridor. The river valley was the focal area of the Apache wars, as well as the gold rush at Tombstone.
- Q. Archaeological sites in the river valley represent the remains of human occupation from 13,000 years ago (BLM San Pedro RNCA website). The Lehner Mammoth-Kill Site provides the first conclusive evidence of human hunting of mammoths in North America.
- R. Prehistoric cultures occupying the San Pedro River Valley included the Clovis Culture (9,000–6,000 BC), Archaic People (6,000 BC – AD 1), Mogollon, Hohokam and northern Mexico cultures (AD 1–1500).

Threatened:

- A. The owners of the largest tract (480 acres) must sell on a short time-frame because they are moving their ranch to the Midwest. The Nature Conservancy must acquire the tract in advance of Forest Legacy Program funding to prevent a sale to developers.
- B. The owners of the other Cascabel tracts are concerned by development pressure along the San Pedro River and wish to protect their properties' conservation values for future generations but cannot afford to do so without Forest Legacy Program funding.
- C. There currently is no zoning or other mechanism that would protect the Cascabel tracts if this project is not funded by the Forest Legacy Program.
- D. Subdivision of up to 225 building lots along the river would be prevented by protection of the Cascabel tracts through the Forest Legacy Program.
- E. Approximately 90% of the riparian forest habitat that existed in Arizona at statehood has been lost or extremely degraded (Arizona Riparian Council). Further loss is imminent due to increasing

development pressure and planned water withdrawals.

- F. Arizona is one of the fastest growing states in the country, with a 40% increase from 1990 to 2000. Southeast Arizona is one of the fastest growing regions, with scenic properties such as those located along the San Pedro River especially threatened.
- G. Private lands in the watershed, which were once large ranches, have been extensively subdivided into small 40-acre ranchettes. Because there are few large tracts left, conservation efforts are akin to “putting Humpty–Dumpty back together again”.
- H. The threat of real estate development is imminent. A developer recently acquired a 500-acre property immediately adjacent to the Cascabel 2 tract and subdivided it into smaller parcels for resale as rural recreational properties.
- I. The nearby 1,100-acre White House Ranch was also recently subdivided into smaller ranchettes for resale and development.

Strategic:

- A. This project is a major contribution to the success of a large, landscape-level conservation effort for the San Pedro River Watershed. This collaborative effort has protected over 65,000 acres of riparian forest and restored hundreds more.
- B. The San Pedro River Ecosystem Project is a network of private, state and federal lands which encompass a critical wildlife corridor extending along the San Pedro River and across the river valley from the Catalina Mountains to the Galiuro Mountains.
- C. The Coronado National Forest identified loss of connectivity between isolated Forest units on these mountain ranges as one of the highest threats in the current planning process. This project addresses the goal of maintaining habitat connectivity.
- D. This project is within the current focal area of the San Pedro River Ecosystem Project. The Cascabel focal area includes 3,500 acres of private lands with riparian forest in a narrow band along the river corridor, connecting to protected areas.
- E. The Nature Conservancy is in continuing dialogue with landowners interested in protecting the final key properties in the Cascabel focal area.
- F. Protection of the Cascabel tracts in this project will contribute to protection of the water supply for the greater San Pedro River ecosystem by limiting demand for water needed to support development.
- G. Conservation easements which were placed on the adjacent Three Links Farm limit development in the river corridor and have reduced groundwater pumping by 90%. This has resulted in increased surface flow to the river.
- H. Restoration on Three Links Farm and other areas provided conditions suitable for southwestern willow flycatcher nesting in two years. Restoration could increase riparian forest on several tracts to create additional habitat for this Endangered bird.
- I. The entities listed in the following bullets recognize the strategic value of this project. These partners are making the following contributions to the larger landscape-level conservation effort for the San Pedro River Watershed:
- J. The Coronado National Forest manages Forest units on each side of the San Pedro basin for multiple-use resource values, wildlife habitat and public recreational opportunities.

- K. The Bureau of Land Management oversees the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (40-mile stretch of river, 56,000 acres) and in this project area has purchased and manages more than 2,600 acres of important conservation lands.
- L. The Bureau of Reclamation has invested more than 10 million dollars in land acquisition and management along the San Pedro to ensure its riparian forest resources are sustained.
- M. The Department of Defense has provided substantial funding for conservation easements to protect the San Pedro River Watershed and buffer Fort Huachuca from development.
- N. The US Geological Survey has conducted numerous hydrological and biological research projects to provide partners with the science needed to achieve conservation objectives.
- O. The US Fish and Wildlife Service manages federally listed wildlife populations and provides assistance to other partners in achieving conservation objectives.
- P. The Arizona Game and Fish Department manages native wildlife populations and provides public recreational opportunities. AGFD acquires and protects lands and waters to achieve fish and wildlife conservation objectives using the Arizona Heritage Fund.
- Q. The Nature Conservancy acquires ecologically important lands and waters, works with private landowners to achieve conservation objectives, and manages key nature preserves. The Conservancy has made substantial investments in protecting the San Pedro.
- R. The Salt River Project is a municipal water provider for the Phoenix metropolitan area. SRP has acquired and manages mitigation properties along the San Pedro River for Endangered southwestern willow flycatcher habitat.
- S. The Saguaro Juniper Corporation and the Cascabel Hermitage Association are local private conservation organizations that hold over 11,500 acres in the watershed and are working to protect other privately-owned lands through conservation easements.
- T. The Center for Desert Archaeology is collaborating with The Nature Conservancy to overlay cultural resource data with biodiversity data in order to identify high priority sites for action in the San Pedro River Watershed.
- U. Cochise County, Pima County, City of Sierra Vista, Town of Cascabel and Arizona's Congressional delegation support protecting the entire San Pedro River through collaborative planning.
- V. Additionally, the proposed project is supported by the Arizona State Forestry Division and the Southwest Region of the USDA Forest Service (see letters of support).

Ready:

- A. All landowners are willing to sell conservation easements in order to protect conservation values on their property for future generations and have an interest in participating in the Forest Legacy Program.
- B. A 32% match for the Forest Legacy funding will be provided by partnering landowners and The Nature Conservancy. The Conservancy will provide funding as well as staff time for outreach and transactional assistance.
- C. Draft conservation easements have been prepared and agreed upon for two tracts.
- D. An option for purchase of conservation easement has been signed for one tract.

- E. A recent appraisal has been completed for a neighboring property that provides confidence in the project cost estimate.
- F. Environmental Hazards Assessments will be conducted by The Nature Conservancy for all tracts.
- G. Much of the content of the Forest Stewardship Plans for the individual tracts is being grafted from the existing San Pedro Ecosystem Plan.
- H. The Nature Conservancy began purchasing property on the San Pedro River in 1987. To date, the Conservancy has negotiated and successfully completed numerous transactions contributing more than 10,000 acres to protected lands within the watershed.
- Supporting parties include: Arizona Game & Fish Department, Arizona Riparian Council, Arizona State Division of Forestry, Arizona's Congressional Delegation, Cascabel Hermitage Association, Center for Desert Archaeology, City of Sierra Vista, Cochise County, Coronado National Forest, National Audubon Society, Pima County, Saguaro Juniper Corporation, The Nature Conservancy, The Salt River Project, Town of Cascabel, US Bureau of Land Management, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Department of Defense, US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey and USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region

For more information on the Forest Legacy Program, contact:

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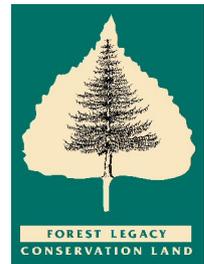
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San Pedro River Ecosystem Project, AZ Cascabel Focal Area FY2010 Forest Legacy Project

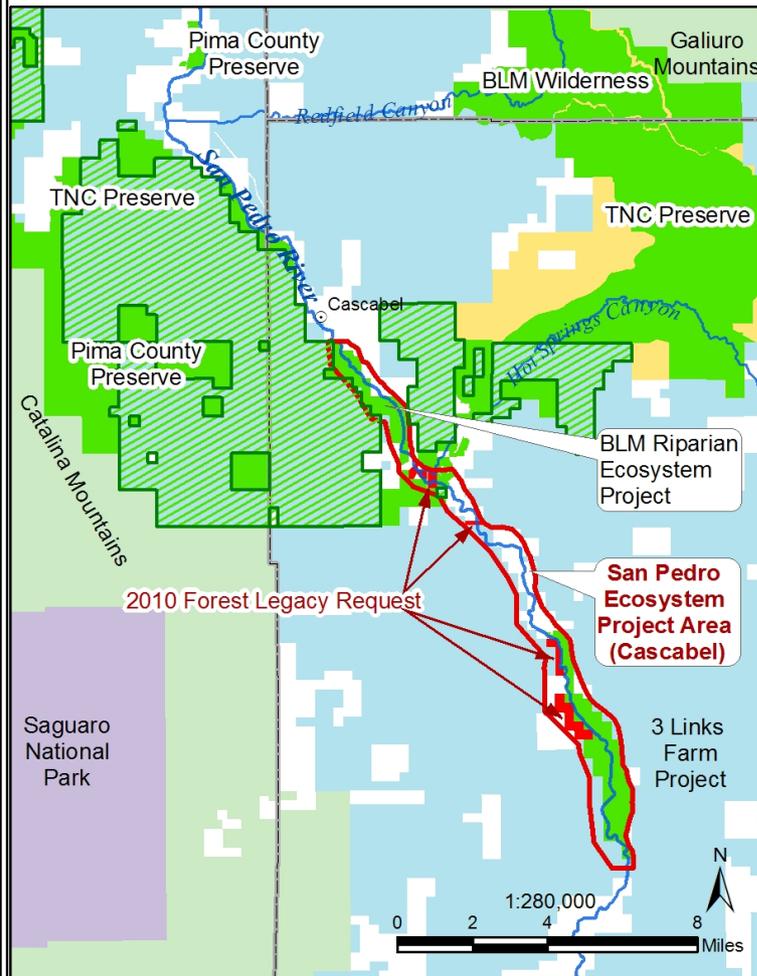
 2010 Forest Legacy Request

Conservation Management

-  Protected Areas
-  Managed Allotments

Surface Management

-  BLM
-  USFS
-  National Park
-  Private
-  State Trust



BLM Riparian Ecosystem Project

San Pedro Ecosystem Project Area (Cascabel)

Conservation Partners in the Cascabel Area:
 Cascabel Heritage Association
 Pima County
 Saguaro Juniper
 The Nature Conservancy
 US Bureau of Land Management
 US Bureau of Reclamation

Map Created by: D Imig, TNC, AZ
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