

Tucson Mountains ASSOCIATION SINCE 1934



March 2015

E-mail: TMA@TucsonMountainsAssoc.org

2015 Spring Fundraiser *Historic Rancho Las Lomas Walking Tour*



**Saturday, April 4th 2015
1-4pm**

4500 W. Speedway, Tucson AZ 85745

The Tucson Mountains Association invites you to come and enjoy a walking tour of the historic Las Lomas Ranch. Las Lomas was designed and built by Margaret Fulton Spencer, one of the first female architects in the United States. This community of homes and casitas was built of locally quarried stone in the 1930's and 1940's. Spencer was a dear friend to Frank Lloyd Wright, who visited the site and helped Spencer plan its development. His influences abound.

Don't miss the opportunity to visit this Tucson treasure and enjoy some real southwest hospitality with our Board of Directors!

Tickets are \$15.00
in advance
\$20.00 on the day
of the event
For advance tickets
contact: Debbie Hicks,
Treasurer 743-3906
debhicks@mindspring.com



Spring Newsletter

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From the President: Peter Chesson

The Tucson Mountains are a special place. We have a beautiful wilderness with an abundance of nature to charm and inspire us, every day. But we cannot take it for granted. On its eastern flanks, development is hemming it in, taking away the beautiful rolling country that connects it to the Santa Cruz River and beyond. Places that become isolated lose species. Small populations of animals and plants in isolated areas lose genetic diversity, weaken and decline. Isolation stops animals moving with the seasons to new localities, and gives them limited opportunities as the climate changes. Plants too must move, from generation to generation, through dispersal of their seeds.

Pima County has a remarkable plan, the Sonora Desert Conservation Plan, which recognizes the need for all the natural areas in the Tucson basin to remain connected biologically. In particular, it details how on the north eastern side of the Tucson Mountains, broad provision should be made for them to be connected by corridors of minimally disturbed landscapes to the Tortalita Mountains. But how well are we following this plan? Our best hope is for strategically located permanent reserves, zoning that at the minimum is SR with no more than 3 homes per ten acres, and all development kept away from critical areas. A quick look on Google Earth shows hopes for this plan fading.

Your Board has been working hard with other conservation groups to restrict upzoning, and to promote purchase of open space strategically located. We were wonderfully successful with the Sweetwater Preserve, which now protects a swath of land in the foothills of the Tucson Mountains down to the lower reaches of the Sweetwater Wash connecting to a short, as yet undeveloped area, down to the Santa Cruz River. Land in and near major washes is some of the most valuable land for wildlife corridors. Flood risk and existing County ordinances naturally restrict development, but ideally broad and diverse areas along washes should be retained. Our current and recent initiatives to protect these areas are discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. But these initiatives will be of limited value if the Santa Cruz River itself cannot serve as a corridor. Much of the land along the Santa Cruz River is in poor shape. It has been degraded from various activities, including sand mining and quarrying, but much of it also is County land. Let's hope that the County sees fit, with community support, to restore this land over the years ahead so that it becomes a wonderful natural park, a wildlife corridor that provides a biological connection to the north to the undeveloped land connecting across to the Tortalita Mountains, and to the east along the Rillito River and the Canada Del Oro Wash to the Catalina Mountains. With this newsletter, we announce the River Corridors Initiative to promote this vision. Watch this newsletter and the TMA website for developments.

WEST SIDE CELL TOWER by Ed Verberg

Over the last few months, neighbors, and representatives from TMA and the Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association participated in meetings conducted by a consulting firm on behalf of Verizon at the Camino de Oeste fire station. Verizon Wireless will hold it's third and final neighborhood meeting at Tucson NorthWest Fire Station #35 on Monday, February, 23rd, 2015 at 5 pm to discuss the proposed application for the new cell tower, as-well-as final designs and color options decisions. The fire station staff support the installation of a cell tower to help prevent lost calls for emergency purposes. Options were presented for consideration, including a water tower (antenna contained within the water tank portion) and a palm tree. There was discussion at these meetings of the tradeoff between cell service and the scenic impact of these towers. TMA conducted a poll and we want to thank all who responded! The majority of neighbors preferred a water tower at this particular location. The final tally of the poll was 14 votes for Palm design, and 23 for water tower design and two votes for no cell tower. The figure of the palm was misleading in that showed the design smaller; the visual profiles of both designs are the same size. The wireless service providers will want to install more Cell Towers in the near future, so please contact the TMA board of Directors if you hear of one being planned near you so we can get information out early to members and give TMA a voice at the meetings.

Ina/ Silverbell Update:

TMA was contacted last year by concerned neighbors regarding a new proposed development just south of Ina on Silverbell. This property is located across an important wash leading from the Saguaro National Park to the Santa Cruz River. The proposed development would be a major impediment to wildlife movements. Unfortunately, in 2002, a rezoning allowed the original zoning of one home per 3.3 acres to be replaced by almost three homes per acre. Recently, the developer returned to the Marana Town Council asking for further intensification, which would have prevented nearly all animal and plant movement. TMA joined the neighbors and the Coalition in opposing the original plan. In response to these concerns, significant modifications were made. The final plan was then approved by the Marana Mayor and Council January 20th, 2015. You can see the proposed development in this map, and find the complete Plan at the Town of Marana website. Although the neighbors did not get all the concessions they requested, significant compromises were made, including better protection of the washes and wildlife corridors.



LAZY K UPDATE:

TMA joined the neighbors, the Saguaro National Park and the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection in successfully opposing an environmentally damaging development proposal for the Lazy K Bar Ranch. This ranch is on 138 acres of land located near the northern end of the Saguaro National Park. It is currently zoned as Resort Ranch by the City of Marana, but no longer functions as a ranch. There is still good habitat on the property, and stunning views of surrounding wild areas. It still permits wildlife to move through the area. This is especially important given its proximity to the Saguaro National Park. Unfortunately, there is dense development between this area and the Santa Cruz River, although some important washes remain clear enough for wildlife movements.

However, there is no block to the north, and so it is especially important that the Ranch not be more intensely developed, inhibit wildlife movements, and change the wild character of the area. Fortunately, at a recent Marana City Council Meeting the proposal for more intense development of the Ranch was denied.

Thank you to all who have recently renewed your membership!

Now is the time to Renew your membership \$ 30.00 (household) annual Fee, and invite your neighbors to join! Just print and Cut out this form, fill out and mail with a check to: TMA, PO Box 86117, Tucson, AZ

85754-6117

Name _____

Business Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

E-mail _____



Predator Masters Protests!

Many of you may have been part of, or noticed, the recent protests against the group called Predator Masters. This Utah based predator hunter's group held their annual conference (and "hunt") in Tucson at the International Wildlife Museum. There were about 150 protesters gathered to let them know that they are not welcome in Tucson and that we love our coyote, bobcat, coati mundi, and badgers. We are not opposed to responsible hunting, we are opposed to excessive hunting. The result of the protests in Tucson was that the County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution put forward by Richard Elias opposing any future hunts in Pima County. We can all thank Richard Elias for his leadership in support of wildlife. Richard.Elias@pima.gov There is now further movement towards sending this to the state level.

Sweetwater Preserve Trail Update:

The County recently sent out a letter and map, to neighbors living near the Sweetwater Preserve, describing the new trails completed to date, and those scheduled for completion in the fall of 2015. They have also begun a process of closing off old "social trails" with the intent of revegetating and allowing them to recover, thereby reducing the erosion in the Preserve, while also not doubling the amount of trails in the area. Another goal of the redesigned trails was to create a larger habitat for the wildlife to be able to travel and live in with less disruption, while still providing for multiple, non-motorized, recreational uses.

Call for new board members

We are always looking for people to join the TMA board. Naturally, it involves time and effort, but there are many rewards. You get to work with other people committed to working for our local environment, learn about the issues in detail, and derive satisfaction from the successes that we have. If you are interested in becoming a board member, or know of someone who would be a good board member, please get in touch with one of the current board members listed on the first page.