

# PINAL COUNTY TRAILS PLAN



MAY 2005

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Designated in 1871 by the Territorial Legislature, Pinal County includes some of Arizona's best agricultural land, scenic vistas of the Superstitions Mountains, unique riparian habitat along the Gila River, and five State Parks. With 5,370 square miles of lush Sonoran Desert, this rural County was historically home to farmers, ranchers, and miners. The legend of the Lost Dutchman gold mine, reputedly located somewhere in the Superstition Mountains, adds to the history and mystique of the County.

The rural nature of the county, however, is rapidly transitioning to another level of growth. Between 1990 and 2000, Pinal County grew at a rate of 54 percent, and according to the US Census Bureau QuickFacts, was estimated to have over 200,000 residents in 2003. As the county continues to grow, its environmental heritage is rapidly being altered by encroaching development and urbanization. This heritage includes nonrenewable resources such as extensive undisturbed natural areas, historic/cultural sites, and natural landmarks. These irreplaceable resources warrant preservation as smart growth accommodates development that is sensitive to the creation of healthy and vibrant communities. Environmental diversity should be maintained and enhanced through the preservation and conservation of critical habitats. Both the rivers and mountains are important topographical features in the county, not only because of the views they afford, their value as scenic vistas and backdrops, and the intrinsic value they hold for wildlife or plant habitat, but also for the economic benefits generated through recreational opportunities.

With 54 percent of the county under state and federal landownership, hunting, fishing, camping, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation are popular activities of residents and visitors and add significant revenue to the County. According to a study conducted in 2002 by the Arizona Hospitality Research and Resource Center School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Northern Arizona University entitled *The Economic Impact Of Arizona State Parks*, Pinal County received approximately \$13 million of total income from activities related to park visitation. Those same parks also generated over 450 job related opportunities. This economic impact analysis was a collaborative effort of the Arizona Departments of Commerce, Arizona State Parks, and the Arizona Office of Tourism to further the understanding of the impact and importance of State Parks to Arizona—and rural communities in particular.

The Arizona State Horsemen's Association sponsored a 2001 study that by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona—Tucson, that found that the horse industry in Arizona exceeds \$1 billion a year in sales and services. In Pinal County, the study found that on average 2.9 percent of households own horses and that each of those households own an average of 2.07 horses. These numbers equate to over \$26 million being spent annually in the county.

Another study, conducted by Arizona State Parks in partnership with Arizona State University (ASU) entitled *The Economic Importance of Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation*, estimated OHV expenditures in Pinal County totaled \$153 million in 2001. That number constitutes the revenue generated for trip-related costs, equipment, and vehicle expenditures. Hunting and fishing, under a similar report by ASU for that same year entitled *The Economic Importance of Hunting and Fishing*, brought in an additional \$23 million to the county. This number does not include the money that was spent on days scouting prior to the hunt. Any closure or limitation on access to public lands within the county would have a major impact on the local businesses that rely on the revenue associated with those activities.

The Transportation Element found in the *Pinal County Comprehensive Plan (Comprehensive Plan)* recognizes that trails need to be an integral part of the transportation system. Specified nonmotorized trail corridors that include bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian facilities should be incorporated as elements of the transportation system. Envisioned is a system that serves both alternative mode of travel and recreational needs by connecting residential areas with work, shopping, and recreational destinations. This plan and the location of the trail corridors will be fundamentally linked to the County Transportation Plan to ensure consistency and continuity in planning efforts.



The Natural Environment Element, also found in the *Comprehensive Plan*, further recognizes the importance of establishing trail corridors, creating open space, increasing habitat “edges” that increase biological diversity and preserving the county’s rich cultural heritage. As growth in the county accelerates, it has triggered the need to use those goals to reevaluate the future needs of the growing community. As a result, the County has initiated a proactive planning approach to secure those tools needed for open space acquisition, park and trail development, and transportation planning that will enhance the quality of life standards for its residents.

## 2. PURPOSE/GOALS

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The purpose of the *Pinal County Trails Plan (Trails Plan)* is to facilitate a planning framework to create a countywide system of nonmotorized trails and a system of motorized trails. In principle each system will complement and enhance the other and provide a wide range of recreational opportunities for all ability levels. Designated nonmotorized trails will be used exclusively for nonmotorized recreation. Motorized trails can be used for multiple purposes. Public safety, environmental constraints, and wildlife protection are a few examples of factors that may support special uses on some trails.

The planning framework will incorporate existing regional trail corridors and quasi-public corridors, such as utility easements, floodplains, abandoned railways, and road rights-of-way as a countywide network of trails. The framework would also focus on preserving important public access points to public lands and linking with other regional trails bordering the county such as the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail or Central Arizona Project canal. Another important component of the framework is to put in place incentives and regulatory measures to institutionalize trail planning and development as a fundamental investment in creating livable and healthy neighborhoods and commercial districts. Finally, the planning framework will ultimately identify Regional Parks to serve growing recreation needs.

The following goals and strategies define the trail system planning framework that will guide decision-making, incentive and regulatory actions, design guidelines, and implementation of Pinal County’s network of motorized and nonmotorized trails at both the regional and local levels.

► **Goal 1: Create the framework for an interconnected trail system consisting of public nonmotorized and motorized corridors in Pinal County.**

**Strategy 1:** Seek opportunities for easements, dedications, joint-use agreements, and/or other appropriate methods with public agencies and/or private landowners.

**Strategy 2:** Seek opportunities to designate or construct trails on lands already under public ownership.

**Strategy 3:** Establish methods for public trail acquisition, design, construction, and maintenance that maximize alternative funding opportunities, material contributions, and community support.

► **Goal 2: Encourage coordination and cooperation among adjacent counties, agencies, tribal governments, municipalities, and the public in trail planning and development.**

**Strategy 1:** Collaborate to provide public trail links to recreational, cultural, historical, and natural resource open space areas and regional trail systems.

**Strategy 2:** Coordinate with public agencies and private developers to ensure appropriate public trail connections and access points are planned, constructed, and maintained.

**Strategy 3:** Develop public education and outreach programs to assist in the implementation of the *Trails Plan*.



- ▶ **Goal 3: Identify proposed corridors and/or segments needed to link communities within Pinal County and connect urban areas to recreational, cultural, historical, and natural resource areas, places of employment, and transit stops.**

**Strategy 1:** Work with developers to help create the network of county trails as growth occurs.

**Strategy 2:** Develop an Open Space and Master Trails Plan to identify proposed routes and access points.

**Strategy 3:** Provide multimodal transportation opportunities that will link the public pedestrian and bikeway system to the public conservation trail corridor system.

Over the last 2 years, the Pinal County Trails Association, consisting of representatives from trail interest groups and assisted by federal, state, county, and local governmental agencies, has provided guidance, advice, and information incorporated into this Plan. The effort provided by the residents and the Pinal County Trails Association has established the vision, goals, objectives, and preliminary trail alignments for the County and has provided the framework for the *Trails Plan*.

### 3. PLAN STRUCTURE

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The foundation of the *Pinal County Trail Plan* is built around three primary regional trail corridors. These three corridors, the Arizona Trail, the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal corridor, and the Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail, are described in more detail below.

#### ▶ **The Arizona Trail**

The Arizona Trail is a 790-mile nonmotorized trail that hikers, bikers, and equestrians can use. Through use of existing trails or primitive roads, the Arizona Trail, which connects Utah and Mexico through Arizona, is broken into 43 separate segments. Securing an Arizona State Heritage Fund Trails Grant, working with the Arizona State Land Department to acquire perpetual rights-of-way, and using youth corps crews and volunteers to construct the trail is the primary focus of the County. In partnership with the Arizona Trail Association, Pinal County will soon have all but 3 miles constructed of the approximately 55 miles of trail needed to connect Oracle to the Gila River. The second primary focus will be to complete the approximately 15 miles of trail needed from the Gila River north to the Tonto National Forest. Although primarily located on Bureau of Land Management land, there are several miles that will need to be acquired from State Trust Lands rights-of-way. A statewide Memorandum of Understanding for the Arizona Trail is also being developed that will list Pinal County and all the other contributing counties, agencies, and municipalities as Arizona Trail Partners. This continuing partnership will be beneficial to the County and the communities of Oracle, Dudleyville, Winkelman, Kearny, and Superior as the trail passes through or near these areas. With stopover opportunities being relatively scarce along the long trail, these communities will be critical to trail users as resupply and rest areas.

#### ▶ **The Central Arizona Project Canal**

The CAP canal is a 336-mile-long system of aqueducts, tunnels, pumping plants, and pipelines constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). As the largest single source of renewable water supplies in the state of Arizona, the CAP canal is designed to bring about 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water per year to municipal and industrial, agricultural, and Native American users. This water delivery system reaches from Lake Havasu to 14 miles south of Tucson.



As part of the planning effort for the CAP canal, Reclamation committed itself to maintaining a 20-foot recreation corridor on the right side of the canal (facing downstream). Reclamation created this corridor by offsetting its security fence 20 feet from the actual property line.

Maricopa County has completed a feasibility study along its portion of the CAP canal, which addressed potential alternative alignments and locations of the multiuse path, required additional easements, staging and trailhead access areas, neighborhood access points, wash and street crossings, and linkages to adjacent or nearby recreation areas, open spaces, and/or other trails and pathways. Sections of the trail are being constructed according to this study or as development occurs adjacent to the CAP corridor. The 53 miles of CAP canal system located in Maricopa County has also been identified as part of its Regional Trail System.

Pima County has established trail development criteria along the CAP canal as well. Its sections of the trail are being constructed by the Pima County and by developers of planned communities adjacent to the canal. In 2000, Congress designated the portion of the CAP canal that runs through Pima County as a National Recreational Trail.

Pinal County, with over 50 miles of the CAP canal system, can provide not only a quality trail system for the residents of the county, but also an important regional link to both Maricopa and Pima Counties. Conducting a feasibility study and developing trail design standards—before major development occurs along the CAP canal corridor—will help the Pima County eliminate future encroachments, obstacles, crossing barriers, and access issues that currently face Maricopa and Pima Counties.

#### ► **Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail**

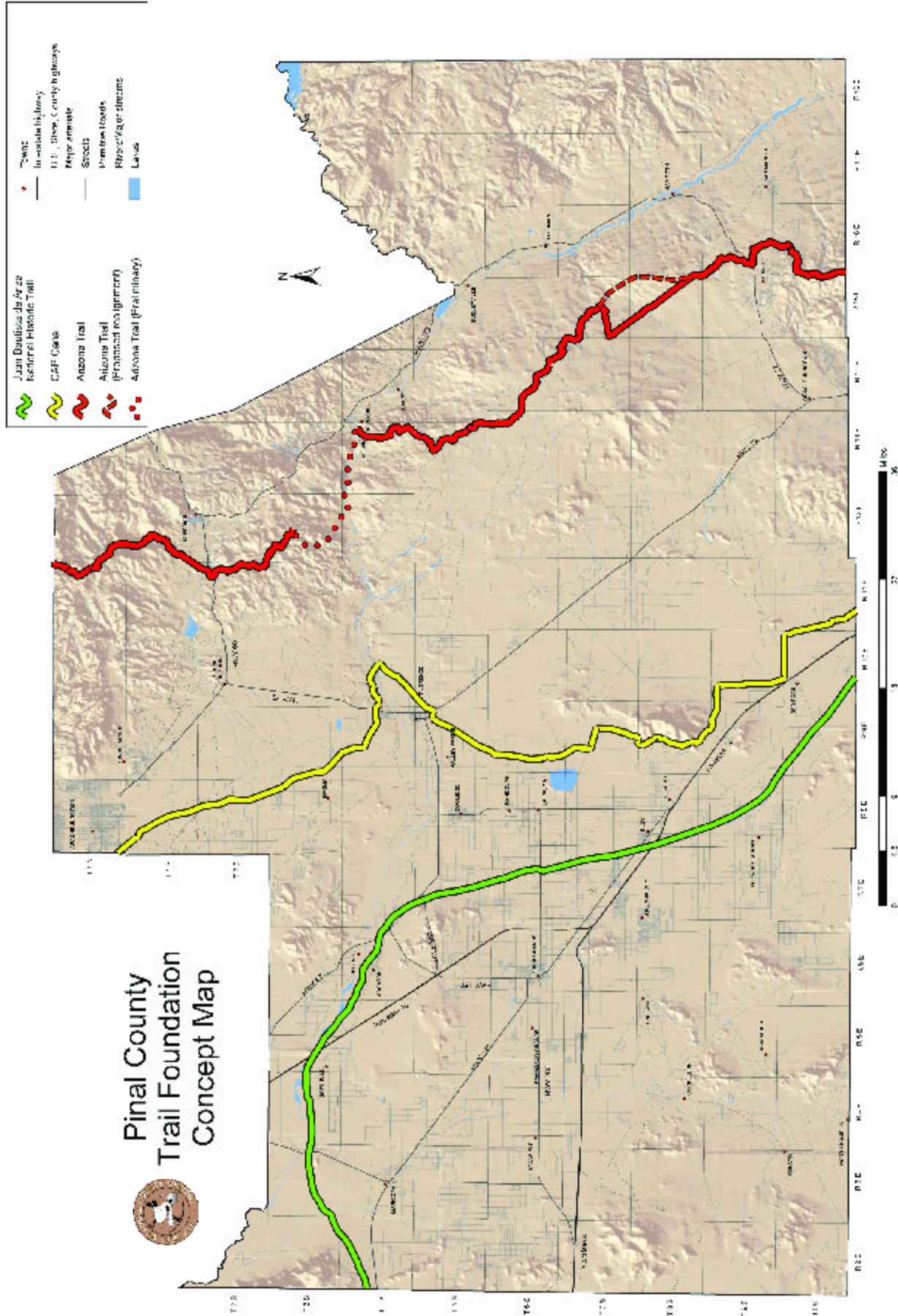
Established by Congress in 1990, the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, administered by the National Park Service, preserves the corridor that Juan Bautista de Anza, commander of the Tubac Presidio, used to guide 198 settlers from Mexico to a mission in the San Francisco Bay Area. This 1,200-mile trail followed the Santa Cruz River to Pima Villages along the Gila River and then followed the Gila to its junction with the Colorado River. The trail continues through California before ending around the Bay Area. Over 300 miles of this designated corridor has had the trail reconstructed and signed for nonmotorized use. The majority of the corridor in California has also been established and signed as part of a driving interpretive route, with the Arizona section soon to follow. This concept allows tourist to drive along the corridor on designated roadways while providing interpretive stops along key portions of the historic route.

In Arizona, Santa Cruz and Pima Counties are actively securing and constructing portions of the trail within the established corridor. Working with these Counties, the National Park Service, and other interested individuals, Pinal County can establish another regional trail corridor that will not only provide recreational opportunities to its residents but promote economic growth through the development of facilities that will capture additional tourism dollars as well.

These three trail corridors will provide the skeletal system from which a more comprehensive trail network will be developed (see Trail Foundation Concept map, page 5). Open space and trails have long been recognized for their role in protecting resources, providing recreational opportunities, and enhancing aesthetic qualities. Open space areas and trails also reduce motor vehicle trips per day, improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion, increase property values, enhance community aesthetics, promote a community identity, provide environmental education opportunities, and protect communities' environmental heritage.



# Pinal County Trail Foundation Concept Map



## 4. RELEVANT STUDY

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Arizona State Parks in partnership with ASU, conducted an extensive research and public involvement process to determine priority recommendations from both motorized and nonmotorized trail users for inclusion into the *Arizona Trails 2005 Plan*. This Plan helps to guide Arizona State Parks and other agencies in their prioritization and management of motorized and nonmotorized trail resources. The statewide survey included over 5,000 residents contacted by telephone for a short survey, followed by a longer mail survey for those who agreed to continue participation. In addition to the statewide survey, Arizona State Parks facilitated 15 public workshops around the state to gain additional information from trail users, land managers, recreation managers, and interested residents. The following is a representative list of findings that will serve as a resource guide for federal, state, and local agencies over the next 5 years—2005 through 2009—for trail preservation, construction, and maintenance projects:

- Approximately two-thirds of Arizona residents consider themselves trail users.
- The most popular nonmotorized activities on Arizona’s trails are *trail hiking (day hiking)*, *walking*, *visiting historical archaeological sites*, and *jogging/running*.
- 63 percent of respondents participated in nonmotorized trail use at some point during their time in Arizona.
- 24 percent of respondents participated in motorized trail use at some point during their time in Arizona.
- 49 percent of the of the Pinal County residents consider themselves nonmotorized trail users.
- 9 percent of Pinal County residents consider themselves motorized trail users.
- Declining public access to trail opportunities is a priority concern of Arizona’s trail users.
- Trail support facilities (trailheads, restrooms, etc.) are important to both nonmotorized and motorized users.
- Nonmotorized trail users most often recreate in, or just outside, a city or town; motorized trail users most often recreate in, and prefer, rural and remote settings.

## 5. EXISTING TRAIL ROUTES

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The State of Arizona is the largest landowner in the county (35.5 percent) the majority of this is State Trust Land, followed by private landowners and corporations (25.7 percent), tribal communities (20.3 percent), the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) and the Bureau of Land Management (17.5 percent), and “other” public land (1.2 percent). With the majority of the county under federal, state, tribal, or local jurisdiction, recreational trail use has already been established on many of those properties. The County recognizes those existing recreational opportunities and will develop the mechanisms needed to provide supporting links to those systems, preserve access, and to urge sensitive development. The County will continue to work with adjacent counties, agencies, tribal governments, municipalities, and/or private landowners in a cooperative partnership to ensure continuity, connectivity, and consistency in the expansion of the County regional trail network. The following is a representative list of trails or areas where motorized and nonmotorized routes exist, either on County property or on other properties that fall within the county boundary (see Trail Concept map, page 14).

## ► Nonmotorized Routes

### ***Lost Goldmine Trail***

As the first trail project initiated by Pinal County, the Lost Goldmine Trail is an important trail connection that skirts the front face of the Superstitions to connect the Jacobs Crosscut Trail to the Peralta Trailhead. The County went through an extensive planning and public review process to get this project implemented. The construction of this trail was funded by an Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund Grant and is administered by the County.

### ***Arizona State Parks***

There are several State Parks that lie within Pinal County that have trails or walking tours available. The Lost Dutchman State Park is a popular destination that has developed camping and trails that serve as a gateway to the Superstition Wilderness. Oracle State Park offers several short hikes with the Arizona Trail running through the park. Boyce Thompson Arboretum offers shorter interpretive hikes where visitors can learn about desert flora. McFarland State Historic Park does not offer recreational trails but may be an important link in a County trails system. Picacho Peak State Park includes the Hunter Trail, which leads hikers to the top of one of the most recognizable mountains in the County.

### ***Municipalities***

Many of the communities in Pinal County have transportation plans or general trail references that mention existing or proposed corridors within their jurisdiction. Those routes are vital amenities to those communities by providing not only recreational opportunities but also healthy benefits as well. The County will continue to maintain those partnerships in order to incorporate public trail links to recreational, cultural, historical, and natural resource open space areas and regional trail systems.

### ***Forest Service lands and designated Wilderness Areas***

The Superstition Mountains were established as a Primitive Area in 1939 and became an official Wilderness Area in 1964. Expanded in 1984 to 160,000 acres, the Superstitions Wilderness has elevations that range from approximately 2,000 feet on the western boundary to 6,265 feet on Mound Mountain. There are about 180 miles of trails that run throughout the area as well. In addition to the numerous trail opportunities found in the Superstition Wilderness, like the popular Peralta and Hieroglyphic Trails, there are additional nonmotorized recreational opportunities on both the Tonto and Coronado National Forests. Each National Forest may be contacted to obtain more information concerning these additional recreational opportunities.

### ***Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands and designated Wilderness Areas***

The White Canyon Wilderness Area is a remote, 5,800-acre area located approximately 45 miles southeast of Mesa and about 7 miles south of Superior and includes the southeast portion of the Mineral Mountains. The two major topographical features are White Canyon, with its numerous side canyons, and the Rincon, a large escarpment that towers above the valley floor.

The Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness Area is located 120 miles southeast of Phoenix in Graham and Pinal Counties. The wilderness includes the 11-mile-long Aravaipa Canyon, as well as the surrounding tablelands and nine side canyons. The canyon contains the perennial waters of Aravaipa Creek, which is subject to periodic and seasonal flooding. A permit, issued by the BLM, is required to enter the canyon.



The Sonoran Desert National Monument is located southwest of Phoenix along 25 miles of Interstate 8. With 496,600 acres of cactus plains and rugged mountain ranges, this area became, in 2001, one of four new BLM-administered zones in Arizona. Unlike National Park Service national monuments, the Sonoran Desert has very few facilities and no central attraction; its purpose is mainly to protect the historic sites, native habitats, vegetation, and wildlife.

Ironwood Forest National Monument is located northwest of Tucson. The ironwood tree is featured in this 129,000-acre National Monument because of the many benefits it provides to the local ecosystem. The scenery and general vegetation are very similar to the nearby Sonoran Desert National Monument—both contain isolated mountains separated by wide, empty basins filled with saguaro and many other species of cacti. Also found in the National Monument are petroglyph sites, several ghost towns, and a working silver mine.

Other BLM areas found in Pinal County include the Table Top Wilderness Area (partially in the Sonoran Desert National Monument) and Box Canyon Area.

### ***San Tan Mountains***

The San Tan Mountains Regional Park is located south of Hunt Highway and Ellsworth Road near the town of Queen Creek. The park is managed by Maricopa County under a cooperative agreement with Pinal County and the BLM. A master plan has been adopted that identifies future trails and access points.

## **► Motorized Routes**

### **Arizona State Trust Lands**

As the largest landowner in the county, there are many existing opportunities for recreation on State Trust Land. It is important to remember that State Trust Land, however, is not public land and some of it is under lease by other parties. Arizona State Land Department's mission is to "To manage State Trust lands and resources to enhance value and optimize economic return for the Trust beneficiaries, consistent with sound stewardship, ... for citizens here today and generations to come..." Governmental and/or private entities may purchase State Trust Land parcels, easements, and rights-of-way for development purposes or for preserving recreation/open space. To gain access to State Trust Lands, recreation permits must be obtained from the Arizona State Land Department or the Arizona Game and Fish Department. In Pinal County there is an area of State Trust Land that has been identified and placed under lease for multiuse recreational purposes. The creation of the Desert Wells Multi-use Area—south of US 60 and west of US 79—was the result of a 2-year commitment from multiple agencies, private ranchers, and OHV groups. The State Land Department in conjunction with the Arizona State Game and Fish Department worked cooperatively with the Pinal County Supervisor's Office, Pinal County Air Quality, the City of Apache Junction, the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, area ranching interests, and a variety of interested OHV clubs to develop this multiuse recreational area and to encourage responsible OHV use.

### **Existing Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Roads**

Similar to the regulations established on State Trust Lands, the federal policy for OHV use on federal lands also requires that all motorized activity take place on established roads and trails. Cross-country travel that damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife, or vegetative resources is strictly prohibited. For motorized trail enthusiasts who come to Pinal County, there is no shortage of designated routes on these public lands. It is recommended that users contact the appropriate agency or obtain area-specific maps prior to the trip to ensure a safe and quality trip.

## 6. POTENTIAL TRAIL ROUTES

The identification of proposed conservation trail corridors is critical to ensure future trail connectivity to existing or proposed parks, open space areas, neighborhoods, and places of employment (see Trail Concept map, page 14). Early identification allows future developers the flexibility to incorporate these proposed corridors into their planning process and/or provide connections from their developments to adjacent corridors. Failure to highlight these preferred alignments can result in lost opportunities for connectivity and/or costly negotiations. The following is a list of initial trail corridor opportunities that the County will evaluate in the development of the *Trails Plan*.

### ► Nonmotorized Routes

#### ***River and wash corridors***

Pinal County recommends that the river and wash corridors be evaluated for potential designation as trail corridors. This designation will allow for the rivers and washes to stay in their natural state, serve their natural hydrologic functions, act as wildlife corridors, and allow for recreational trails to be established on the banks of these drainageways.

#### ***Transportation corridors***

As the transportation system is being developed or improved throughout Pinal County, there is the opportunity to simultaneously enhance the pedestrian and bikeway system. Construction of the pedestrian and bikeway system with the transportation system will maximize multimodal opportunities, improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion, and provide opportunities to improve health. Trails and pathways help people of all ages incorporate exercise into their daily routines by connecting them with places they want or need to go, facilitating active, healthy communities.

#### ***Regional/Municipal/Agency connections***

Many of the municipalities and agencies in the county have either trail plans, transportation plans or general trail references that mention existing or proposed corridors within their jurisdiction. As these communities continue to grow, it will be important for the County to continue to nurture the partnerships created to ensure that trail continuity, connectivity, and consistency is maintained.

#### ***Future development connections***

Pinal County is proactively pursuing the development of a master open space and trails plan that will establish design standards and guidelines for both trails and open space areas. These standards and guidelines will be used to ensure that the quality of life standards established for the residents of Pinal County are met as development continues to occur. Developers of large, planned community will be encouraged to provide trails and open space within their developments as well as to provide connections to existing/proposed trails or open space adjacent to the developments.

#### ***Abandoned railways***

Pinal County recommends that abandoned railways be considered as potential trail corridors. Trails and greenways are valued for their ability to connect people with places and enhance the beauty of the community. Multiuse trails built on abandoned rail corridors can be a key component of the trail system in the county. Linking the places where we live, work, learn, and play with conservation trail corridors is a crucial element of the County's efforts to build safer, healthier, more livable communities.



### ***Utility corridors***

The County recommends that utility corridors also be evaluated for potential use as trail conservation corridors. The trails would exist on top of the maintenance roads that typically exist in conjunction with those facilities. The colocation with these potential utility alignments would provide secondary opportunities for regional links across the county.

### **► Motorized Routes**

#### ***The Middle Gila Conservation Partnership***

The Middle Gila Conservation Partnership, a collaborative group of agency personnel and OHV interest groups, is preparing a report that will provide a set of recommendations that identify proposed motorized trail routes in the area east of US 79 and south of US 60. When the report is finalized, the County will consider the recommendations in the *Pinal County Trails Plan* decision-making process.

#### ***The Great Western Trail***

The Great Western Trail is a proposed motorized trail that will eventually connect the Mexican and Canadian borders. However, there are segments completed in only parts of Utah and Arizona, with portions proposed for Pinal County. This trail uses a combination of backcountry roads and surface streets. The section of the corridor that runs through Pinal County is east of US 79 and falls within the area that is currently under review by the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership.

#### ***Forest Service Environmental Impact Statement for Cross-County Travel by Motor Vehicles***

As demand for a greater variety of recreation uses increases, managing an appropriate balance between motor vehicle use and nonmotorized recreational activities has become an important priority for the Forest Service. A designated system of trails and areas for motorized use established with public involvement would enhance public enjoyment of the National Forests, while maintaining other important values and uses on National Forest System lands.

In spring 2003, the Forest Service announced a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and proposed plan amendment, which disclose the potential environmental consequences of managing motorized, wheeled cross-county travel on five National Forests in Arizona. Specifically, the Forest Service is proposing a new rule (36 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 – Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use) to identify appropriate uses of OHV in the National Forest system.

The Forest Service acknowledges that motor vehicle use is an appropriate way to recreate in the National Forests. The establishment and clear identification of a transportation and use system for motor vehicles on each National Forest will aid in the management of those National Forest system lands. Under the rule, each Forest would identify roads, trails, and areas that are appropriate for motor vehicle use and include them on the Forest Transportation Atlas. Motor vehicle use would be restricted to identified (designated) roads, trails, and areas.

#### ***Bureau of Land Management National Management Strategy on Motorized Use***

In an effort to accommodate growing motorized use on public land while protecting natural resources, BLM released its National Management Strategy in January 2001. The strategy offers general guidance to land managers and recommends numerous actions aimed at creating a local framework for reviewing and resolving motorized issues. BLM also has a current workplan that outlines priorities for recreation and visitor services with goals, objectives, milestones, and actions. Arizona BLM is

in the process of establishing a designated travel network. This will be accomplished through its land use planning efforts currently in progress.

The County will continue to work with BLM as it proceeds through the Resource Management Planning (RMP) process to identify areas eligible for recreation under the Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) Act.

### ***Southwest Motorized Access Work Group***

The Southwest Motorized Access Work Group was established in 2004 through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by participating state and federal agencies in New Mexico and Arizona. The purpose of this group is to ensure consistency in management of OHV use by federal and state agencies and to establish effective, uniform, and understandable guidelines for the public. Consistent management is key to the success of management on public, state, and tribal lands and/or other areas of mutual interest.

The County will continue to work with interest groups like the Southwest Motorized Access Work Group to ensure that access to public land is maintained.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

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The implementation of the *Pinal County Trails Plan* will be a phased process. Phase I of the process will detail the 5-year plan, Phase II will speak to the 10-year goals, and Phase III will incorporate long-range goals to be accomplished over the next 25 years. The following lists those preliminary goals that the County would like to achieve within the identified timeframe:

### ***Phase I: 1- to 5-year plan***

- Develop Open Space and Trails Master Plan.
- Identify preliminary routes using washes, utility corridors, railways, roadways, and key linkages .
- Establish set of open space and trail design standards and ordinances.
- Continue partnerships with adjacent counties, agencies, municipalities, tribal governments, and private landowners.
- Assist in the completion of the Arizona Trail segment through Pinal County.
- Begin the feasibility study for the CAP canal trail corridor.
- Implement one demonstration project along the CAP canal.

### ***Phase II: 5- to 10-year plan***

- Ensure trail connectivity/continuity within the county and surrounding counties.
- Continue to secure easement/rights-of-way along the Anza Trail corridor.
- Continue to secure available open space from BLM and developers for recreational purposes.
- Complete the development of the CAP canal trail corridor.

### ***Phase III: 10- to 25-year plan***

- Continue to link trails to parks/open space/employment areas.
- Finish the Anza Trail segment through Pinal County.
- Continue to secure available open space from BLM and developers for recreational purposes.

#### **► Possible Funding Sources**

Funding the growth of the proposed open space and trails plan will be one of the limiting factors that will determine the speed at which the plans may be implemented. Generally there are four areas of potential funding sources available for the implementation of trails, trail crossings, and trail signs:

- Local – General Funds, Fees, and General Obligation Bonds.
- Private – There are national nonprofit organizations such as Trust for Public Land that exist to assist communities in these kinds of efforts.
- State – Arizona State Parks Heritage Funds and Arizona Game and Fish Department Grant.
- Federal – Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF), Local Transportation Assistance Fund (LTAF), Transportation Enhancement Activity Funds (TEA-21), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation, Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Funds, and Highway Safety Funds.

## **8. CONCEPTUAL-LEVEL DESIGN STANDARDS**

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#### **► Nonmotorized Trails**

Conceptual design standards for nonmotorized trails, trail roadway crossings, and trail signage are captured within the most recent editions of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access*, the USDOT Manual on *Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), and other guidelines recognized by the State of Arizona. Pinal County is proactively pursuing the development of a master open space and trails plan that will establish these conceptual design standards and guidelines for both trails and open space areas. These standards and guidelines will be used to ensure that the quality of life standards established for the residents of Pinal County are met as development continues to occur.

#### **► Trail Liability**

In today's litigious society, private landowners and municipalities must concern themselves with the issue of liability. The fear of a lawsuit is often enough to prevent private landowners from opening their land to trail users.

Most states, including Arizona, have enacted laws that limit both private and municipal landowners, liabilities (Arizona Revised Statutes § 33-1551). On the private side, these laws are called Recreational Use Statutes. For public land, the governing law is usually the state's Government Immunity Act or Tort Claims Act. These laws are important for the future of trail development because they can shift the burden of responsibility to the trail user and away from the private and/or municipal landowner.

## 9. CONCLUSION

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The rural nature of the Pinal County is rapidly transitioning to another level of growth. Without action, the county's environmental heritage could be lost to encroaching development and urbanization. As a result, the County has initiated a proactive planning approach to secure those tools needed—open space acquisition, park and trail development, transportation planning—that will enhance the quality of life standards for its residents.

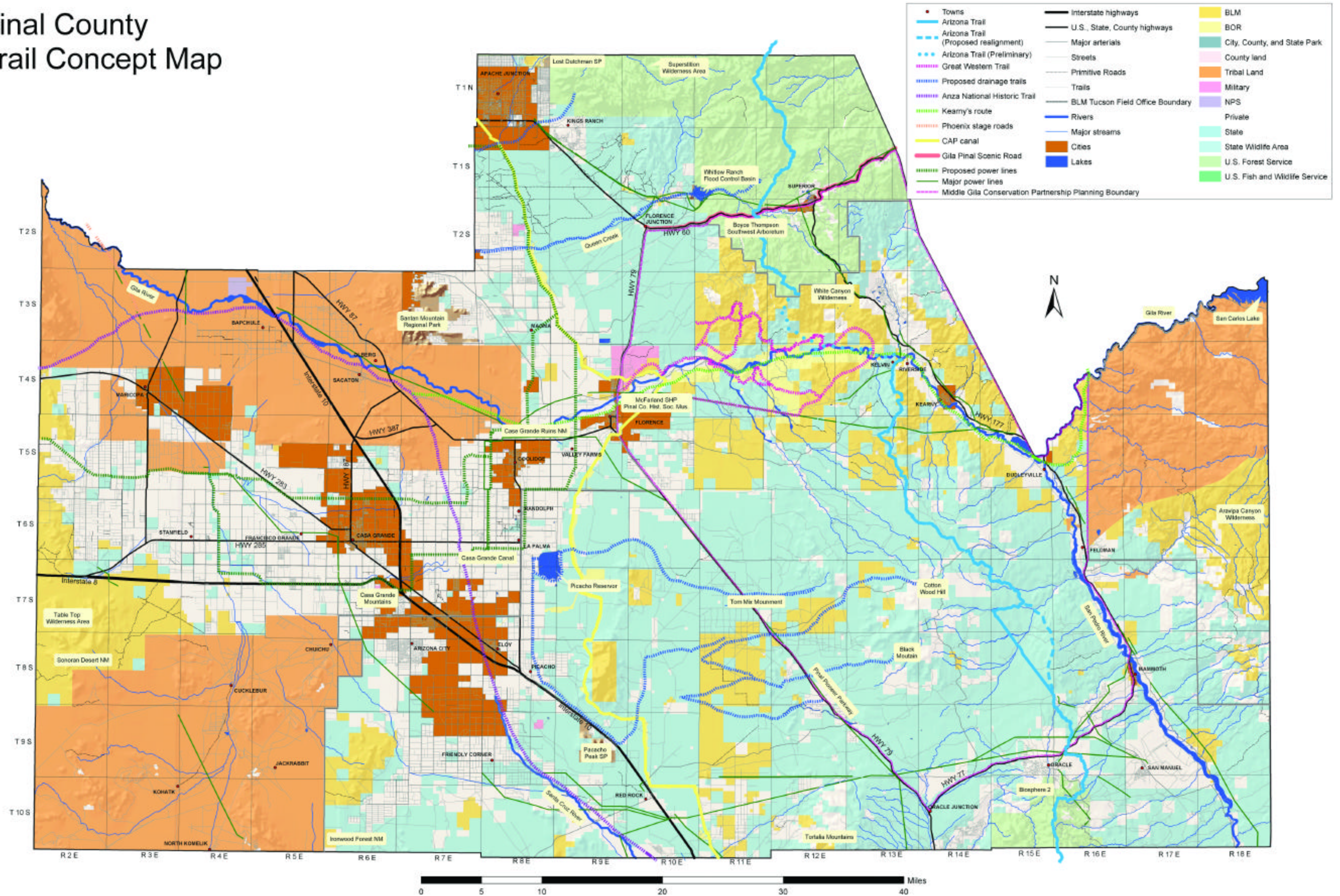
The County's *Comprehensive Plan* elements for Transportation, Land Use, and Natural Environment each identify the need to incorporate bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian trail facilities into the growth plans for the county. Setting aside open space for recreational uses and the preservation of cultural and biological resources is also addressed in these elements. The County has an unprecedented opportunity to develop policy and ordinances that will aid in the preservation of the county's character prior to the majority of development.

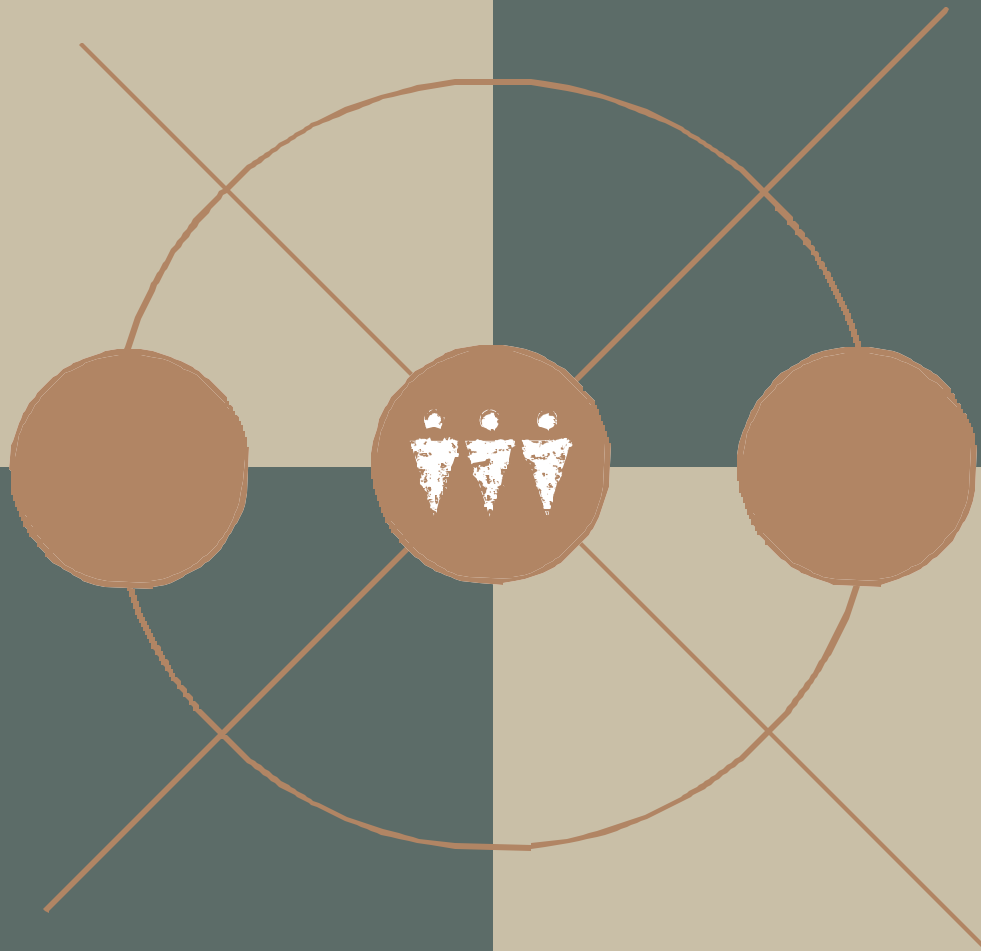
As the planning process progresses through the identified phases, public involvement will play a key role in assisting County staff in setting priorities and identifying future issues. The formation and use of a Technical Advisory Committee and/or Parks and Recreation Committee will further aid the County in addressing the changing needs of the communities it serves.

The course of action needed to implement the final plan will not be a quick process. However, by identifying the issues early, proactively initiating the planning process, and by being responsive to public input, the County will secure those quality of life standards anticipated by both existing and future county residents.



# Pinal County Trail Concept Map





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