

# PARKS VISION 2030

## STRATEGIC SYSTEM MASTER PLAN UPDATE

*Continuing the Legacy*

Public Meetings  
November 8 and 10, 2021



Maricopa County  
Parks and Recreation Department  
[www.maricopacountyparks.net](http://www.maricopacountyparks.net)

# Agenda

- About Maricopa County Parks
- Brief History of System Park Plans
- **Parks Vision 2030**
- Outreach Efforts
- Preliminary Key Findings
- Next Steps





**Maricopa County**  
Parks and Recreation Department



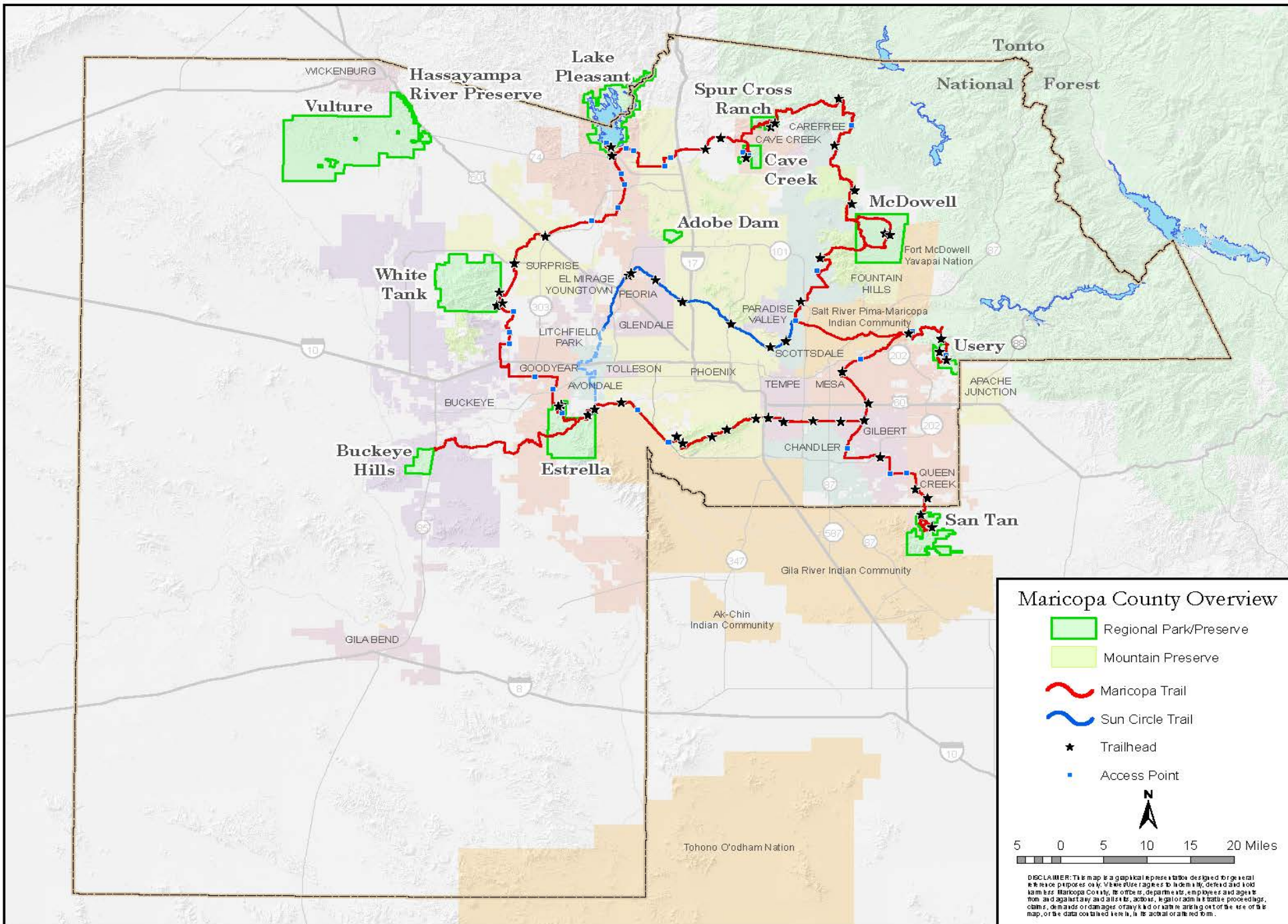
One of the largest regional park systems in the country with over 122,000 acres.

12 regional parks including:

- mountain parks
- the region's largest lake
- conservation areas
- education center
- major concession areas
- a new regional park under development

Outdoor recreation opportunities:

- campgrounds
- nature centers
- fishing and boating
- hundreds of miles of trails
- wildlife viewing
- and much more!





**Fall 2021**

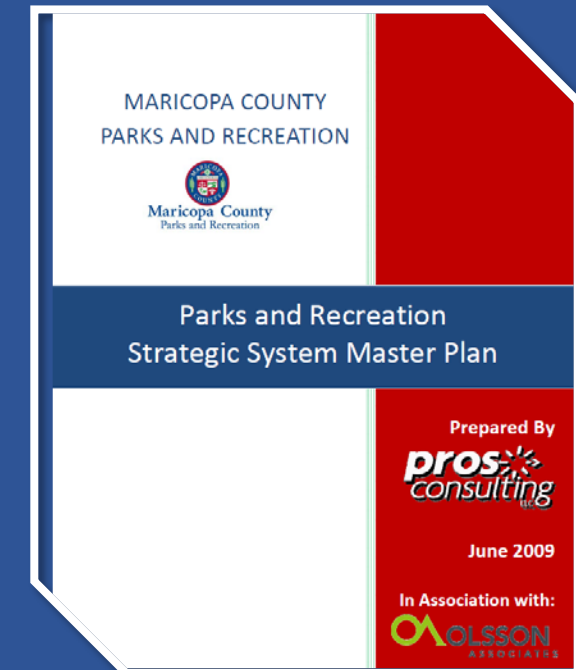
**Top 3 Maricopa County Parks to Visit Video**

<https://youtu.be/jrxIL7KsPqk>



# System Master Plan History

- **1965 Maricopa County Regional Parks System Plan**
  - 1953 – First large regional park Estrella Mountain
  - 1965 – First regional park system plan adopted
  - Focus on large, unspoiled preserves removed from the urban area
  - Offer a retreat from urban areas
  - Activities are passive in nature
- **2009 Strategic Systems Master Plan**
  - Internal operations including operations, maintenance and finances
  - Community needs and programs
  - Assessment of land and facilities
  - Implementation strategies were defined



# 2009 – MISSION & VISION



**VISION:** Our vision is to connect people with nature through regional parks, trails and programs, inspire an appreciation for the Sonoran desert beauty and natural open spaces, and create life-long positive memories.

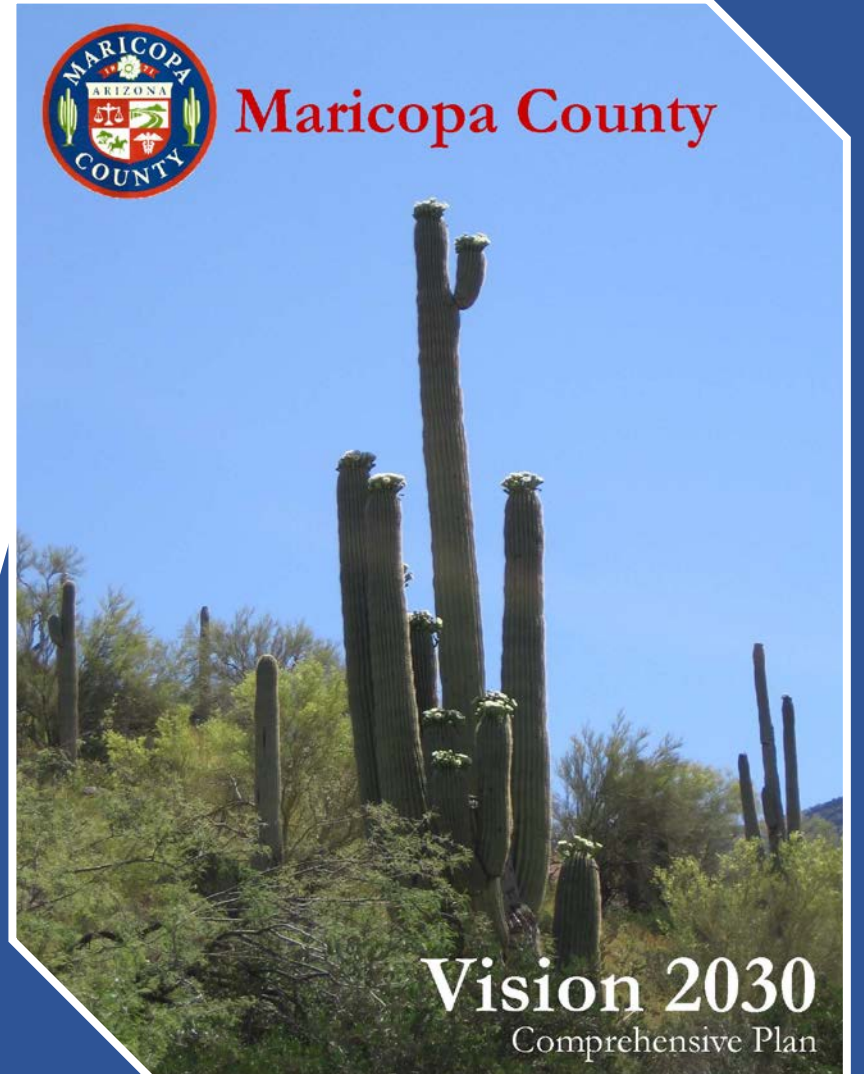


**MISSION:** Our mission, through responsible stewardship, is to provide the quality parks, trails, programs, services and experiences that energize visitors and create life-long users and advocates.



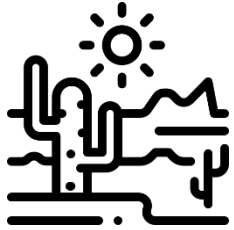
# MARICOPA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - VISION 2030

- Maricopa County is required to prepare a **comprehensive plan**.
- This plan covers a variety of topics that are important to this region's future, including **land use, transportation, environment, economic growth, areas of future growth, open space, water resources, energy, and fiscal impacts**.
- The latest county comprehensive plan is known as Vision 2030.
- Main relevant elements for Parks Vision 2030:
  - **Open Space**
  - **Transportation**
  - **Land Use**
  - **Economic Growth**
  - **Environment**



# PARKS VISION 2030

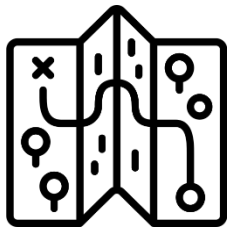
## IMPORTANCE OF A PARK SYSTEM MASTER PLAN



Planning That Protects and Conserves High Quality Natural Desert Places



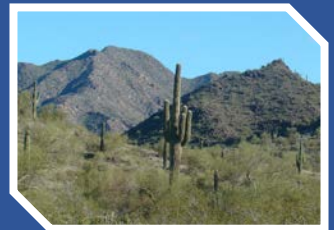
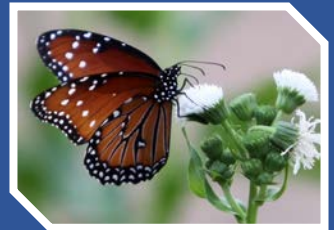
Planning That Promotes Transparency, Engagement and Partnerships



Planning That Connects People and Nature Through Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

### GREAT PARK SYSTEMS...

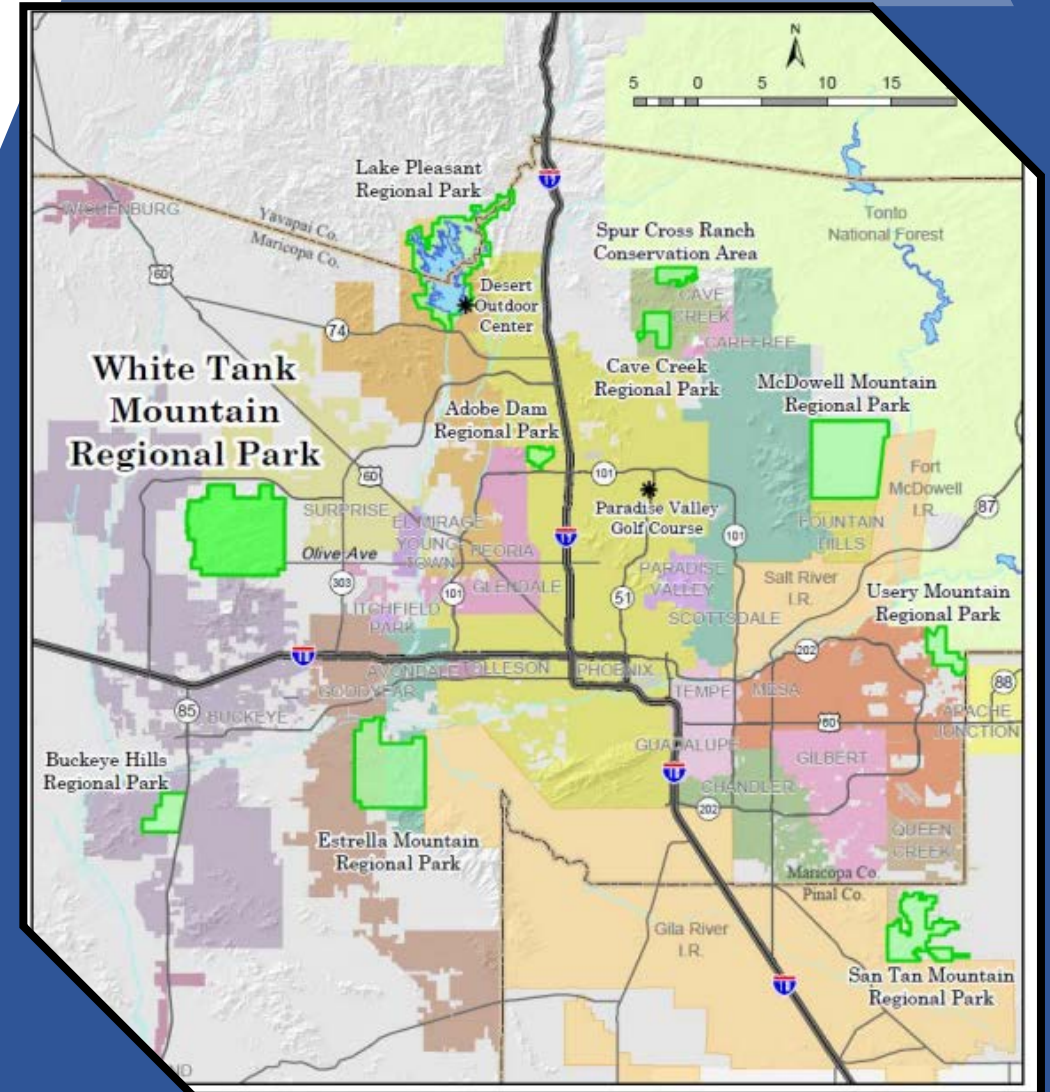
- Provide **value** to communities by celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the area
- Provide **quality recreational benefits and opportunities**
- Provide **economic development opportunities** by promoting tourism to the area
- Are **guided by a compelling vision** that supports the mission, guides management strategies, and aligns with the vision and direction of the region



# PARKS VISION 2030

## STRATEGIC SYSTEMS MASTER PLAN

- Focus on a larger regional system
- 10-to-50-year horizon
- Addresses growth, development pressures
- Identifies opportunities for new parkland, buffers to existing parks, expanded partnerships
- Address regional scale conservation measures to sustain a system of connected landscapes - *"Continue the Legacy"*



# WHAT WE KNOW

- Parks are an “Essential Service”!
- 98% of Arizona residents say “parks, preserves, forests and open spaces” are important to them.
- Protecting air, water, land and wildlife are among Arizonan's top priorities for future action.
- 92% of Arizona residents say “preserving and protecting Arizona's rivers, natural areas and wildlife” is important to them.
- 59% of Arizona residents participate in outdoor recreation each year.
- Maricopa County is the fastest growing county in the U.S. for the last four years.
- By 2040 the region’s population could top 6.5 million and vast acres of development will be needed to support the new population.
- Outdoor Recreation is among the State's largest economic sectors with annual spending exceeding \$21 Billion.
- For every dollar invested in Maricopa County Parks, the regional economic benefit is \$4.85.



# REASONS FOR VISITING

Maricopa County Park visitors rank their Satisfaction as "Extremely High".

## TOP FIVE REASONS/MOTIVES



1. Observe the scenic beauty



2. Enjoy physical exercise



3. Experience the open space



4. Improve my physical health



5. Relax

**"Hiking #1 Activity"**

# PLAN ELEMENTS

*Balancing People and  
Place*

**PEOPLE**

**PLACE**



# PARKS VISION 2030 TIMELINE

## 2019

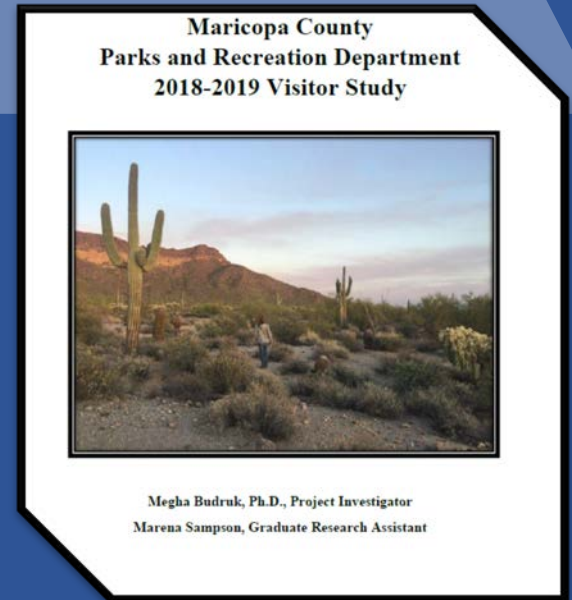
- Maricopa County Parks Visitor Study
- Economic Impact Study
- Staff and Volunteers Outreach

## 2020

- Executive Team Outreach

## 2021

- Executive Team Outreach
- Staff Outreach
- Stakeholders Outreach



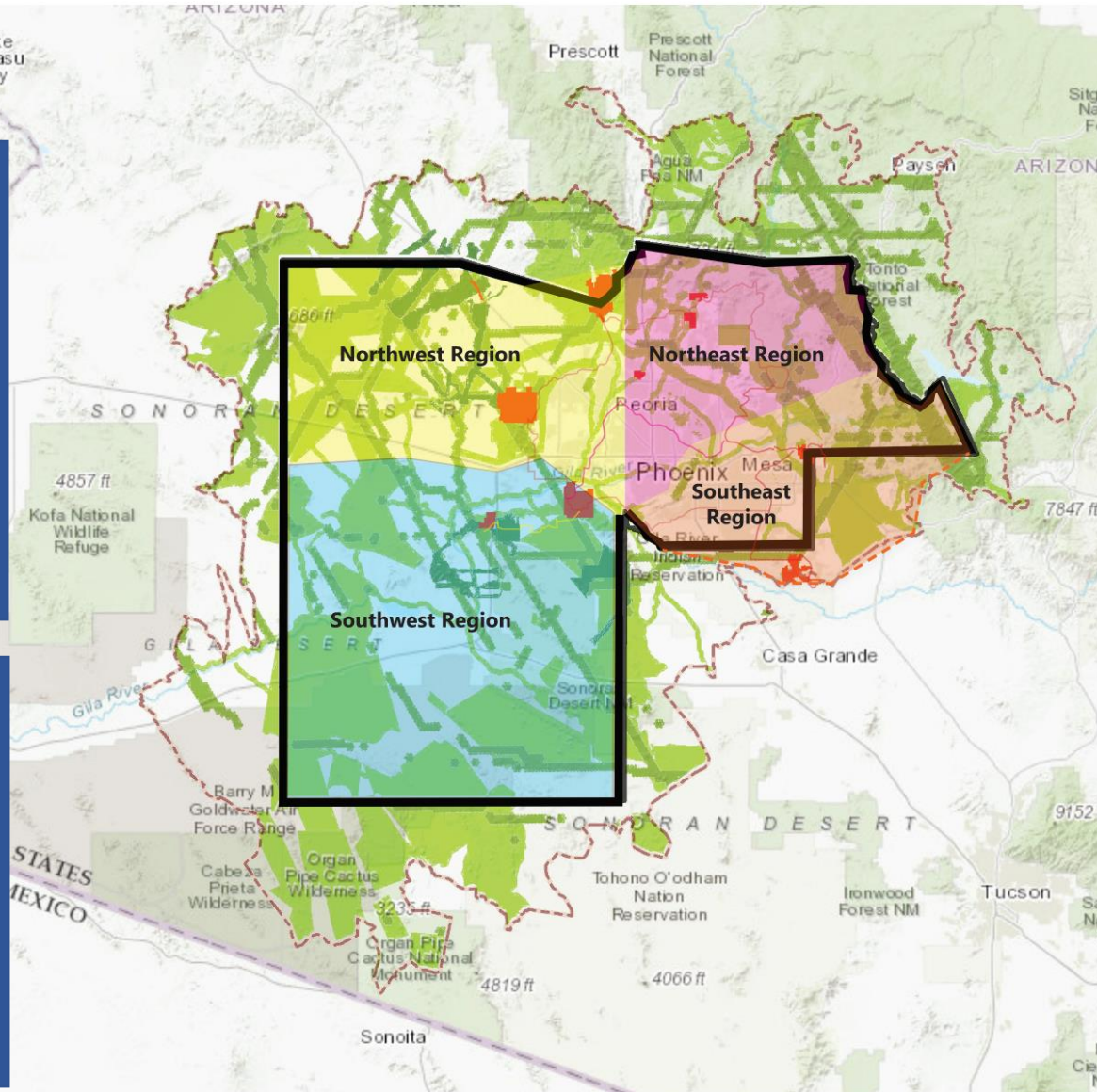
# FOCUS GROUPS BY REGION

## Northwest Region

Cities	Agencies/Org.
Wickenburg	White Tank Mtn Conservancy
Surprise	BLM
Peoria	USFS
Glendale	BOR
El Mirage	CAP
Youngtown	AGFD
Buckeye	State Land

## Southwest Region

Cities	Agencies/Org.
Buckeye	Gila River Indian Community
Goodyear	Tohono O'odham Nation
Avondale	NPS
Litchfield Park	BLM
Gila Bend	AGFD
Tolleson	State Land



## Northeast Region

Cities	Agencies/Org.
Phoenix	Ft McDowell Indian Community
Carefree	Salt River Indian Community
Cave Creek	Yavapai County
Fountain Hills	McDowell Sonoran Conservancy
Scottsdale	USFS
Guadalupe	NPS
Paradise Valley	BOR
	CAP
	SRP
	AGFD
	State Land

## Southeast Region

Cities	Agencies/Org.
Phoenix	Ft McDowell Indian Community
Mesa	Pinal County
Gilbert	Gila River Indian Community
Queen Creek	USFS
Apache Junction	BOR
Tempe	CAP
Chandler	SRP
	AGFD
	State Land

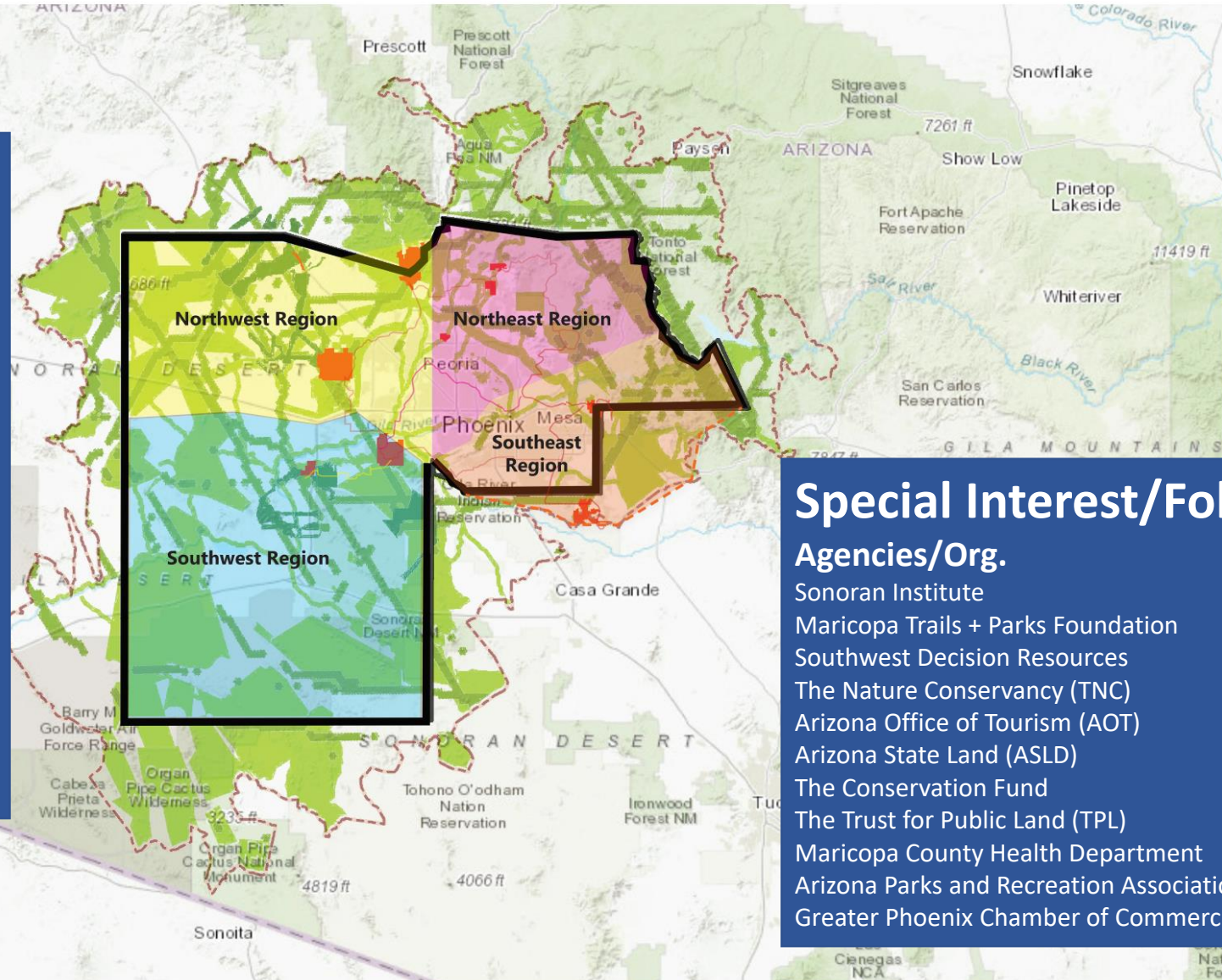


# REGIONWIDE AND SPECIAL INTEREST

## Regionwide

### Agencies/Org.

Central Arizona Conservation Alliance  
Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT)  
Arizona State Parks and Trails (ASPT)  
Maricopa County Planning & Development  
Central Arizona Project (CAP)  
AZ Alliance for Livable Communities  
Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)  
Flood Control District of Maricopa County  
Arizona Public Service (APS)  
Maricopa Trails + Parks Foundation  
Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)  
Arizona State Land Department (ASLD)  
Arizona State University (ASU)  
Arizona Planning Association (AZ APA)  
Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)  
Arizona Game & Fish Department (AGFD)  
National Audubon Society



## Special Interest/Follow-up

### Agencies/Org.

Sonoran Institute  
Maricopa Trails + Parks Foundation  
Southwest Decision Resources  
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)  
Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT)  
Arizona State Land (ASLD)  
The Conservation Fund  
The Trust for Public Land (TPL)  
Maricopa County Health Department  
Arizona Parks and Recreation Association (APRA)  
Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce

# Emerging Themes From the Focus Groups

## 1. Improving Existing Regional Parks

- Trail Connections to Regional Parks
- Edge pressures on regional parks and open space
- Additional Access Points

## 2. Responding to Population Growth and Increased Visitation

- Future Regional Park Areas for Expansion
- Identifying/Acquiring Lands for Future Regional Open Space
- Epic Outdoor Adventures



# Emerging Themes From the Focus Groups

## 3. Improving Regional Connectivity for Wildlife and People

- Regional Recreation Connectivity
- Wildlife Connectivity
- Trails throughout the Region
- Maricopa Trail
- River Corridors



# Emerging Themes From the Focus Groups

## 4. Addressing Priority Concerns & Challenges

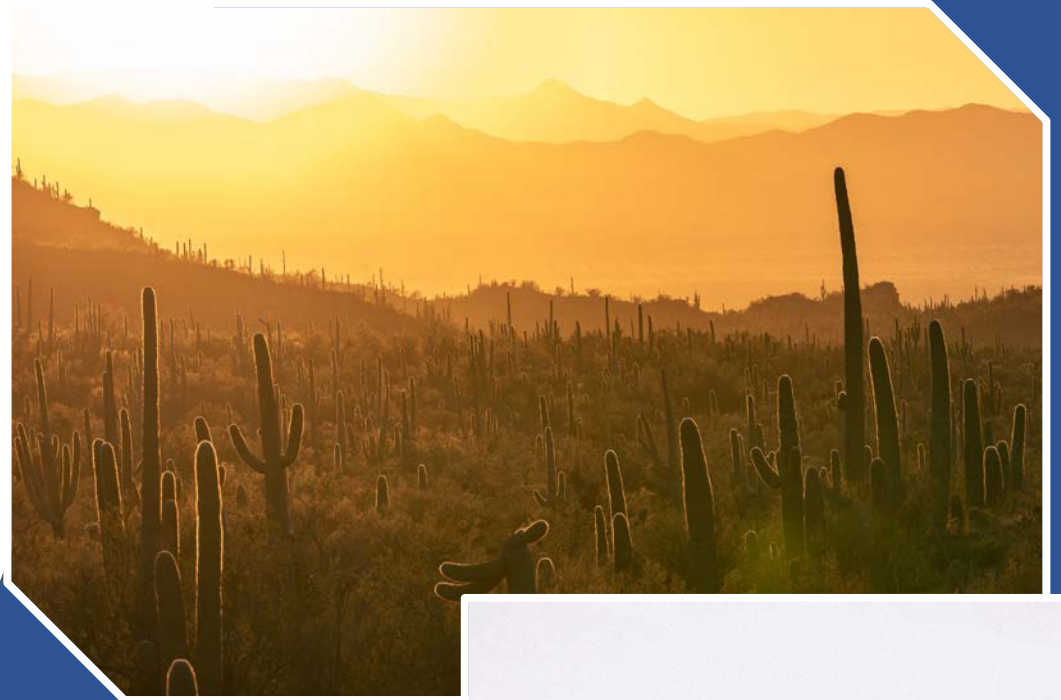
- Urban Interface Areas
- Increased Use
- Organization Resources
- Development Impacts
- Land Ownership
- Priorities of Organization Missions
- Environmental Stewardship and Public Knowledge on Conservation
- Community Preferences
- Inclusion and Equity
- Funding



# Emerging Themes From the Focus Groups

## 5. Improving Communication, Collaboration and Coordination

- Working Group Development on Partnerships & Funding
- Focus on Community Health and Well-being
- Creating Mechanism to Sustain a System of Parks, Trails and Open Spaces



# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Spending time outdoors is important for physical health and mental well-being.
- Visitors come to the parks for their scenic beauty, passive recreation, and hiking.
- Parks are seeing an increase in visitation.
- An emerging trend, visitors are seeking challenging mountain biking, hiking, and obstacle courses to increase health and endurance.



# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## REINVEST, PROTECT & CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR EXISTING PARK SYSTEM

- The success of the park system is to continually invest in facilities, resources, and quality programming.
- Additional park access points and trail connections are desired but should be balanced with protection of wildlife and conservation.
- Updating the individual park master plans is important to meet visitor and community needs.



# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## ACQUIRE AND MANAGE NEW PARKS AND OPEN SPACE LANDS

- Acquiring new parks and open space ahead of development is important to protect sustainable ecosystems and wildlife corridors.
- New park lands provide future recreational needs for a rapidly growing community.
- Major river corridors present a unique opportunity to provide connected open spaces to underserved communities.

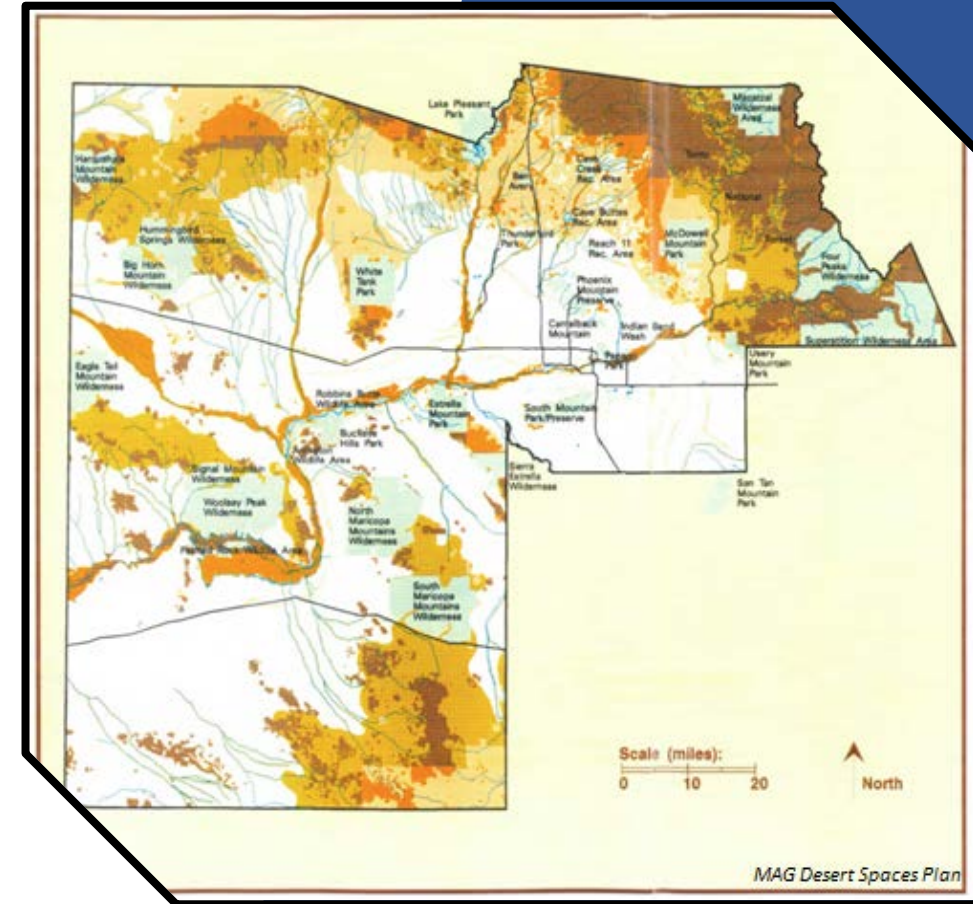




# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION & PRESERVATION

- Maricopa County Parks is in a unique position to identify and lead a regional park and open space system.
- Partnering with Federal and State land managers provide opportunities to protect natural areas while managing a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Opportunity through Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to help with protecting open space and wildlife corridors as well as river corridor restoration by facilitating agreements and partnerships with various cities and towns.



# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

- Sustainable funding is a primary concern in maintaining a high-quality park experience.
- Existing funding may not provide adequate or timely funding to complete park master plans in keeping pace with visitor demand.
- Bonds, grants, and other types of public funding will be necessary to acquire, protect and develop future parks and open space.
- Evaluate existing County assets, amenities, and park lands to identify additional sources of revenue.



# PARKS VISION 2030

## NEXT STEPS



- **November 2021**
  - Public Outreach
- **Early 2022**
  - Draft Plan Prepared
- **Mid - 2022**
  - Board of Supervisors Approval

# PROJECT WEBSITE

[maricopacountyparks.net/about-us/project-overview](https://maricopacountyparks.net/about-us/project-overview)

## About the Project Video

**Public Outreach Feedback Form  
closes December 10th**

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/  
ParksVision2030Public](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParksVision2030Public)

**Email:** [maricopacountyparks@maricopa.gov](mailto:maricopacountyparks@maricopa.gov)



# Questions? Ideas?




# Thank you!

Find out more and come visit us!

[www.maricopacountyparks.net](http://www.maricopacountyparks.net)

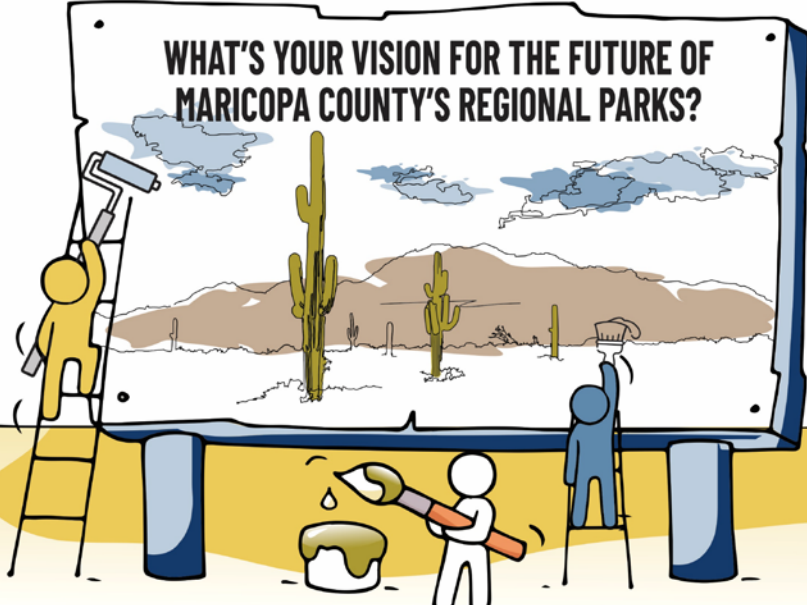


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Maricopa County  
Parks and Recreation Department

WHAT'S YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF  
MARICOPA COUNTY'S REGIONAL PARKS?



The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department wants to know how you envision the future of your parks. To learn more and complete the **PARKS VISION 2030** survey, visit

**WWW.MARICOPACOUNTYPARKS.NET**

CONTINUING THE LEGACY