



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lower San Pedro River

Collaborative Conservation Initiative



A proposal for a collaborative conservation initiative in the Lower San Pedro River

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is exploring the idea of a collaborative conservation and management initiative along the Lower San Pedro River involving interested landowners, land managing agencies, local communities, non profit organizations, businesses and the public who share a vision of a healthy river system contributing to people's livelihoods and a functioning, hydrologically healthy riparian corridor that supports a diverse and rich native flora and fauna. This collaborative venture would be landowner/land manager driven, FWS could contribute an array of various tools that landowners could voluntarily and freely choose from including technical assistance, cooperative agreements for management, Partners for Fish and Wildlife grants, conservation easements, or fee title acquisition by the FWS for a National Wildlife Refuge. This initiative would build on the success of existing cooperative landowner groups along the Lower San Pedro River.

The Lower San Pedro River Collaborative Conservation Initiative would

Be a cooperative and collaborative endeavor among participants

Be entirely voluntary.

Embrace and continue the shared vision of a working landscape by supporting working ranches and farms.

Be guided by a steering group of landowners and land managers with support from agency/organization liaison representatives.

Have no regulatory power. Individual landowners remain free to manage their lands as they wish.

Provide resource efficiencies and savings by coordinating resources to help landowners restore, improve, manage, or conserve their lands to maximize returns while contributing to a healthy river system.

Enable the establishment of a National Wildlife Refuge through voluntary participation by landowners in sale or donation of property or conservation easements to benefit their financial condition or leave a conservation legacy. Any potential land or easement acquisition by FWS would only be from willing sellers or donors.

There are a number of similar endeavors around the nation that are useful models for the Lower San Pedro River Initiative

including the Malpai Borderlands Group, the Blackfoot Challenge, the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area and the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.

This initiative is independent of, and not related to, the proposed Resolution Copper southeast Arizona land exchange legislation currently under consideration in Congress.

Why Here, Why Now?

The San Pedro is the last major undammed river in the American Southwest. This Globally Important Bird Area is located at the convergence of four major ecosystems—the Sierra Madre and Rocky Mountains, and the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, which contribute to its high biodiversity values. The San Pedro River is recognized as one of the primary migratory bird corridors in the West, with estimates of up to four million birds that annually traverse the corridor between Mexico and breeding areas in the West. The San Pedro River basin is considered to be a “keystone” transition zone that sustains biodiversity in other eco-regions. The San Pedro contains vital habitat for approximately 250 species of migrant and wintering birds and over 100 species of breeding birds. The river is designated critical habitat for southwestern willow flycatchers.

Our vision is for the FWS to serve an important role as a facilitator for coordinated efforts among participating landowners and other partners to accomplish the shared vision of landscape scale restoration of ecological integrity on the lower San Pedro River.

For Further Information, contact

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March 2012



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Cochise, Pima & Pinal Counties, Arizona

