

**ADOT Board of Supervisors Meeting Statement**  
December 21, 2007

I am Daniel Baker, an owner of a 10,000 acre ranch in Cascabel, member of the Cascabel Working Group, former employee of The Nature Conservancy and Secretary of the Cascabel Hermitage Association.

The superlatives about the San Pedro River Valley are many: the last major free flowing river in the desert southwest, the main migratory corridor for neo-tropical birds in the West, and the greatest diversity of mammal species in North America. The Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madres, Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts all merge here to create the greatest biodiversity of any landlocked area in the U.S.

Four points against a bypass through the San Pedro River Valley:

1. Recognizing the above facts, The Nature Conservancy and others are working toward its establishment as a National Wildlife Refuge or a National Conservation Area. Because that designation is not yet accomplished does not make it any less reprehensible to propose an interstate there than it would through Yellowstone or Yosemite.
2. The URS report notes that the proposed route intersects wildlife linkages across large swaths of land and calls for further NEPA studies as to how to mitigate those impacts. The Bureau of Reclamation, the Salt River Project, the Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, Pima County and others have already done the studies and made millions of dollars in land acquisitions there for conservation. Most of them are already on record in opposition to this proposal. What better scientific authority could there be that no amount of "mitigation" can safeguard this fragile desert ecosystem? No further study is needed!
3. The URS report states that "Fatal flaw determinations include... existing conservation land designations (i.e., The Nature Conservancy lands...." TNC is about to complete acquisition of property interests in one of those wildlife linkages (Hot Springs Canyon) such that no projected route could avoid crossing that land – a self described "fatal flaw."
4. This proposal is supposedly long-term, 20-50 years down the road. However, development interests know that its mere possibility is sufficient for speculators to be attracted, land values to escalate, and State Lands to become of sufficient value to be auctionable. It is the foot-in-the-door to open up a pristine area that not incidentally has water resources.

This is not my backyard; this is Arizona's backyard. Preserve this environmental treasure that adds to the quality of life and economy of Arizonans. Do not vote for further study! Do not approve any route through the San Pedro River Valley for acquisition! Stop this Special Interest Group boondoggle NOW!