

# Sonoran Desert

## National Monument

Manager's Annual Report  
FY 2014

# 2014

Manager's Annual Report



NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS

Arizona



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*Cover Photo: South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness  
Cynthia Barrett, BLM Law Enforcement Ranger*

# 1 Sonoran Desert Profile

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## Designating Authority

**Designating Authority:** Presidential Proclamation 7397, Establishment of the Sonoran Desert National Monument

**Date of Designation:** January 17, 2001

If other legislation exists that has affected the management of the unit, list it here as well.

Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Title II-Bureau of Land Management Authorizations, Subtitle A-National Landscape Conservation System. [Legislatively codified the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System]

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, Subtitle B-Withdrawals in Arizona, Section 3031. Barry M. Goldwater Range, Arizona. [Provided for relinquishment of certain portions of the Barry M. Goldwater Range, including "Area A" (or "Area 1," the Sand Tank Mountains) containing approximately 83,554 acres which subsequently became a portion of the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Public access to this area still is managed via a free access permit required by this legislation]

## Acreage

Total Acres in Unit	BLM Acres	Other Fed. Acres	State Acres	Other Acres
496,400	486,400	N/A	3,900	6,100 (private)

## Contact Information

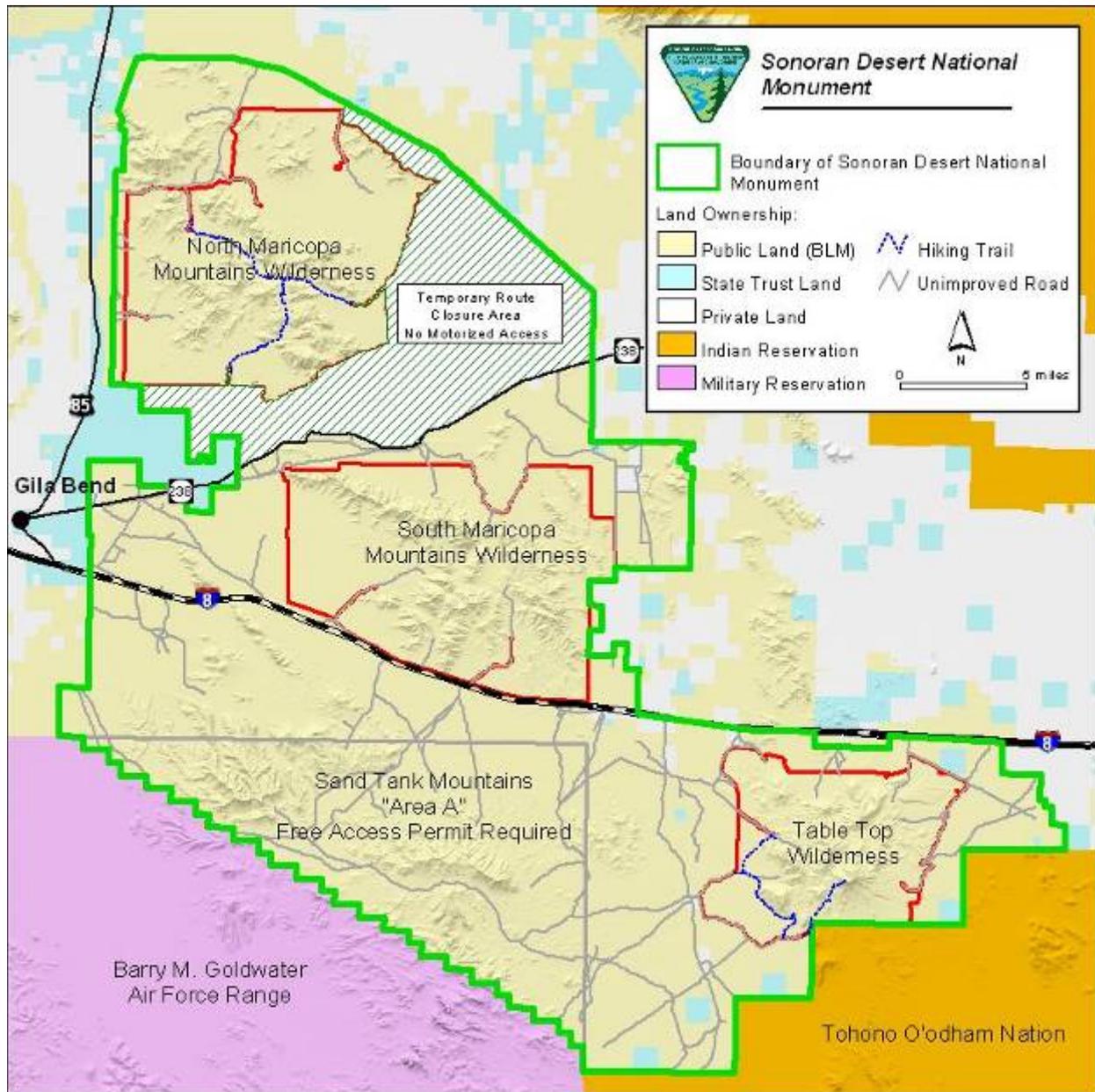
Unit Manager	Phone	E-mail	Mailing Address
David Scarbrough	(623) 580-5651	dscarbro@blm.gov	21605 N. 7 <sup>th</sup> Ave. Phoenix, AZ 85027

Field Office	District Office	State Office
Lower Sonoran	Phoenix	Arizona

## Budget

Subactivity	Labor (Base)	Operations (Base)	Operations (One-Time) *	Subtotal
1210	\$ 24, 525	\$ 16, 431	\$ 0	\$ 40, 956
1610	\$ 9, 918	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 9,918
1630	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 278, 195	\$ 278, 195
1640	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 113, 350	\$ 113, 350
1660	\$ 16, 199	\$ 984	\$ 0	\$ 17, 183
1711	\$ 533, 307	\$ 85, 322	\$ 0	\$ 618, 629
Subtotal:	\$ 583, 989	\$ 102, 737	\$ 391, 545	<b>\$ 1, 078, 231</b>

\*Southern Arizona Project funding.



General area map of the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

## Managing Partners

N/A

## Staffing

The manager for the Sonoran Desert National Monument reports to the Lower Sonoran Field Manager, and also is responsible for the Lower Sonoran Field Office as the Assistant Field Manager.

The current Lower Sonoran Field Office table of organization provides for 15 positions including the Field Manager and Assistant Field Manager/Monument Manager. The "lands and minerals" staff is supervised directly by the Field Manager, and the "resources" staff is supervised directly by the Assistant Field Manager/Monument Manager. The "resources" staff includes eight positions. Currently, six of these positions are filled and two are vacant and not funded. All staff of the Lower Sonoran Field Office works both on the monument and the remaining public lands of the field office. The Monument Manager and Park Ranger spend approximately 90% of their time on monument issues; other staff approximately 20% on the monument.

# 2 Planning and NEPA

## Status of RMP

The Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Sonoran Desert National Monument was completed by signature of the BLM-Arizona State Director on September 14, 2012.

## Status of Activity Plans

A Travel Management Plan for the Sonoran Desert National Monument was completed by signature of the Lower Sonoran Field Manager on September 14, 2012.

## Status of RMP Implementation Strategy

A five-year RMP implementation strategy was completed during fiscal year 2014.

## Key NEPA Actions and/or Project Authorizations

1. "Southern Arizona Project: Vehicle Barriers and Route Reclamation, South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness," NEPA No.: DOI-BLM-AZ-P040-2014-0001-DNA, February, 2014.

The purpose of the project proposal was to provide protection of the wilderness values of the South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness and of monument objects of the Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM). The need stemmed from increased vehicle incursions, proliferation of vehicle routes and foot trails, and accumulations of trash related to illegal human and drug smuggling. The project intended to obstruct illegal vehicle traffic through the South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness, clean-up accumulations of trash, and restore illegal vehicle routes, foot paths, and other areas of disturbance to as near a natural condition as possible. This project was part of a larger BLM strategy to improve resource conditions within the SDNM to remove trash and improve natural and cultural resource values.

The project constructed two vehicle barriers in the South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness. The barriers were constructed of natural materials (large boulders obtained on site) and acted to obstruct passage by vehicle on a former vehicle route that bisected the South Maricopa's in a south-to-north direction prior to passage of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act. In recent years, this route has increasingly been used in the commission of illegal human and drug smuggling activities. During fiscal year 2013 the BLM constructed two barriers of native rock at this location using hand crews and tools only. These barriers were since breached, and under this project the boulder barriers were "scaled-up." Access within wilderness by vehicle and a "sky track" lift was required to complete the project. No new route construction occurred.



*Construction of rock vehicle barrier.*



*Completed barrier.*

# 3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

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## General Accomplishments

General accomplishments during fiscal year 2014 included completion of a five-year resource management plan implementation strategy, continuing progress on "Operation Reclaim Our Arizona Monuments" (Operation "ROAM"), implementation of "Project Daylight," continuing progress with the Sonoran Landscape Initiative in partnership with Tread Lightly! (to address the issue of recreational target shooting in the Sonoran Desert region), and continuing progress with ongoing partnership agreements with Northern Arizona University. These efforts are discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this report.

Visitor days for the SDNM in fiscal year 2014 were estimated to be 8,313, an 18% increase over visitation for fiscal year 2013 (7,021 visitor days).

## Current Areas of Focus

The management issues and annual program of work for the Sonoran Desert National Monument have remained consistent for the past several years, with the exception that land use planning was completed in fiscal year 2012. The major issues include illegal human and drug trafficking — and the resultant impacts to natural resources of the Sonoran Desert National Monument, recreational target shooting, litigation stemming from decisions made in the recently completed land use plan for the Sonoran Desert National Monument, and an ongoing "temporary" route closure that restricts public vehicle access to popular areas of the monument.

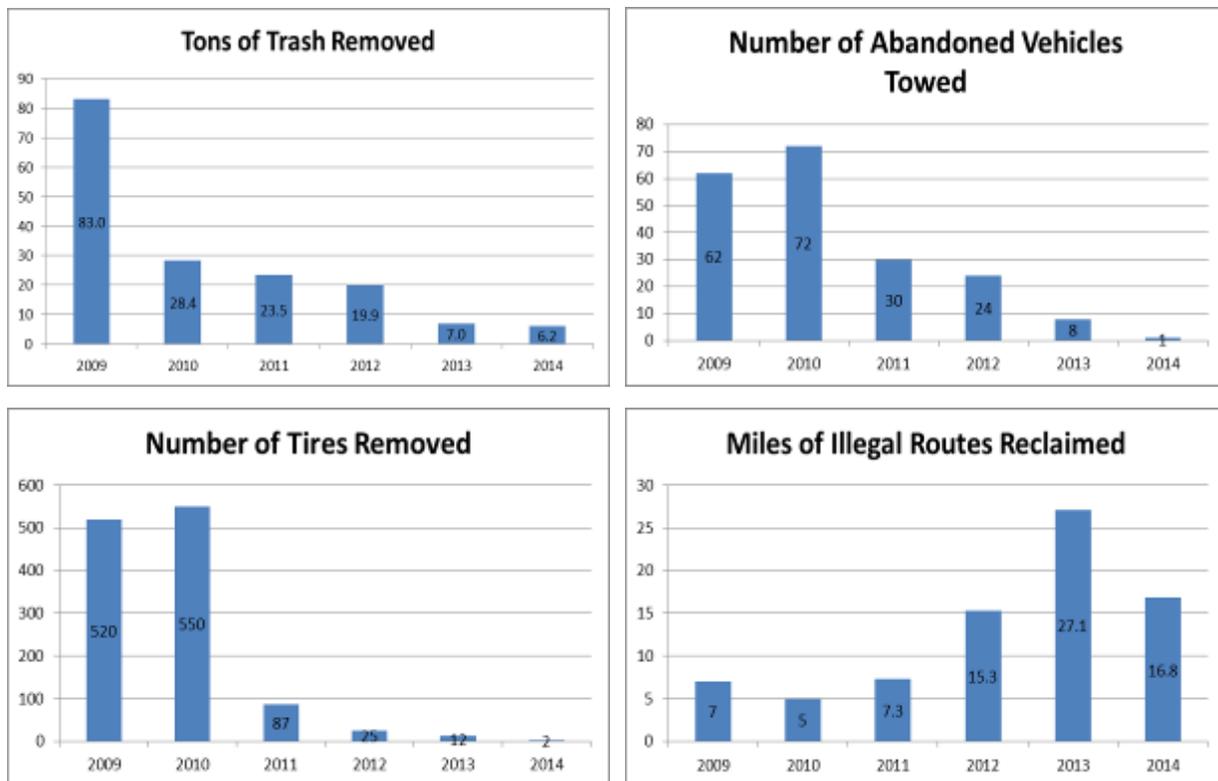
### Illegal human and drug trafficking

During the past several years, certain parts of the Sonoran Desert National Monument and adjacent public lands of the Lower Sonoran Field Office have experienced increased levels of illegal immigration and smuggling of undocumented aliens, and of trafficking in illegal drugs and weapons. Typically, individuals and gangs involved in these activities move people and illegal drugs north into the United States from the Republic of Mexico, crossing federally administered lands of numerous jurisdictions including the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, and the BLM, as well as those of the extensive Tohono O'odham Nation (Papago Indian Reservation) and Arizona State Trust and private lands.

Impacts resulting from illegal human and drug trafficking are addressed by operational funding provided through the "Southern Arizona Project." On the Sonoran Desert National Monument (and Ironwood Forest National Monument) this funding is used for Operation "Reclaim Our Arizona Monuments" (Operation "ROAM"). Operation ROAM began in fiscal year 2011 and has

remained the primary workload for monument staff. During Operation ROAM, the BLM increases law enforcement staffing on the Sonoran Desert National Monument for two week periods, or “surges,” during the cool weather season from October –May. Resource remediation work is conducted concomitantly with the increased law enforcement presence providing security. During fiscal year 2014 six law enforcement surges were conducted. During these periods, youth crews and BLM staff removed 6 tons of trash, one abandoned vehicle, four abandoned bicycles, and two automotive tires from the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Additionally, 16.8 miles of illegal vehicle routes were blocked and remediated to the extent possible.

The graphs provided below summarize some of the results of these efforts over the past several years. A decreasing trend in the amount of trash and other impacts year-over-year can be discerned, with the exception of “miles of illegal routes reclaimed.” This is due to BLM’s ability to move its field efforts to focus more on remediating illegal vehicle routes as other impacts are brought under control. During fiscal year 2014, Operation ROAM also completed projects outside of the SDNM on adjacent public lands of the Lower Sonoran Field Office, with an additional 32.4 tons of trash removed and 19.7 miles of illegal vehicle routes remediated.



During the course of these illegal activities smugglers often use thickets of trees and heavy brush along Interstate 8 to hide and await pick-up by vehicles. In addition to the refuse that accumulates at these areas of concealment and load-out points, these illegal activities also pose substantial public safety hazards – such as when load-out operations disrupt traffic or when

citizens stopped on the road shoulder are exposed to concealed criminals. Substantial hazards are also posed to state and federal agency employees working in the area (such as highway maintenance crews), and to law enforcement officers engaged in assisting the public as well as in suppressing these criminal activities.

Project Daylight was initiated to reduce threats to public and employee safety by improving visibility within the Interstate 8 right-of-way and nearby areas of public lands; limit the availability of areas of concealment adjacent to Interstate 8; enhance the ability of law enforcement agencies to suppress criminal activity along Interstate 8; and improve and maintain resource conditions where illegal activities have caused damage. Environmental analysis for the project was completed in fiscal year 2013, and in fiscal year 2014 field implementation was begun. The project pruned and thinned dense shrubbery at three critical locations along Interstate 8 in partnership with the Arizona Department of Transportation, Arizona Department of Corrections, and Arizona Conservation Corps. The adjacent photos illustrate the work that was accomplished. Initial reports from law enforcement staff indicate that the project has been successful in reducing the amount of criminal activity at these locations.



*Smuggling "lay-up" site adjacent to Interstate 8.*



*Field crews clearing brush adjacent to Interstate 8.*



*Dense vegetation "before."*



*Dense vegetation "after."*

## Recreational Target Shooting

During the completion of the land use plan for the Sonoran Desert National Monument the issue of recreational target shooting became quite controversial. Although during the draft stages of the resource management plan the BLM had considered closing the monument to target shooting, the decision ultimately was to leave the monument open to target shooting and to engage with the recreational target shooting community to address issues that often accompany this activity. To this end, the BLM entered into a partnership agreement with Tread Lightly! to facilitate this outreach effort. Using Tread Lightly!'s "Respected Access is Open Access" educational platform, a stakeholder group consisting of agency, non-governmental, and private entities was formed. Additionally, Tread Lightly! began developing educational materials such as brochures, posters, billboards and other media focused on the target shooting issue. This effort promises to be a major focus for the Sonoran Desert National monument in the years ahead.



"Respected Access is Open Access" billboard near SDNM.

## Litigation

The Sonoran Desert National Monument currently is defending two decisions from its recently completed land use plan in United States District Court for the District of Arizona. These are related to decisions involving livestock grazing (*Western Watersheds Project and Sierra Club v. Bureau of Land Management*) and recreational target shooting (*National Trust for Historic Preservation, et al., v. Bureau of Land Management*) on the monument.

## "Temporary" Route Closure

During 2008 approximately 88 miles of vehicle routes were closed to motor vehicles on the Sonoran Desert National Monument. This action was taken due to damage resulting from rampant off-road use of motor vehicles, and was expected to last two to three years. The BLM has since made great strides in remediating the damage; however, the area remains closed to vehicles due to lack of staffing to produce an activity plan for the development of modest facilities and access improvements that are believed necessary to prevent the recurrence of

such damage when the area is re-opened for public vehicle use. This plan is believed necessary for the BLM to remain in compliance with the regulations at 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8341.2, under which the closure was put into place, and is believed to be of critical importance to the future management of the monument.

## Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

Education and outreach conducted by monument staff included presentations at Operation ROAM law enforcement briefings, work crew orientations, gatherings of volunteers such as boy scout troops and others involved in clean-up projects; tours of the monument for various Washington and State office officials, and meetings with other agencies. During fiscal year 2014 the Sonoran Desert National Monument brochure was republished in a slightly edited version and is the monument's primary means of providing information to the public.

As discussed above, the BLM has entered into a partnership agreement with Tread Lightly! to develop an education and outreach program to recreational target shooters in south-central Arizona. This project has yielded the development of new brochures, posters, and billboards conveying a "Respected Access is Open Access" message fine-tuned for this recreation community. Additional projects under consideration include point-of-sale distribution of educational materials, radio public service announcements, and additional stakeholder meetings.

The Sonoran Desert National Monument Park Ranger engages the public on a weekly basis to provide information, education, directions, and regulatory information on a wide variety of topics to a diverse group of visitors.

## Partnerships

The Sonoran Desert National Monument is fortunate to have several long-lasting partnerships, particularly with the Geography, Planning, and Recreation Department at Northern Arizona University (NAU). Beginning in 2003, NAU has been helping the BLM with recreation impact site evaluation and monitoring, and later with developing remote sensing technologies and methods for evaluating impacts on the monument. More will be said about these projects in the section on "Science" below.

The Sonoran Desert National Monument works closely with the Arizona Conservation Corps, a non-profit organization devoted to providing training and employment to youth and at-risk youth in Arizona. This organization provides the primary labor force for Operation ROAM and other field projects conducted on the monument.

During the development and implementation of Project Daylight, the Sonoran Desert National Monument worked closely with the Arizona Department of Transportation and Arizona

Department of Corrections, and has partnership agreements with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Friends of the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

## Volunteers

During fiscal year 2014, the SDNM co-sponsored a volunteer project to clean up target shooting related debris at "Box Canyon" in partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Tread Lightly!. Volunteers contributed approximately 1,096 hours during this project (137 volunteers x 8 hours each). Box Canyon is a popular target shooting site located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the SDNM.

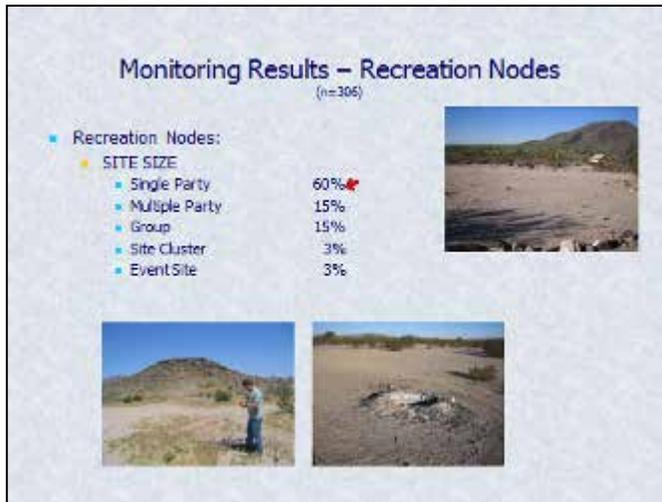
## Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

N/A.

# 4 Science

## Science

Recreation Impact Monitoring. Conducted in partnership with Northern Arizona University, this project began in 2003 with the goal of identifying and monitoring impacts from recreation activities on the Sonoran Desert National Monument. The monument has been inventoried to



establish a baseline of recreation impacts, and these sites have been monitored to detect changes over time. The next milestone is the development of management standards to which the monument would be adaptively managed under a “Limits of Acceptable Change” concept that responds to deviations from the established management standards.

*Recreation impact monitoring report*

Remote Sensing. Conducted in partnership with Northern Arizona University, this project began in 2010 with the goal of developing technical specifications and protocols for effectively using remote sensing technologies to identify, measure, and monitor impacts to the Sonoran Desert National Monument. The project initially focused on impacts resulting from illegal smuggling activities; however, it is now broadening its approach to the development of baseline image data, travel inventory and management, vegetation mapping, and other innovative studies.



*Travel routes mapped by visibility, Table Top Wilderness, SDNM*

Wildlife Corridor Validation. Conducted in partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, this project began in 2011 with the goal of validating Geographic Information System (GIS) derived wildlife movement corridors used in land use planning with actual wildlife



movements in the field. The project captured two mountain lions and fitted them with satellite enabled tracking collars. These lions have since perished; however, initial results were highly interesting and seem to indicate that at least one GIS modeled wildlife movement corridor was validated by actual movements in the field. The project expects to field more tracking collars in FY2014 and FY2015.

*Radio-collared mountain lion on SDNM*

Science Plan. A science plan for the Sonoran Desert National Monument has not yet been started.

# 5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

During the development of the resource management plan for the Sonoran Desert National Monument, eight “objects” were identified for the monument as described in Presidential Proclamation 7397. The following descriptions of these objects are taken verbatim from Presidential Proclamation 7397:

## Functioning Desert Ecosystem

“The Sonoran Desert National Monument is a magnificent example of untrammled Sonoran Desert landscape. The area encompasses a functioning desert ecosystem with an extraordinary



*Photo by Bob Wick*

array of biological, scientific, and historic resources. The most biologically diverse of the North American deserts, the Monument consists of distinct mountain ranges separated by wide valleys, and includes large saguaro cactus forest communities that provide excellent habitat for a wide range of wildlife species.”

## “Functioning Desert Ecosystem” Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

## “Functioning Desert Ecosystem” Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	486,400 – Land Health Assessments	486,400	252,500 acres monitored for Land Health Assessment per Arizona standards for Rangeland Health. 157,700 acres of wilderness in three units monitored for wilderness character.

## Stressors Affecting “Functioning Desert Ecosystem”

No overt threat to the functioning desert ecosystem of the Sonoran Desert National Monument as described in 2001 is evident. Although impacts from invasive weeds, illegal human uses, and off-road use of vehicles are evident, these impacts appear at this time to be minor and there are no readily observable or known pathogens, climatic factors, or activities that would appear to threaten properly functioning biotic communities of the monument.

### Diversity of Plant and Animal Species

“The Monument’s biological resources include a spectacular diversity of plant and animal species. The higher peaks include unique woodland assemblages, while the lower elevation lands offer one of the most structurally complex examples of paloverde/mixed cacti association in the Sonoran Desert. The dense stands of leguminous trees and cacti are dominated by saguaros, palo-verde trees, ironwood, prickly pear, and cholla. Important natural water holes, known as tinajas, exist throughout the Monument. The endangered acuna pineapple cactus is also found in the Monument.”



*Hedgehog Cactus*

### “Diversity of Plant and Animal Species” Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

**“Diversity of Plant and Animal Species” Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	486,400-Land Health Assessments	484,400	252,500 acres monitored for Land Health Assessment per Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health

**Stressors Affecting “Diversity of Plant and Animal Species”**

No overt threat to the diversity of plant and animal species of the Sonoran Desert National Monument as described in 2001 is evident. Although impacts from invasive weeds, illegal human uses, and off-road use of vehicles are evident, these impacts appear at this time to be minor and there are no readily observable or known pathogens, climatic factors, or activities that would appear to threaten the diversity of plant and animal species of the monument.

Saguaro Cactus Forests

“The most striking aspect of the plant communities within the Monument are [sic] the abundant saguaro cactus forests. The saguaro is a signature plant of the Sonoran Desert.



Individual saguaro plants are indeed magnificent, but a forest of these plants, together with the wide variety of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that make up the forest community, is an impressive site [sic] to behold. The saguaro cactus forests within the Monument are a national treasure, rivaling those within the Saguaro National Park.”

*Saguaro Cactus*

**“Saguaro Cactus Forests” Status and Trend Table**

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

### “Saguaro Cactus Forests” Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	A system for inventorying “saguaro cactus forests” has not yet been put into place.	320,333 (area of monument classified as “Arizona Upland Subdivision of Sonoran Desertscrub Biotic Province.”	87,338 acres monitored during Land Health Assessment.

### Stressors Affecting “Saguaro Cactus Forests”

Approximately 21,500 acres are not meeting Arizona Standard #3 for Rangeland Health (“productive and diverse upland and riparian-wetland communities of native species exist and are maintained”); 500 acres of this sum are not meeting standard due to livestock grazing and the remaining 21,000 are thought to not be meeting standard due to drought, wildfire, or human causes. Although impacts from recreational target shooting, illegal human uses, and off-road use of vehicles are evident, these impacts appear at this time to be minor and the saguaro forests of the monument are not believed to be threatened.

### Sand Tank Mountains

“The rich diversity, density, and distribution of plants in the Sand Tank Mountains area of the Monument is especially striking and can be attributed to the management regime in place since the area was withdrawn for military purposes in 1941. In particular, while some public access to the area is allowed, no livestock grazing has occurred for nearly 50 years. To extend the extraordinary diversity and overall ecological health of the Sand Tanks [sic] Mountains area, land adjacent and within biological resources similar to the area withdrawn for military purposes should be subject to a similar management regime to the extent possible.”



*Sand Tank Mountains*

### “Sand Tank Mountains” Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

### “Sand Tank Mountains” Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	83,554. Vegetation of the Sand Tank Mountains was inventoried in 2004-2011 by the Pacific Biodiversity Institute.	83,554 (approximate area extent)	0

### Stressors Affecting “Sand Tank Mountains”

No overt threat to the Sand Tank Mountains of the Sonoran Desert National Monument as described in 2001 is evident. Although impacts from illegal human uses are evident, these impacts appear at this time to be minor and there are no readily observable or known pathogens, climatic factors, or activities that would appear to threaten the Sand Tank Mountains.

### Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climate



“The Monument contains an abundance of packrat middens, allowing for scientific analysis of plant species and climates in past eras. Scientific analysis of the midden [sic] shows that the area received far more precipitation 20,000 years ago, and slowly became more arid. Vegetation for the area changed from juniper-oak-pinion pine woodland to the vegetation found today in the Sonoran Desert, although a few plants from the more mesic period, including the Kofa Mountain barberry, Arizona rosewood, and junipers, remain on higher elevations of north-facing slopes.”

*Opportunities for scientific study*

**“Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climate” Status and Trend Table**

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

**“Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climate” Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	0	486,400	0

**Stressors Affecting “Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climate”**

None.

Vegetation Communities: Creosote Bush-Bursage, Desert Grassland, and Washes

“The lower elevations and flatter areas of the Monument contain the creosote-bursage plant community. This plant community thrives in the open expanses between the mountain ranges, and connects the other plant communities together. Rare patches of desert grassland can also be found throughout the Monument, especially in the Sand Tank Mountains area. The washes in the area support a much denser vegetation community than the surrounding desert, including mesquite, ironwood, paloverde, desert honeysuckle, chuparosa, and desert willow, as well as a variety of herbaceous plants. This vegetation offers the dense cover bird species need for successful nesting, foraging, and escape, and birds heavily use the washes during migration.”



*Vegetation Communities: Creosote Bush—Bursage*

**“Vegetation Communities: Creosote Bush-Bursage, Desert Grassland, and Washes”  
Status and Trend Table**

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

**“Vegetation Communities: Creosote Bush-Bursage, Desert Grassland, and Washes”  
Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	166,067  490 miles of desert washes	166,067 (area of monument not classified as “Arizona Upland Subdivision of Sonoran Desertscrub Biotic Province.”  Total miles/acres of desert washes has not been determined.	151,643 acres monitored during Land Health Assessment.  490 miles

**Stressors Affecting “Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climate”**

Approximately 106,000 acres of the creosote-bursage plant community are not meeting Arizona Standard #3 for Rangeland Health (“productive and diverse upland and riparian-wetland communities of native species exist and are maintained”); 8,000 acres of this sum are not meeting standard due to livestock grazing and the remaining 98,000 acres are thought to not be meeting standard due to drought, wildfire, or human causes. Approximately 294 miles of desert washes did not achieve rangeland health standards, with livestock grazing cited as the probable cause for 12 of these miles. Although impacts from recreational target shooting, illegal human uses, and off-road use of vehicles are evident, the vegetation communities and desert washes of the Sonoran Desert National Monument are not believed to be threatened.

Wildlife

“The diverse plant communities present in the Monument support a wide variety of wildlife, including the endangered Sonoran pronghorn, a robust population of desert bighorn sheep, especially in the Maricopa Mountains area, and other mammalian species such as mule deer,

javelina, mountain lion, gray fox, and bobcat. Bat species within the Monument include the endangered lesser long-nosed bat, the California leaf-nosed bat, and the cave myotis. Over 200 species of [song] birds are found in the Monument, including 59 species known to nest in



*Collared Peccary*

the Vekol Valley area. Numerous species of raptors and owls inhabit the Monument, including the elf owl and the western screech owl. The Monument also supports a diverse array of reptiles and amphibians, including the Sonoran desert tortoise and the red-backed whiptail. The BLM has designated approximately 25,000 acres of land in the Maricopa Mountains area as critical habitat for the desert tortoise. The Vekol Valley and Sand Tank Mountain areas contain especially diverse and robust populations of amphibians. During summer rainfall events, thousands of Sonoran green toads in the Vekol Valley can be heard moving around and calling out."

**"Wildlife" Status and Trend Table**

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

**"Wildlife" Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	0	486,400	20,000 acres monitored for terrestrial wildlife habitat

**Stressors Affecting "Wildlife"**

No overt threat to wildlife of the Sonoran Desert National Monument as described in 2001 is evident. Although impacts from illegal human uses are evident, these impacts appear at this time to be minor and there are no readily observable or known pathogens, climatic factors, or activities that would appear to threaten wildlife of the monument.

Archaeological and Historic Sites

“The Monument also contains many significant archaeological and historic sites, including rock art sites, lithic quarries, and scattered artifacts. Vekol Wash is believed to have been an important prehistoric travel and trade corridor between the Hohokam and tribes located in what is now Mexico. Signs of large villages and permanent habitat[ation] sites occur throughout the area, and particularly along the bajadas of the Table Top Mountains. Occupants of these villages were the ancestors of today’s O’odham, Quechan, Cocopah, Maricopa, and other tribes. The Monument also contains a much used trail corridor 23 miles long in which are found remnants of several important historic trails, including the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (NHT), the Mormon Battalion Trail, and the Butterfield Overland Stage Route.”



*Papago Indian Chief Mine*

**“Archaeological and Historic Sites” Status and Trend Table**

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good.	Stable.

**“Archaeological and Historic Sites” Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table**

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
486,400	29,708 acres / 291 recorded cultural resources	486,400	26 prehistoric and historic sites

## Stressors Affecting “Archaeological and Historic Sites”

No overt threat to the archaeological and historic sites of the Sonoran Desert National Monument as described in 2001 is evident. Although impacts from illegal human uses are evident, these impacts appear at this time to be minor and there are no readily observable or known pathogens, climatic factors, or activities that would appear to threaten archaeological and historic sites of the monument.

# 6 Summary of Performance Measures

Although detailed inventory and monitoring protocols specifically designed for the eight objects of the Sonoran Desert National Monument have yet to be devised and put into place, inventory and monitoring for related resource program areas — such as for rangeland health assessments, wilderness condition, recreation uses, and wildlife habitat — is ongoing and has not indicated potential threats to either the status or trend of monument objects. Accordingly, the general status of monument objects is regarded as “Good” and the trend as “Stable.”

Summary Table*		
Resource, Object, or Value	Status	Trend
Functioning Desert Ecosystem	Good	Stable
Diversity of Plant and Animal Species	Good	Stable
Saguaro Cactus Forests	Good	Stable
Sand Tank Mountains	Good	Stable
Scientific Analysis of Plant Species and Climate	Good	Stable
Vegetation Communities	Good	Stable
Wildlife	Good	Stable
Archaeological and Historic Sites	Good	Stable

\*This table is a synthesis of the individual object/value status tables in the “Objects, Values, and Stressors” section.

# 7

## Manager's Letter

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During fiscal year 2014 the Sonoran Desert National Monument completed the five-year implementation strategy for its Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan signed on September 14, 2012. Monument staff continued to address impacts to resources caused by illegal, borderlands-related activities; hosted the Director of the Bureau of Land Management on a tour of the southern portions of the monument; completed a land health evaluation of livestock grazing allotments bisected by the monument; worked to address recreational target shooting through partnership with Tread Lightly! and the Sonoran Landscape Project; and addressed two lawsuits entered in federal district court over decisions made in the resource management plan relating to livestock grazing and recreational target shooting on the monument.

Looking toward fiscal year 2015, the primary focus areas for the annual program of work on the Sonoran Desert National Monument continues to be addressing impacts from Borderlands-related issues, partnership building to address impacts of recreational target shooting, implementing travel management on the monument, and addressing a "temporary" vehicle closure implemented in 2008 for a popular area of the monument damaged by off-road vehicle use. This area, which includes the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and the route of the 19th-century Butterfield Overland Mail, is a natural attraction for the public and will be important in promoting the benefits of the Sonoran Desert National Monument and National Landscape Conservation System in years to come.



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

## **Sonoran Desert National Monument**

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January, 2014

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