



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 5, 2024

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Progress Report No. 5 on Conservation Land Acquisition Funding – Additional Information for January 9, 2024, Item #32, Pima County Parklands Foundation Acquisition Agreement**

The Board of Supervisors (Board) included \$2 million in the adopted Fiscal Year 2022/2023 budget for acquisition of conservation land and allocated another \$2 million for FY2023/2024, collectively the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund.

Attached is the fifth progress report from the internal Conservation Land Acquisition Team (CLAT) with updates on the status of property acquisitions, fund status, and reimbursement expected from the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) grant awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Under my previous direction, CLAT has investigated eleven properties for potential acquisition. Eight acquisitions have been completed per Board-approved acquisition agreements adding approximately 321.3 acres to the County's Conservation Land portfolio. An acquisition agreement for the 311-acre Parkland Foundation property adjacent to Colossal Cave Mountain Park will be on your January 9, 2024 agenda.

With approval of that acquisition agreement, the County will have acquired fee title to 623 acres since March 2023 and be in position to receive a future transfer of the 6,963-acre State grazing lease from the Parklands Foundation. The balance of the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund will then be approximately \$27,580.

The Board's mandate in allocating funding for conservation land acquisition was to advance implementation of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). All eight completed acquisitions and the proposed Parkland Foundation acquisition fulfill that directive. Together they protect regional biological diversity, preserve rural heritage and culture, and retain high quality outdoor recreation opportunities – all of which are SDCP fundamentals.

Acquisition costs for two properties are eligible for partial reimbursement from the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) grant awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The County intends to submit a request for reimbursement mid-February 2024. Total expected reimbursement is \$185,077.


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The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors

Re: **Progress Report No. 5 on Conservation Land Acquisition Funding – Additional Information for January 9, 2024, Item #32, Pima County Parklands Foundation Acquisition Agreement**

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I approve of staff's proposal to combine \$14,923 from the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund balance with the HCP Grant reimbursement creating a pool of \$200,000 to remedy post-acquisition conditions that pose immediate safety risks to the public and staff or which leave the new asset vulnerable to unauthorized access or degradation.

Expenditure of this pool of funds will be subject to guidelines included in the attached, which define a priority ranking to fund remedies for undesirable situations. Requirements are also applied to ensure equitable distribution across multiple properties and timely application of remedies.

JKL/anc

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco Garcia, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Linda Mayro, Director, Office of Sustainability and Conservation
Victor Pereira, Director, Natural Resources Parks and Recreation
Nicole Fyffe, Senior Advisor, County Administrator's Office

Date: January 4, 2024

To: Jan Leshar
County Administrator

From: Linda Mayro, Director *LM*
Sustainability and Conservation

Thru: Carmine DeBonis, Jr.
Deputy County Administrator, Public Works

Re: **Conservation Land Acquisition Fund – Progress Report No. 5**

This memo is the fifth in a series of updates pertaining to progress toward expending the Board of Supervisors' (Board) FY2022/2023 Budget allocation of \$2 million for the acquisition of conservation land and the additional \$2 million allocated in their adoption of the FY2023/2024 Budget, collectively the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund.

Previously, your [September 12, 2022 memo](#) to the Board presented guidelines to evaluate properties for potential acquisition with the FY 2022/2023 allocation and directed that a Conservation Land Acquisition Team (CLAT) carry out those evaluations. Subsequent updates occurred [October 20, 2022](#); [December 6, 2022](#); [June 1, 2023](#); and [August 16, 2023](#).

This memo includes an update on property acquisitions, funding status, and reimbursement expected from the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) grant awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We propose to use grant reimbursement funds along with a portion of the remaining Conservation Land Acquisition Fund to reinvest into acquired properties addressing immediate public safety and asset protection needs; guidelines are offered on how these funds would be applied.

Property Acquisition and Funding Status

CLAT has worked diligently to execute the Board's direction and acquire properties that advance implementation of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP); see summary table below. Collectively, these acquisitions protect regional biological diversity, preserve rural heritage and culture, and retain high quality outdoor recreation opportunities – all of which are SDCP fundamentals.

As of December 31, 2023, nearly \$2.9 million will have been spent out of the \$4 million allocated for conservation land acquisition. Under your previous direction, CLAT investigated a total of eleven properties for potential acquisition. Eight of these properties have been acquired in fee title. This has added 312.3 acres to the County's Conservation Land portfolio since March 2023.

On January 9, 2024, Real Property Services is presenting an acquisition agreement (\$1,064,000) to the Board for the 311-acre Parklands Foundation property adjacent to Colossal Cave Mountain Park. This fee acquisition would also result in a subsequent transfer of a 6,936-acre state grazing lease to the County. Assuming the Board approves this agreement, approximately \$27,580 will remain in the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund.

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Property	# parcels/acres	Property Cost	Status
The Nature Conservancy	3 parcels/20 ac	\$289,320	<i>Acquisition completed 3/31/2023</i>
Tuck 20	1 parcel/20 ac	\$41,750	<i>Acquisition completed 5/8/2023</i>
Buckelew In- holding	1 parcel/10.4 ac	\$734,000	<i>Acquisition completed 7/3/2023</i>
Redstone *	1 parcel/8.4 ac	\$135,105	<i>Acquisition completed 8/29/2023</i>
Lande	1 parcel/5.3 ac	\$125,150	<i>Acquisition completed 9/22/2023</i>
Christensen	1 parcel/4.1 ac	\$92,500	<i>Acquisition completed 9/27/2023</i>
Old Seco	2 parcels/240 ac	\$1,204,173	<i>Acquisition completed 12/8/2023</i>
Larsen *	1 parcel/4.1 ac	\$115,000	<i>Acquisition completed 12/29/2023</i>
Parklands Foundation	5 parcels/311 ac (+ 7,100 ac grazing lease)	\$1,064,000	Acquisition Agmt goes to Board 1/9/2024

(*) denotes properties where certain acquisition costs are reimbursable under the federal HCP Grant.

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HCP Grant Reimbursement and Proposal to Reinvest

The terms of the HCP Grant allow for a 74% reimbursement for eligible property acquisition costs. The Redstone and Larsen properties are grant eligible and we intend to submit reimbursement requests for both by mid-February 2024. Total expected reimbursement is \$185,077 (\$99,977 for Redstone; \$85,100 for Larsen).

The Board's allocations for conservation land acquisition have added new properties to the County's land portfolio yet there is no funding to remedy those existing conditions that pose safety risks to the public and staff or leave the new asset vulnerable to unauthorized access or degradation. CLAT, therefore, proposes to use the \$185,077 grant reimbursement plus \$14,923 from the remaining Conservation Land Acquisition Fund balance to reinvest up to \$200,000 for such immediate post-acquisition needs on properties acquired with the FY2023/2024 allocation to secure them for their intended use.

The attached guidelines have been drafted to govern how this funding would be applied including a priority ranking of situations needing remedy. They also reflect CLAT's intent to equitably provide funding across multiple properties and ensure concerning situations are remedied in a timely manner.

Attachment

cc: Victor Pereira, Director - NRPR
Eric Shepp, Director – RFCD
Jeff Teplitsky, Director – Real Property Services
Conservation Land Acquisition Team Members

Proposed Guidelines Governing Expenditure of Readiness Funds on Conservation Properties Acquired with the Board's FY24 Allocation

Goal

To remedy existing post-acquisition conditions that pose immediate safety risks to the public and staff or leave the new asset vulnerable to unauthorized access or degradation and to prepare the property for timely use.

Requirements

- Funds are available only for properties acquired with the Board's FY2023/2024 allocation.
- Spread this funding across all properties acquired and address readiness/remediation needs proportionally.
- For each property, encumber readiness/remediation funds within 6 months of the acquisition date or 6 months from receipt of permission to use Readiness Funds whichever is later, and aim to complete work within one year of that date.
- Allow readiness/remediation funding to remain available after June 30, 2024, to allow funding for work to be completed following acquisition.

Ranked Priorities

The following types of activities and expenditures are eligible for prioritized funding based on this ranking:

Priority 1 - secure property for public and staff safety and health.

Examples include:

- ◇ capping open hand dug wells
- ◇ demolition of unsafe buildings or other infrastructure
- ◇ clean up of dumped debris

Priority 2 - secure the property against unauthorized entry.

Examples include:

- ◇ gating property entrances
- ◇ locking or otherwise securing buildings and valuable infrastructure like wells
- ◇ minimal fencing or other barriers to secure property
- ◇ installing no trespassing signs in some areas

Proposed Guidelines Governing Expenditure of Readiness Funds on Conservation Properties Acquired with the Board's FY24 Allocation

Priority 3 is infrastructure remediation.

This is to repair existing infrastructure that will be utilized in the future use and management of the property. Examples include:

- ◇ replacing/repairing downed fencing or other barriers
- ◇ repair of access road to property
- ◇ repair of building(s) that will be occupied
- ◇ repair of well/water systems so it is useable

Priority 4 is natural space remediation.

Examples include:

- ◇ initial removal of limited areas of invasive species that could spread from the property to other nearby 'clear' properties
- ◇ treatment of invasives that create significant fire danger threatening occupied structures
- ◇ repair of active eroding areas that threaten resource values

Priority 5 is public access actions.

Examples include:

- ◇ installing county conservation area signs, posting park rules
- ◇ surveying parcel as needed to determine if access or other infrastructure is on the property