

NEWS RELEASE

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Critical land and water along San Pedro River permanently protected Partners come together to protect one of the Southwest's most ecologically significant rivers and a vital migratory bird corridor

PHOENIX – The Upper San Pedro River, one of the last free-flowing rivers in Arizona, received additional protection today as 122 acres just north of the United States/Mexico border were acquired by The Nature Conservancy and the Arizona Game and Fish Department with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The property is one of the largest privately owned parcels adjacent to this stretch of the river, where groundwater pumping would directly impact the river's flow.

The San Pedro River begins in Mexico and flows north to meet the Gila River, near the town of Winkelman, Arizona. It is nationally renowned for its natural diversity and its support of migrating birds. About 250 species — including 1 to 4 million migrating songbirds — rely on the river and its streamside habitat annually as they move between wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America and breeding grounds in the United States and Canada. The river also provides habitat for approximately 80 species of mammals and reptiles, including the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and Huachuca water umbel.

The property was purchased with funding received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Section 6 Endangered Species Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Program and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The latter is part of the foundation's \$13 million grant to The Nature Conservancy to support state wildlife action plans across five Rocky Mountain states – Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming.

“Acquisition of this property is critical for the protection of adjacent aquatic and riparian habitat along the Upper San Pedro River, and it is a key step towards conserving several endangered and threatened species, including the southwestern willow flycatcher, Chiricahua leopard frogs and Gila topminnow,” said Bob Broscheid, assistant director of wildlife management for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. “The type of habitat found on the property supports among the highest known nesting bird density of any habitat in North America, so protecting it is important for preserving species diversity and providing connectivity corridors between habitats.”

Patrick Graham, state director of The Nature Conservancy in Arizona, adds, “This project is a great example of how public agencies, non-profits, public funding and private funding sources such as the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation can work together to accomplish tremendous feats to conserve a vital natural water source such as the San Pedro River.”

According to Steve Spangle, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Arizona field supervisor, the river's future requires these types of collaborative efforts. “The San Pedro River is under tremendous pressure as it faces increased human water demands, drought and climate change. Only by working together, with common goals, can we overcome these odds to ensure the health of the river for people and nature for generations to come.”

This property, commonly referred to as the Yarbrough property, is part of the historic Clinton Ranch, which at one time included much of the land along the Upper San Pedro in the Palominas, Arizona, area. It is adjacent to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Riparian National Conservation Area on one side and to a 910-acre parcel that is

protected by BLM under a conservation easement.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. The Nature Conservancy in Arizona has been protecting nature and preserving life for more than 40 years. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at nature.org/arizona.

The **Arizona Game and Fish Department** is charged with conserving, enhancing, and restoring Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and habitats through aggressive protection and management programs, and to provide wildlife resources and safe watercraft and off-highway vehicle recreation for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use by present and future generations.

The mission of the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** (USFWS) is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The USFWS is both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for its scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on the USFWS's work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

The mission of the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation** (www.ddcf.org) is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties.

State wildlife action plans were first conceived in 2000, when Congress mandated that each state develop a comprehensive strategy for conserving its wildlife in order to receive federal funds. The states submitted their plans to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the fall of 2005, and they were all approved by Congress in February of 2007. In developing these plans, the state wildlife agencies were careful to consider the broad range of wildlife, including game and non-game species, common species as well as endangered ones. They identified and prioritized key wildlife habitat, in many cases using the latest technology to map these lands