

Is the cost worth the risk?

Why are we blowing such a large amount of money on such a small amount of land?

Saving a lot of land might do little for wildlife, while saving a little money might have wide benefits elsewhere.

Is the cost worth the risk?

- Buying land is just the start . . .
- But there are other hidden, recurring costs of habitat protection, the price tag depends on how much land the *public* buys :
 - managing the land
 - monitoring its plants
 - monitoring its animals

Is the cost worth the risk?

- Even *vacant* land will have to be maintained, secured or kept up.
- And in the end, ambitious plans to protect open spaces, and the plants and animals living there, might not even work.

Pushing people

- It costs money to withdraw open land from development, and Tucson is not a rich town - earning less than \$9 for each \$10 made by households nationwide.
- Preserving land also pushes people to places they wouldn't otherwise choose to live, putting affordable housing at risk.

Pushing people

- Only the rich have the means to live amidst nature preserves, while others find their options for housing grow more compact and more urban.
- The SDCP will only benefit owners of large land parcels that will be part of county purchases.
- Those wealthy landowners also benefit from increased property values because of proximity to officially protected parcels.
- These land restrictions might also reduce access to public lands.

The Cost

- Pima County is one of the fastest growing areas in the Nation.
- In 10 years (1900-2000), the population in Pima County grew 26.5%
- The SDCP limits this growth which limits
 - Economic development and growth
 - County revenue
 - Cultural growth
- Tucson can remain stagnant, or we can aspire to be a better community!

The Cost

- Desert protection might cost up to one billion dollars!!
 - \$ 11 million for the Tortolitas
 - \$ 5 million for Avra Valley
 - \$ 10 million for land surrounding Davis-Monthan
- These millions are just for purchasing the dead land and do not include protection and management costs

The Cost

- Desert protection, as with all public spending, takes a heavier toll on people in Pima County:
 - Median family income here is \$44,446, according to the 2000 census, or about 88 percent of the national average. It has remained there since 1990.
- Pima County also has the highest property tax rate of Arizona's 15 counties.
- The plan could hurt homeowners who already pay the state's highest property tax rate.

Independent Research

- In the highly charged political atmosphere surrounding the far-reaching Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, it would be valuable to have an independent group research other communities that have implemented large-scale land-use plans.
- The following are results of a report conducted by the Morrison Institute, an independent research group . . .

Independent Research

- Business leaders are divided on whether the conservation plan will actually allow developers to know where they may develop.
- Most business people believe the amount of affordable housing will be reduced.

Independent Research

- Thus, the issue should not be dismissed as a self-serving, pro-development argument.
- If left unchecked, housing price increases will do significant harm. Many families won't be able to buy homes!

References

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