

# a living river

THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER FROM MEXICO TO MARANA



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Julius Schlosburg

**The Santa Cruz River, from Mexico to Marana, is a living flowing river and the foundation of community health and prosperity.**



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**We are working to establish an Urban Wildlife Refuge for the Santa Cruz River in Tucson!**



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## Who is behind the program?

- Dept. of Interior || U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service || Urban Wildlife Conservation Program



## What does an Urban Wildlife Refuge do?

- Engages urban communities to strengthen conservation.
- Establishes a federally recognized refuge within 25 miles of an urban center.
- Focuses on boosting populations subject to environmental injustice.



## How do we create an Urban Wildlife Refuge?

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has created 8 standards of excellence.
- Applicants must demonstrate how a potential UWR would meet those standards.



## Urban Wildlife Refuge standards of excellence

1. Know and relate to the community (demographics).
2. Connect urban people with nature through meaningful engagement.
3. Build partnerships.
4. Be a community asset.
5. Ensure adequate long-term resources.
6. Provide equitable access.
7. Ensure visitors feel safe and comfortable.
8. Model sustainability for the surrounding community.



# How is SI working to create an Urban Wildlife Refuge?

Over past year:

- Met with partners to build interest;
- Explored the refuge extent;
- Assessed and mapped Tucson's urban river corridor for demographics and ideal HQ;
- Created a proposal for the regional and national U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.





**FRIENDS OF  
VALLE DE ORO  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**



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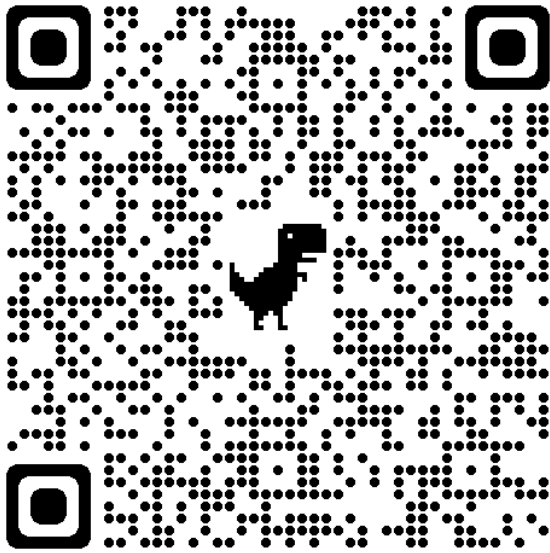


# What comes next?

Current phase: Continued stakeholder and resident engagement

- Socialize the idea of a Tucson Urban Wildlife Refuge
  - Elected and appointed officials
  - Academia
  - Impactful NGOs and orgs like MPNA
  - Tohono O’odham Nation
  - State/regional/federal agencies
- No properties identified as yet





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PARA LEER ESTE INFORME  
EN ESPAÑOL, VISITE  
[www.tiny.cc/tlr21sp](http://www.tiny.cc/tlr21sp)

# a living river

CHARTING SANTA CRUZ RIVER CONDITIONS  
DOWNTOWN TUCSON TO MARANA—2021 WATER YEAR

CONNECTING WILDLIFE WITH WATER

## HERITAGE PROJECT REACH

Beginning north of Silverlake Road, this reach historically flowed year-round until 1914 and was home to several species of native fishes, frogs, and other aquatic species. Groundwater pumping caused water levels to decline, and the reach has typically been dry since the 1940s. Flows returned in June 2019, when Tucson Water launched the Santa Cruz River Heritage Project. Using the reclaimed water system, the project transports effluent from the Agua Nueva facility and releases up to 3,150 acre-feet annually into the river downtown. Though developed primarily to recharge water in the aquifer to store for future use, the Heritage Project is also creating riparian habitat, supporting community cultural connections, providing educational opportunities, and improving the quality of life in downtown neighborhoods.

- Tres Rios
- Agua Nueva
- Heritage Project



1,400 ACRE-FEET  
Total Water Released  
in Heritage Project Reach



152  
bird  
species



46  
dragonfly  
species



6  
native  
frog  
species



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CHARTING SANTA CRUZ RIVER  
CONDITIONS  
NOGALES WASH TO AMADO


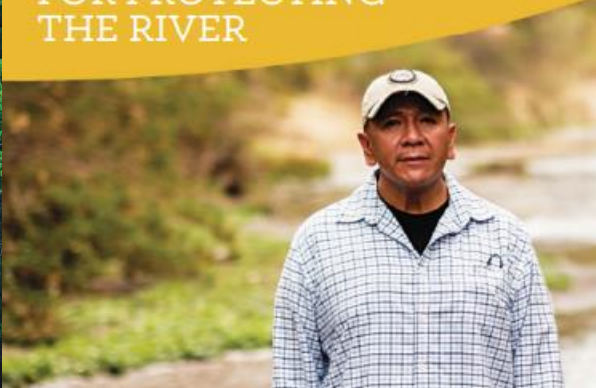

WATER YEAR  
**2021**  
AÑO HÍDRICO

TRAZAR LAS CONDICIONES DEL  
RÍO SANTA CRUZ DESDE EL ARROYO  
LOS NOGALES HASTA AMADO


a living river / un río vivo

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BINATIONAL  
COOPERATION VITAL  
FOR PROTECTING  
THE RIVER



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# February 25, 2023 Santa Cruz River Trash Cleanup

2 hours

2,000 lbs

25-50 vols

2 hours

7,000 lbs

110 vols