

Preserving the McDowell Mountains

Southern Region of the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Scottsdale, Arizona

In 1990, Scottsdale citizens initiated the preservation of the McDowell Mountains and surrounding Sonoran Desert. A vision was established to protect approximately 34,000 acres of desert open space; an area roughly equal to one-third of Scottsdale's total land area.

The protected land is called the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve. The goal of the Preserve is to create a large area of sustainable desert habitat, and to connect it to adjacent natural open spaces including the Tonto National Forest and the Maricopa County Regional Park.

Scottsdale voters approved initial funding of 0.2 increase in the city sales tax in 1995 to purchase land in the McDowell Mountains and surrounding desert.

In 1998, voters approved using the tax to purchase land in an expanded boundary primarily north of the McDowell Mountains which is comprised of isolated mountains, deep washes, and lush Sonoran Desert vegetation.

In 2004, voters approved an additional 0.15 increase in the city sales tax for land acquisition and trail and trailhead improvements.

Arizona voters approved Proposition 303 in 1998, which established an annual appropriation of \$20 million in the Growing Smarter Land Conservation fund for a period of 10 years. The purpose of the fund, managed by Arizona State Parks, is to provide grants to local government agencies for the permanent conservation of open space.

From 2009 through 2013, the City of Scottsdale received \$86 million dollars from the grant fund, and combined it with \$166 million of City Preserve sales tax revenue. Through this partnership, the City was able to acquire roughly 15,582 acres of premier Sonoran Desert habitat from the Arizona State Land Department for permanent protection. Today, the total acreage of protected land within the Preserve is 30,580 acres.

The Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve is managed through a unique partnership between the City of Scottsdale and the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, where the City owns and operates the Preserve and the Conservancy supports the City in the important work of managing and protecting the Preserve.

The goal of the partnership is for the Preserve to be protected in a natural state while providing appropriate recreational opportunities for this and future generations so all can enjoy and experience the splendor of the mountains and Sonoran Desert.

This poster displays the acquisition of nearly 13,000 acres within the Southern Region of the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve by five-year time spans beginning in 1994. Additionally, lands protected by zoning and ordinance are shown to display the portion of the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve which has preserved the McDowell Mountains for all to enjoy in perpetuity.

