Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve
Update – January 2014

Land Acquisition

On November 19, 2013, the City of Scottsdale was the successful bidder at the Arizona State Land Department auction for 2,365 acres of land in the interior of the McDowell Mountains. The land is located along the primary ridge of the McDowell Mountains, generally south of Thompson Peak and north of Sunrise Peak. Total land area now protected by the Preserve is approximately 30,165 acres.

The City Council has also accepted the Preserve Commission's recommendations for the next parcels to pursue and has directed staff to begin the land acquisition process with ASLD for two separate parcels of State Trust land. The proposed area in "Parcel 1" includes a planned location for a major access area to the Preserve at the northeast corner of Pima and Dynamite Roads. Additionally, preservation of this area will link to existing Preserve land thus extending the size of the contiguous and connected Preserve north of Dynamite.

The land in "Parcel 1A" includes the western edge/embankments of the Rawhide Wash corridor which extends to the northeast off the corner of Pima and Dixileta Roads. This area is contiguous to existing Preserve land and would improve the buffering of the wash/habitat corridor from possible future development areas. Both parcels will enhance habitat and sustainability of the area, and expand the opportunity for passive recreational activities and appropriate planned access facilities for the northern portion of the Preserve.

Trailheads and Trails

- **Fraesfield Trailhead** – Construction is complete and the rustic (parking only, no water) trailhead is open for use. It is located on the north side of Dynamite at approximately the 134th Street alignment (13400 E. Rio Verde Dr). It provides access to the trails north and east of Fraesfield Mountain including the Whiskey Bottle and Black Hill Trails. Signage is in progress for the trailhead and newly constructed trails in the area.

- **North Area Trails** – Approximately 55 miles of trails are now open along with the Browns Ranch, Granite Mountain and Fraesfield trailhead facilities. Maps of these trails are available free of charge at the trailheads, or you can download it here. The second season of trail improvements in this area and within the Gooseneck area connecting the southern and northern Preserve areas have begun. . The existing trails in these areas were not planned or built in an environmentally sustainable manner. It is the City's responsibility to improve the trails to a sustainable level, reducing erosion and damage to the natural environment, and minimizing maintenance costs. The area is currently being assessed and work started in the Fraesfield Trailhead and south of Dynamite area.

- **Fountain Hills Connection** – Initial field planning has begun for the trail that will connect to the Fountain Hills Preserve and will be the first trail to be planned and constructed in the acreage acquired in 2013.

- **Upgrades at Gateway Trailhead** – A small portion of the Gateway building has been remodeled to add an area that is more functional for Pathfinder activities.

- **Lost Dog Wash Interpretive Trail -** The next step in planning for this proposed future amenity will be an on-site open house to review possible trail locations in the spring.

- **Boundary and Perimeter Fencing -** The boundary of the newly expanded northern area of the Preserve is more than 30 miles in length. Much of this edge is exposed to roadways, and had been legally accessed with motor vehicles for many decades. The City recognized early on that we would not be able to bring an end to this historic pattern of motor vehicle use overnight. It would take a multifaceted approach that includes physical barriers, signs, education, and enforcement. In 2012, the first phase of perimeter control began. By early summer of 2013, new wire and pipe rail fences, gates, and boundary signs surrounded most of the major historic vehicle access points. The second phase of improvements which bolster some of the areas from the first phase, and add new barriers in less prominent locations including cable barriers and mitigation efforts along the shared boundary with the Tonto have begun. We continue to assess all perimeter improvements for their effectiveness, and will make changes accordingly. In addition, we expect the increase in allowed users (i.e. hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians) to put significant pressure on illegal motorized users that may enter the Preserve. If you are in the Preserve and witness illegal motorized use PLEASE call the Scottsdale Police Department at (480) 312-5000. Be sure to tell the operator that you are reporting motor vehicle use in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve A call for service will be logged and it will assist in our enforcement efforts.

- **Motorized Commercial Tours –** Motorized Tours continue thru May 31, 2014. This action was authorized by City Council on June 18th 2013. . There is ongoing oversight and another incremental report to the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission in March with a final report in May/June 2014. No provision currently exists for motorized tours to be permitted beyond this period. Total visitors into the Preserve from September 1 thru Nov 30 on motorized tours were 347 individuals

For More Information:

City of Scottsdale
Preserve Division
(480) 312-7013
www.ScottsdaleAZ.gov/preserve

For info on public hikes and volunteering:

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy
(480) 998-7971
www.McdowellSonoran.org