



## WRP Natural Resources Committee's Southeastern Arizona/New Mexico (SoAZ/NM Project)



### **SoAZ/NM Project: A formula for success.**

As a direct result of this project's efforts, the area:

- Won the 2014 REPI Challenge (\$4 million)
- Received funding from the Arizona Military Installation Fund for a conservation easement/deed restriction of 908 acres within WRP SoAZ/NM Project priority Focus Area 1
- Fort Huachuca was designated a Sentinel Landscape
- Heightened awareness of the region's importance for natural resources and military operations



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*The Western Regional Partnership (WRP) identified the Southeastern Arizona/New Mexico Region (SoAZ/NM) as one of two important regions to collaborate on broad-based regional planning. This area was identified for its significant wildlife, military testing and training, renewable energy development and other infrastructure. Both projects are demonstration projects that have been very successful.*

### **Success of the Southeastern Arizona/New Mexico Region (SoAZ/NM) Project**

The Southeastern Arizona/New Mexico Region (SoAZ/NM) original study area consisted of 13,100 square miles which was refined to three identified focus areas, consisting of 1,335 square miles. This project was supported by extensive GIS analysis and stakeholder involvement. As a direct result of this project's efforts, the area won the 2014 REPI Challenge (\$4 million); funding from the Arizona Military Installation Fund for a conservation easement/deed restriction of 908 acres within WRP SoAZ/NM Project priority Focus Area 1; and Fort Huachuca was designated a Sentinel Landscape. This Project, which included significant involvement of WRP Partners, has heightened awareness of the region's importance for natural resources and military operations. The Sentinel Landscape Advisory Committee, led by Fort Huachuca, has assumed management of this project and will provide updates to WRP Partners.

### **WRP SoAZ/NM Project Goals:**

- Identify areas important to both **ecological and military values** through GIS Analysis with partner input
- Examine appropriate locations for conservation easements and other projects to enhance habitat, reduce loss potential, improve connectivity and support the military mission
- Leverage resources and implement project findings and recommendations

### **Representative Entities involved in the SoAZ/NM Project:**

Arizona Land and Water Trust;  
Arizona State Land Department;  
Arizona State Parks; Arizona State University; Audubon; Arizona Army National Guard; Arizona Department of Transportation; Arizona Game & Fish; Arizona Governor's Office; Arizona Military Affairs Commission; Arizona State Forestry ; Arizona Zoological Society; Border Patrol; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Reclamation; City of Sierra Vista; Cochise County; Colorado State University; Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative; DOT&E; Federal Highway Administration; Ft. Huachuca; Life Net Nature; Luke AFB 56RMO; National Park Service; New Mexico State University; OSD(I&E); Sky Island Alliance; Sonoran Institute; Southeastern Arizona Government; Southwestern Power Group; The Nature Conservancy; Trust for Public Lands; U.S. Department of Interior; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Geological Survey; University of Arizona; USDA-NRCS; White Sands Missile Range

### **Relevance of the Southeastern Arizona/New Mexico Region to the Project Goals:**

- The San Pedro River runs through the Chihuahuan and Sonoran Deserts in southeastern Arizona, providing essential habitat to hundreds of species. It also contains a rich archeology with sites going back 13,000 years.
- U.S. Army Fort Huachuca, a critical military asset, operates in the project region. It is home to many units, including the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, the Army's school for training military intelligence personnel. It is also home to the largest Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) training center in the world and operates the Army's Electronic Proving Ground.

### **Recent Successful Implementation:**

- In 2015, **Fort Huachuca was designated a Sentinel Landscape**. The Sentinel Landscape Partnership is an initiative of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense and Interior, working nationwide with federal, local and private entities dedicated to promoting natural resource sustainability in areas surrounding military installations. The Partnership identifies opportunities that benefit national defense, local economies, and the conservation of natural resources.
- Fort Huachuca/ALWT **won the 2014 Readiness Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Challenge** of \$4 million to protect key lands, in large part as a result of WRP SoAZ/NM project efforts, within focus area #1, and is the recipient of another \$1 million in REPI funding in 2014. This funding will:
  - Leverage over \$9 million to permanently restrict development on 5,900 acres of rangeland
  - Support the Fort's 160,000 annual air operations and reduces proliferation of electromagnetic interference
  - Prevent the development of up to 1,400 new wells
  - Protect endangered species habitat and the local native grassland habitat.

### **Background on WRP Analysis and Outreach Efforts:**

Three in-person SoAZ/NM Project team meetings were held (initial kick-off meeting in June 2012; mid-project review in April 2013 and further project review in May 2015) and Project calls were held approximately every month to review GIS suitability analysis and provide recommendations to efficiently address priorities in the area through 2014. In 2015 the calls were held every other month and focused on project implementation. Agencies and stakeholders provided information on their efforts related to the project goals and known challenges.

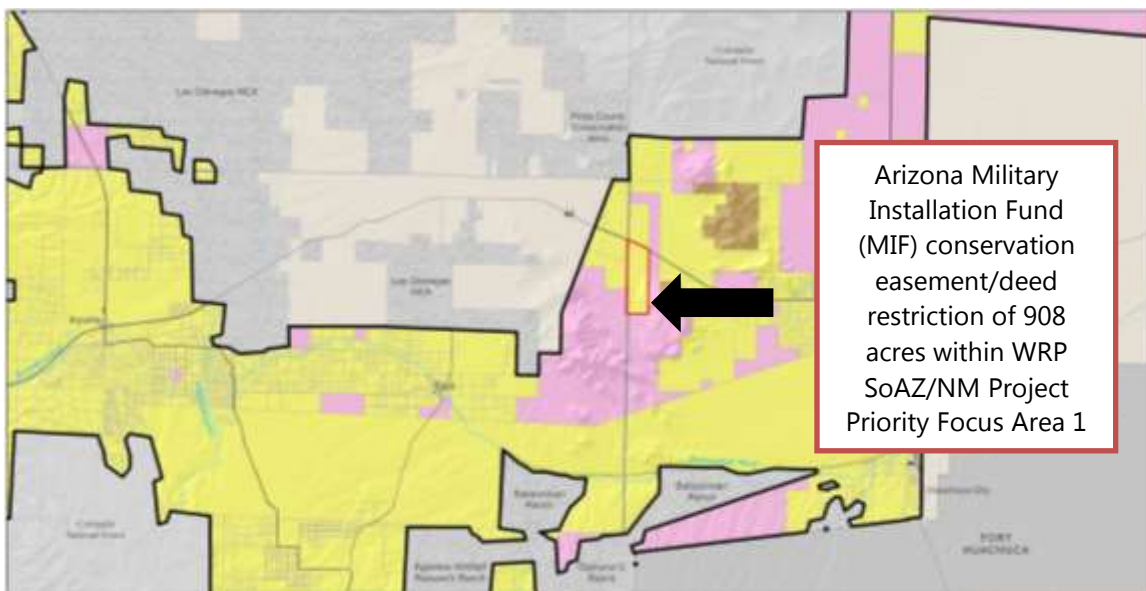
The GIS Suitability Analysis that was conducted evaluated:

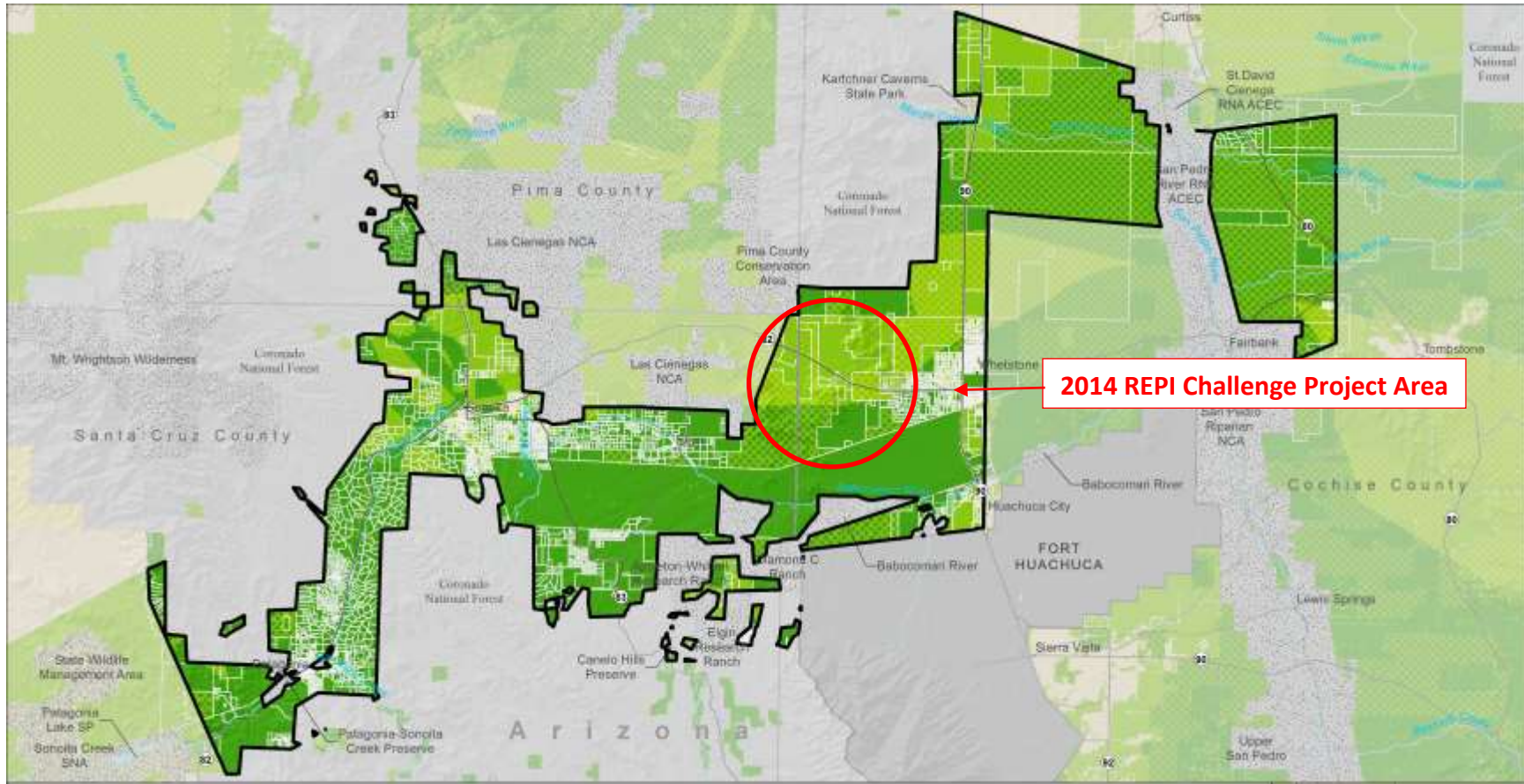
- Lands important to the military mission (including analysis with special use airspace and military training routes).
- Natural resource considerations (including proximity to protected areas, habitat quality, missing linkages and water quality).
- Land use/zoning, parcel ownership.

The analysis included an initial study area of 13,100 square miles which was refined to three identified focus areas, consisting of 1,335 square miles. The REPI grant will assist in the area identified by the SoAZ/NM project as focus area #1 through preservation of key easements which support the mission of Fort Huachuca and preserve natural resources. For more information on WRP please see [www.wrpinfo.org](http://www.wrpinfo.org) and [WRP Southeastern Arizona/New Mexico GIS Suitability Analysis Report](#)

**Significant efforts have been undertaken to support both ecological and military values in the region including:**

- Prior to 2012, the Arizona Land and Water Trust (the Trust) acquired:
  - A 105-acre conservation easement on the High Haven Ranch (Hwy 83), an area included in the Fort Huachuca Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range.
  - Approximately 1,600 acres of conservation easements protecting the ranching operation of the Diamond C Ranch and deterring encroachment to the west of the Fort.
- In 2012, an \$8 million REPI investment, together with a substantial TNC investment, was used to protect nearly 6,000 acres of watershed in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, assisting Fort Huachuca with mission protection and achieving its goal of being "net zero" in water use by protecting and conserving amounts equal to its attributable pumping.
- In 2014, the Trust received funding from the Arizona Military Installation Fund for a conservation easement/deed restriction of 908 acres within WRP SoAZ/NM Project priority Focus Area 1. This project significantly contributes to maintaining Fort Huachuca's mission and was preceded by the purchase of another 2,280 deed restricted acres in the 2007-2011 time period. By protecting priority lands this improves the Fort's capacity to support its air operations. By safeguarding these large parcels, this project also protects endangered species habitat and improves watershed characteristics. Reduced development and encroachment lessens competition for water and limits the need for new groundwater pumping and extraction.





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**WRP SoAZ/NM Project Focus Areas:**

**Total Area**

**Focus Area 1:** Intersection of Cochise, Pima and Santa Cruz Counties

277 mi<sup>2</sup>

**Focus Area 2:** Southeastern Arizona, Northwestern Cochise County

619 mi<sup>2</sup>

**Focus Area 3:** Southeastern Arizona, Southeast Cochise County

439 mi<sup>2</sup>

