

## God's Creation: The Sonoran Desert

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—  
God's eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen,  
being understood from what has been made, so that men and women are without excuse  
~Romans 1:20*

The Sonoran Desert is one of the largest North American deserts located primarily in Arizona and California. This desert, currently covering 100,000 square miles, is a beautiful and rugged place unlike any other place in God's Creation. However, this area of the U.S. is also one of the fastest growing regions in the country. Unfortunately, most of this growth has occurred without much planning or assessment of potential impacts. We must ensure that future growth will not destroy this wild and rugged area that we have all come to love.



### History, Creation, and Beauty

The semi-desert grassland ecosystems of central Arizona—rapidly disappearing because of development—support pronghorn antelope, deer, and elk. Thick riparian vegetation of willows and cottonwoods found near canyons and river corridors nurtures numerous bird species, such as wintering bald eagles and a plethora of migrating birds. Other denizens of the central and south desert include:

- Peregrine falcons
- lowland leopard frogs
- desert tortoise
- Mexican garter snakes
- Gila chub
- common black hawks
- Gila monsters

Ironwood Forest National Monument, for example, offers refuge for the last herd of desert bighorn sheep in Pima County. Two of the most beautiful times in the Sonoran Desert are after the spring rains and during the summer monsoons. After the spring rains, thousands of colorful flowers carpet the desert floor. During the summer monsoons, unique desert amphibians and reptiles awaken to eat and breed.



### *Native American History*

Over thousands of years, many different Native American tribes have been associated with the Sonoran Desert. Today,

the cultures of 17 Native American groups associate with the Sonoran Desert including the Pascua Yaqui (Yoeme), Seri, Tohono O'odham, Gila River Indian Community, and the Cocopah.

Native Americans have used the Sonoran desert for farming and as a central component of spiritual practice and cultural tradition for thousands of years and many today connect with native spiritual practice in the Sonoran Desert.



### **The Sonoran Desert – The Need for Permanent Protection**

Phoenix is the largest metropolitan area in the Sonoran Desert and has terrible urban sprawl that is dramatically impacting the desert. In 2007, the desert was losing 4,000 square meters an hour to urban sprawl in the Phoenix area. It is clear that further protection for the Sonoran Desert is necessary if we want to ensure a Desert for future generations and God's creatures.

More significant protection is needed for the Sonoran Desert to:

- Preserve the beauty of God's Creation in the form of this desert ecosystem
- Protect the cultural and historical resources that can be found in this desert
- Provide opportunities for study and appropriate recreation in this unique part of the country

### *Opportunities for Protection and Conservation*



The Sonoran Desert currently has a small handful of places that are protected areas such as Saddle Mountain and the Sonoran Desert National Monument. However, the Desert in its entirety represents a part of God's Creation that is irreplaceable and should be protected for the well being of God's creatures and future generations alike.

Communities of faith in Arizona are working to seek more protection for the Sonoran Desert through a conservation proposal that would protect large swaths of land from future development and resource extraction. Currently faith communities are working to protect the Desert through the use of National Conservation Areas and wilderness designation that would provide more permanent protection for this special part of God's Creation.