



PLEASE SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES. THANK YOU.

NOTICE OF POSSIBLE QUORUM OF THE CITY OF BUCKEYE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OR OTHER COUNCIL APPOINTED BOARD: PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE MAY BE A QUORUM PRESENT BUT THERE WILL BE NO VOTING TAKING PLACE BY THE CITY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OR OTHER COUNCIL APPOINTED BOARD AT THIS MEETING.

**CITY OF BUCKEYE
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOVEMBER 19, 2024
AGENDA**

**City Hall - 1st Floor / Executive Conference Room
530 East Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
4:00 p.m.**

The doors will be open to the public at least 15 minutes prior to the start time of the meeting.

Accessibility for all persons with disabilities will be provided upon request. Please telephone your accommodation request (623) 349-6911, 72 hours in advance if you need a sign language interpreter or alternate materials for a visual or hearing impairment.

Voting Members will either attend in person or by telephone conference call or video presentation. Items listed may be considered in any order.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

2. Workshop Items

2.A [Presentation and discussion regarding various Gila River projects and initiatives.](#)

Summary: City staff, Rio Reimagined Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassador Cindi Ptak, along with representatives from Arizona State University and the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, will provide the Mayor and City Council updates on the various Gila River projects and initiatives.

Staff Liaison: Adam Copeland, Deputy Director of Planning, acopeland@buckeyeaz.gov, (623) 349-6210; Robert Wisener, Deputy Director of Community Services, rwisener@buckeyeaz.gov, (623) 349-6621

3. Adjournment.

**CITY OF BUCKEYE
Council Workshop Agenda
COUNCIL ACTION REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 11/19/24	AGENDA ITEM: 2.A. DS - Rio Reimagined and Lower Gila Restoration Collaborative Update
DATE PREPARED: 11/14/24	DISTRICT NO.:
STAFF LIAISON: Adam Copeland, Deputy Director of Planning, acopeland@buckeyeaz.gov , (623) 349-6210; Robert Wisener, Deputy Director of Community Services, rwisener@buckeyeaz.gov , (623) 349-6621	
DEPARTMENT: Development Services	AGENDA ITEM TYPE: Workshop Item

TIME NEEDED: 1 hour 30 minutes

ACTION/MOTION: (This language identifies the formal motion to be made by the Council)
Presentation and discussion regarding various Gila River projects and initiatives.

SUMMARY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

City staff, the Rio Reimagined Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassador Cindi Ptak, along with representatives from Arizona State University and the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management will provide the Mayor and City Council updates on the various Gila River projects and initiatives.

Items related to a project or facility location must include an attached vicinity map for Council Review.

ATTACHMENTS:

[RioPowerPoint.pdf](#)

Gila River Update

City Council Workshop

November 19, 2024



Presentation Overview

- Gila River Historical Snapshot
- The Rio Reimagined
- Lower Gila River Collaborative
- Buckeye 40-Acre Site
- Questions

The Rio Reimagined



Gila River Historical Snapshot- El Rio Vision

Focus on multi-use facilities and functions

Improve water quality
Coordinate plans with transportation corridors
Link up with Estrella Regional Park



Link functional compatibility outside the riparian habitat limits

Link canals and washes with developments
Link Estrella Parkway with Gila River corridor



A robust river - Circa 1960



Estrella Parkway

Maintain, enhance or mitigate flood control elements

Increase flow capacity
Enhance conveyance while also providing flood protection and riparian restoration



Restore and maintain the natural functions within the river corridors a riparian habitat

Provide open flow throughout the reach
Create diversity of habitat and wildlife



The Gila River

My people are the river people
We have lived by this river for 8,000 years
I have never seen it
Nothing
Just dirt and wind
I think it is so strange
that I have never seen a river or
ducks or deer
I am an Akimel
Ochilam, and I have never seen a river.

Mexico Lopez, 8
third grade Gila Canyon Community School



Focus on public/private partnerships

Incorporate sand and gravel activities
Promote participation by development community

Estrella Mountain Regional Park



EL RIO
A Plan to Heal the Gila

Public Safety

- Salt Cedars Highly Flammable
- State Route 85 Bridge at Risk
- Fires Occur Frequently
- Air Quality Negatively Impacted
- Nearby Homes & Businesses at Risk



Water Conservation

- **Salt Cedars Consume Significant Amount of Water**
- **Salt Cedar Removal – Can Conserve 30,000-50,000 Acre Feet of Water - Equivalent to Water Needs of 90,000-150,000 Homes a year**





State Route 85

October of 1983

Gila River

Habitat Restoration

- Endangered Species
- Wildlife Preservation
- Bring Back Aquatic Habitat



Gila River Historical Snapshot

- El Rio Specific Area Plan
- Sand and Gravel Reclamation Guidelines
- El Rio Design Guidelines
- El Rio Trails Plan
- Formation of Lower Gila Collaborative
- The Rio Reimagined



The Rio Reimagined

Rio Reimagined Overview

City of Buckeye – Gila River Workshop
November 19, 2024

Maggie Soffel, Senior Director for Rio Reimagined
ASU University City Exchange

Cindi Ptak, Rio Reimagined Ambassador to the
Urban Waters Federal Partnership

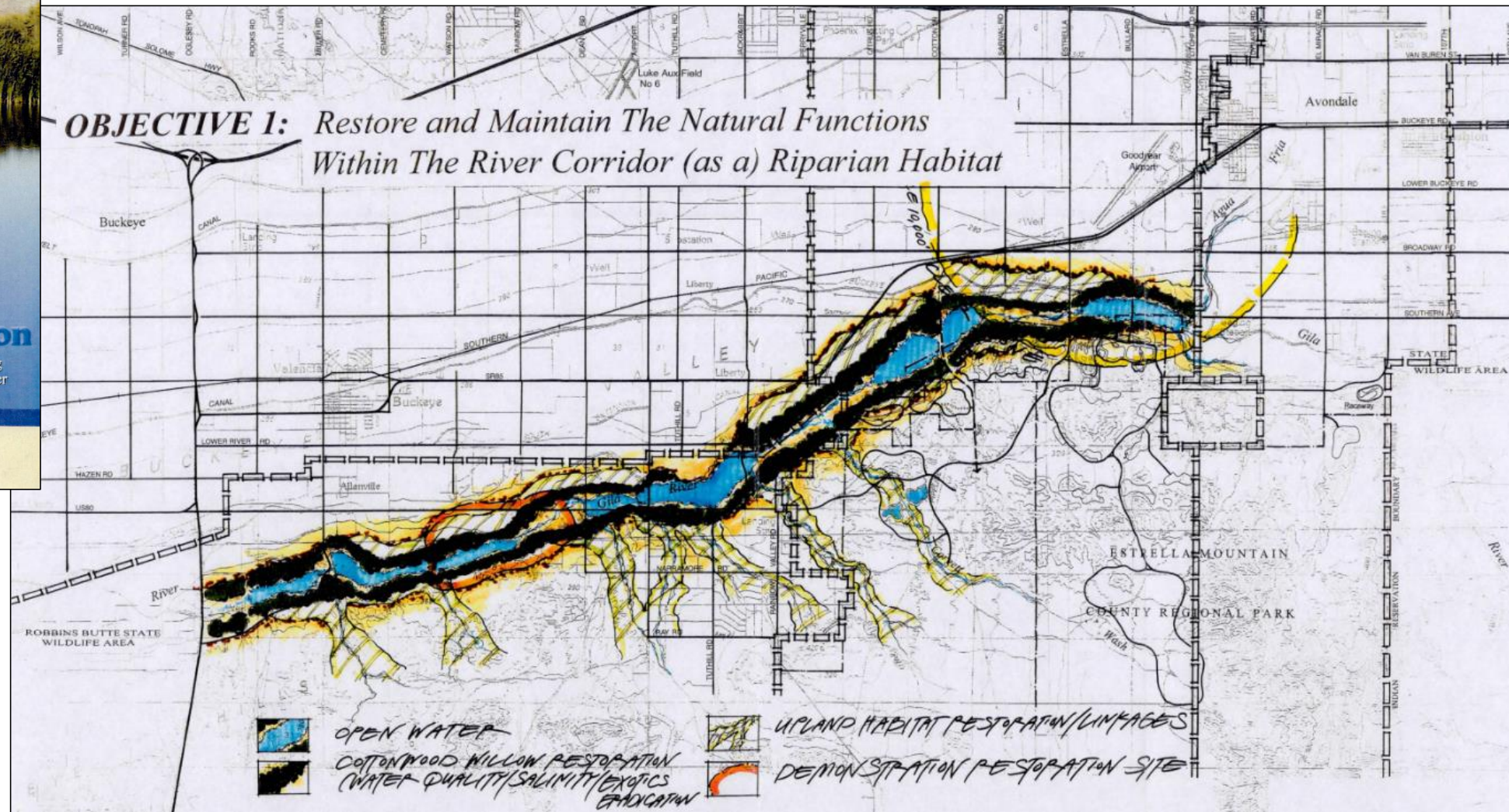
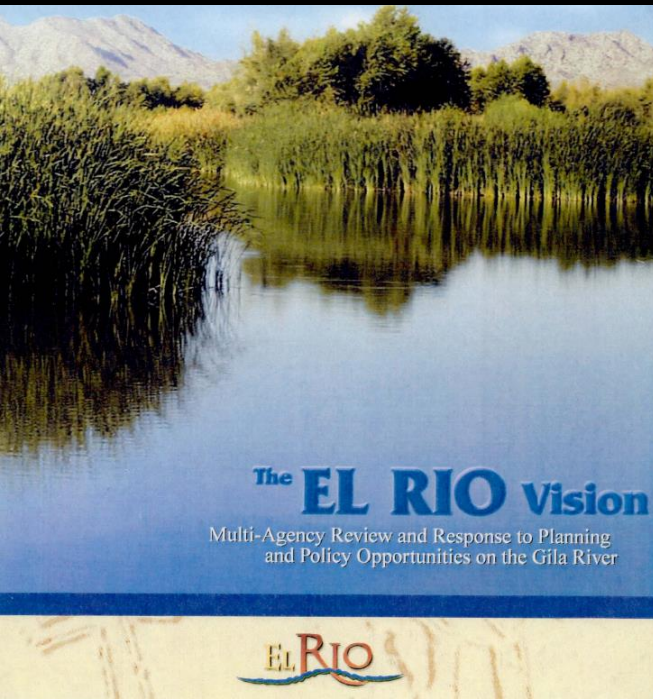


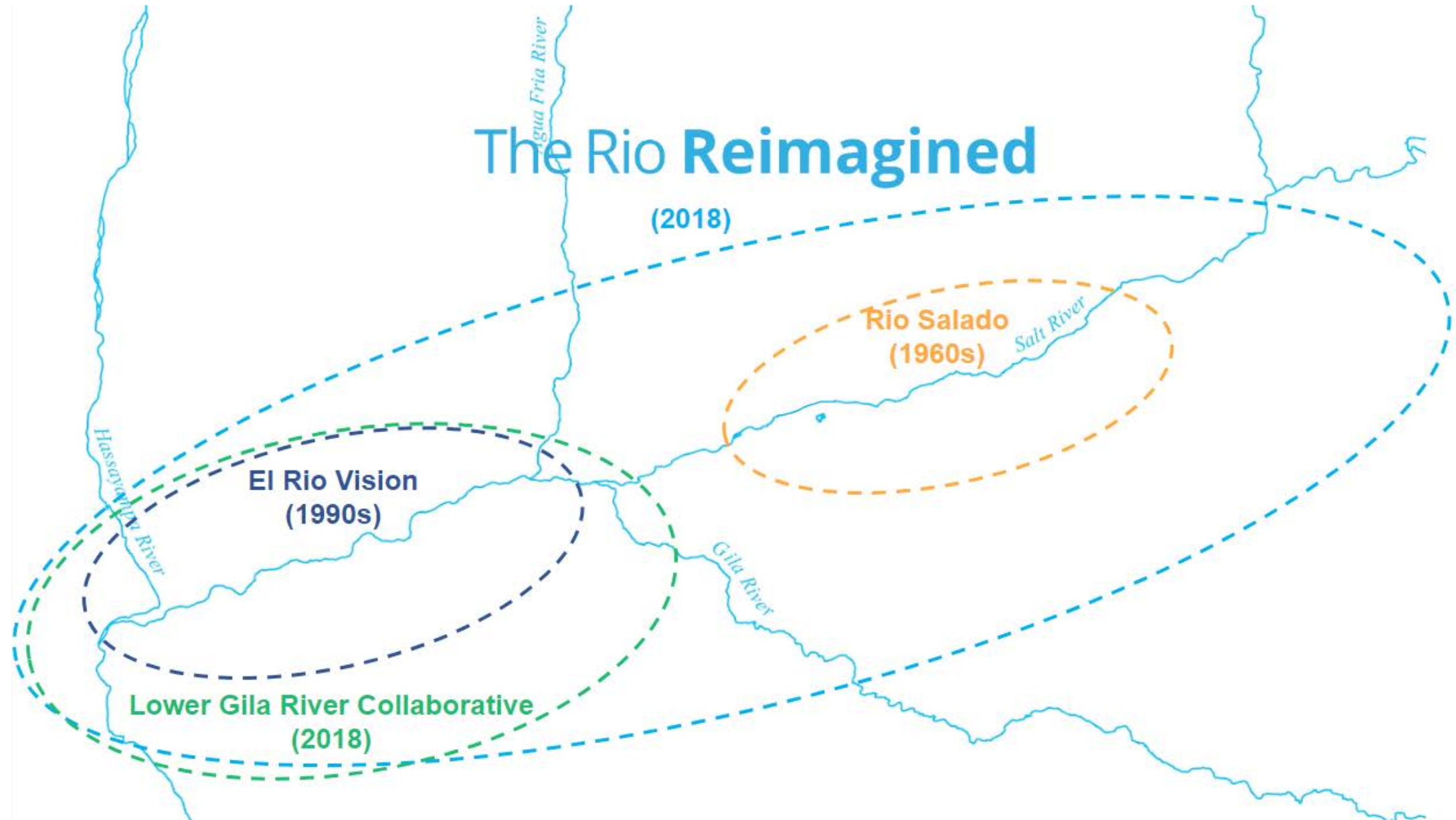


A BRIEF HISTORY



HISTORICAL PLANNING EFFORTS – El Rio Vision





2018 INITIATIVE LAUNCH | SIGNING OF STATEMENT OF INTENT

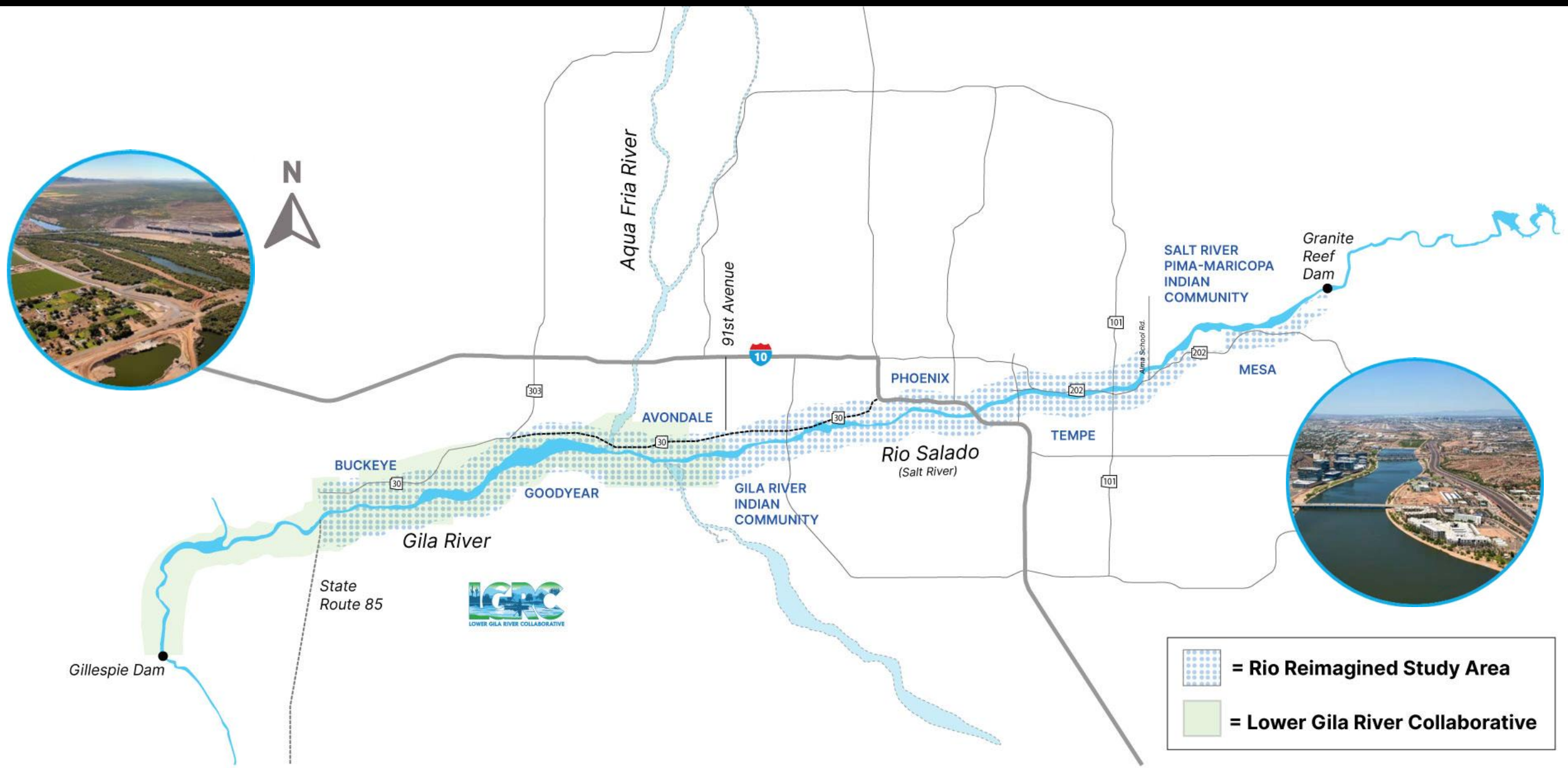




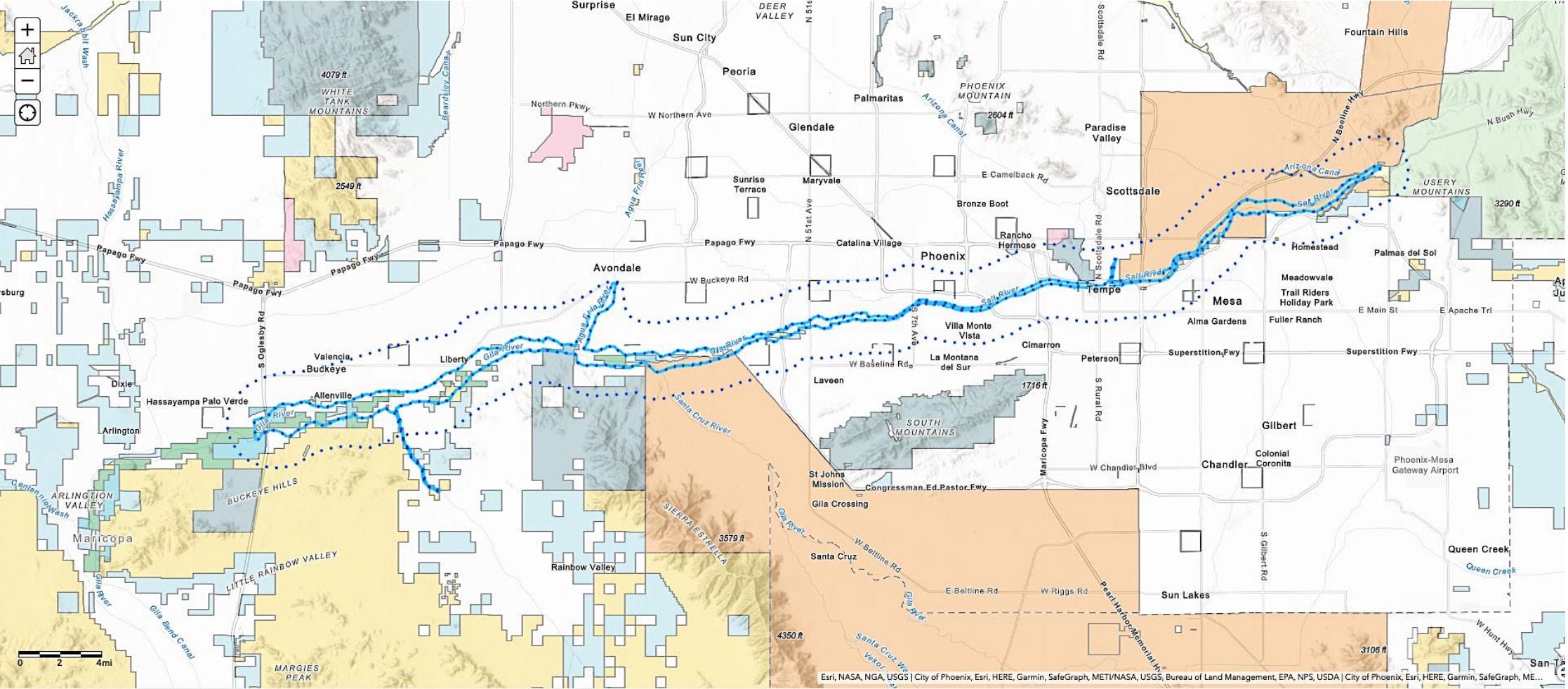
THE RIO REIMAGINED TODAY



THE RIO REIMAGINED STUDY AREA: 55+ miles, 1-2 miles above the banks



DIVERSE LAND OWNERSHIP



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- INDIAN LANDS

USDA | U.S. FOREST SERVICE

- STATE LAND
- STATE WILDERNESS AREA
- LOCAL OR COUNTY PARKS
- MILITARY

PRIVATE

- OTHER
- RIO REIMAGINED AREA
- SALT - GILA FLOODWAY

RIO PARTNERSHIP

RIO SIGNATORIES



FEDERAL



STATE



COMMUNITY



ENHANCING LOCAL PROJECTS WITH REGIONAL COORDINATION





FEDERAL INTEREST + INVESTMENT



URBANWATERS

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE



FEMA



Funding

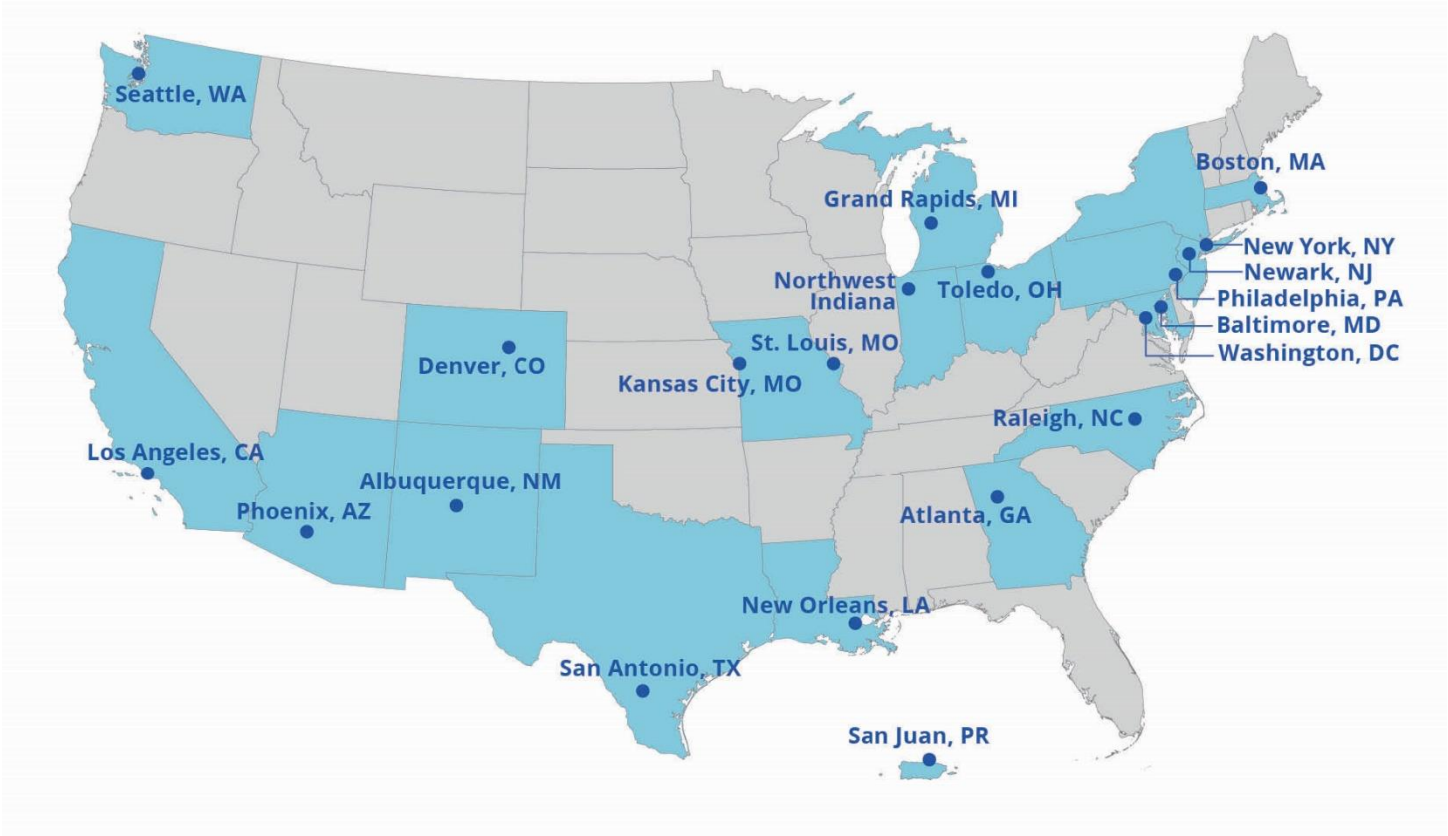
Network Resources

Agency Access

Ambassador

URBANWATERS

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP



Funding

Network Resources

Agency Access

Ambassador

URBANWATERS

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

Point of Contact – Chairs the RIO Advisory Group to collect and communicate insights about needs and priorities to identify federal funding opportunities and connects resources and tools to community partners.

Project Coordinator/ Leader –To develop a **Rio Reimagined work plan** to build on local priorities.

Facilitator/Convener—convening and facilitating coalitions of RIO partners to identify and apply to federal grant opportunities.

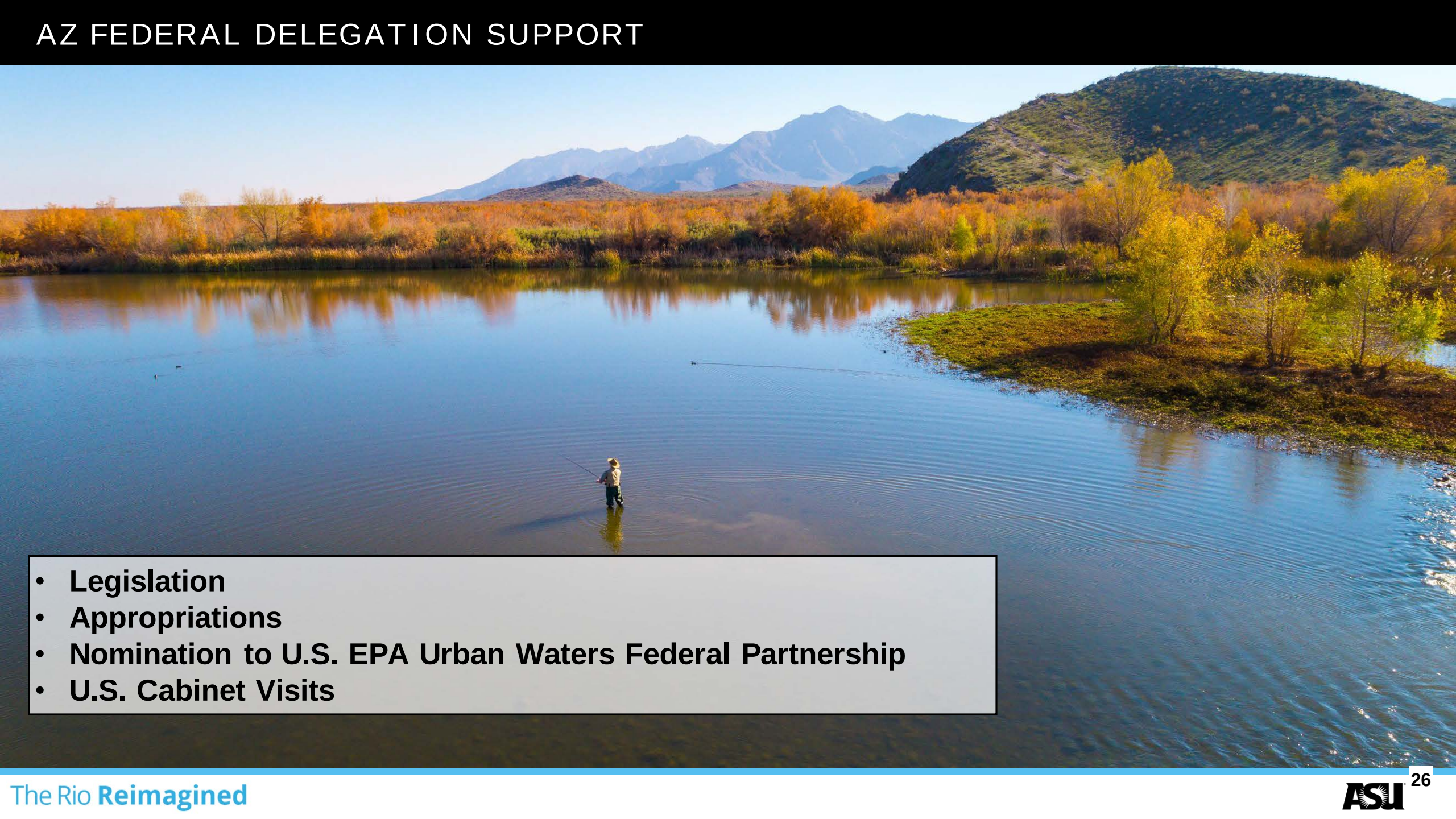
Liaison/Connector—circulating information to partners about federal funding opportunities. Partners also pass information to the Ambassador for broad distribution to a national network of Urban Waters Partnership locations (Ambassador’s website page and newsletter section)

Funding

Network Resources

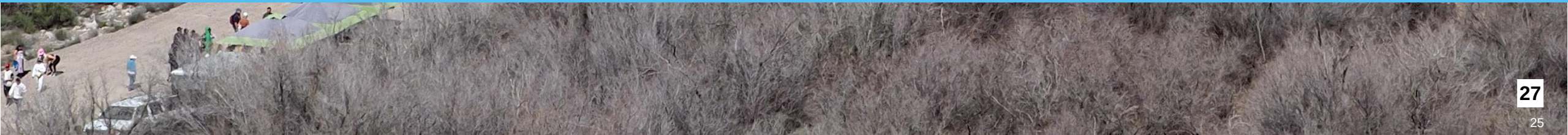
Agency Access

Ambassador

- 
- **Legislation**
 - **Appropriations**
 - **Nomination to U.S. EPA Urban Waters Federal Partnership**
 - **U.S. Cabinet Visits**



INITIATIVE SUCCESSES

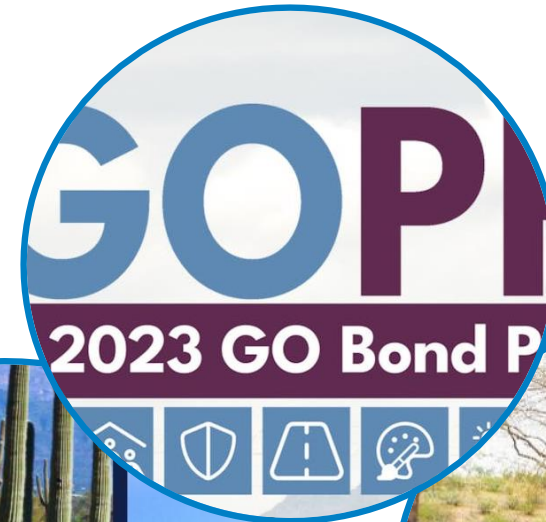


LOCAL PLANS + PROJECTS + ACTIVITIES

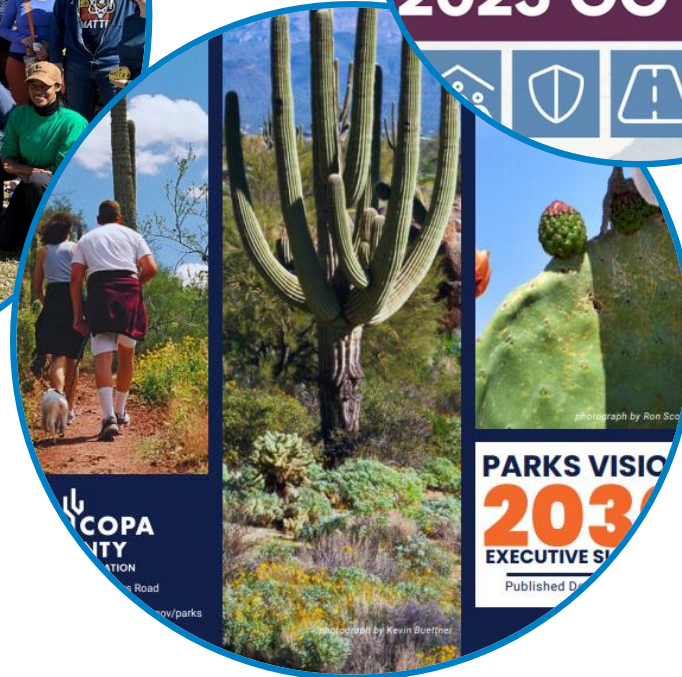
Sustainable Development

Outreach Events

Funding + Capacity-Building



Long-Range Planning



Ecosystem Restoration

Trail Connectivity / Active Recreation

VOLUNTEERISM



RIO INITIATIVE REGIONAL SUCCESSES

- Multi-disciplinary **Partnership**, meeting bimonthly (averages 80-100 attendees)
- **Urban Waters** Federal Partnership program designation (technical & grant funding, federal network)
- Full-time RIO professional dedicated to federal funding for regional projects (**Ambassador**)
- Approval of a federal/local **co-share funding model** to support Rio Reimagined
- **Centralized initiative communications** and outreach: website, newsletter, multiple annual river events
- 2024 MAG Active Transportation Plan - **first regional project**
- Greater Phoenix Leadership formation of a **new c3 non-profit** organization dedicated to RIO

RIO REIMAGINED CORE OPERATIONS TEAM

RIO
Ambassador



MPO/COG



RIO Team @
University City
Exchange



New 501c3
(in process)





THE FUTURE OF RIO REIMAGINED



THE NEED FOR A REGIONAL PLAN FOR THE RIO CORRIDOR

RIO does not yet have a regional plan. A regional plan can help to achieve the following outcomes and benefits:

- Ensure meaningful community engagement + competitiveness for funding
- Leverage current momentum of local interest and amplify for maximum impact.
- Connect and expand the impact of discrete local projects
- Identify and implement new regional projects.
- Create a regional sense of place and identity for river corridor.
- Align diverse priorities (e.g., economic development, ecosystem restoration, community development).

WHAT WILL (NOT) BE IN THE PLAN?

The plan will include:

- ✓ Vision for the corridor
- ✓ Project priorities
- ✓ Community input
- ✓ Historical perspective about past and existing efforts
- ✓ Definition of roles
- ✓ Implementation and funding strategies

The plan will not include:

- ✗ Mandates
- ✗ Regulations
- ✗ Requirements for local communities
- ✗ Projects not supported by that community's elected leaders

2024-2025/ Vision Plan launch (“Phase One”): Consultant guides RIO partners in designing an inclusive planning process and scope of work for a regional vision plan.

2025-2027/ Vision Plan development (“Phase Two”): If partners agree to proceed and funding is secured, “Phase Two” will involve community engagement to identify a regional vision for the Rio Reimagined river corridor.

2027+/ Plan implementation: Implement governance of RIO initiative and projects. Secure additional support for project implementation.

RIO REIMAGINED PRIORITY AREAS

	Urban Planning		Federal Funding	Initiative Operations	501c3 for RIO	LGRC
Activity + Value-add	Regional Vision Planning Process will build upon and connect existing plans for maximum impact and funding.	Rio Reimagined Active Transportation Plan will provide a coordinated vision of a multi-use path and connectivity across jurisdictions to enhance mobility and accessibility along river corridor	Ambassador connects RIO regional strategy to federal partners and supports project development for federal funding	Pro-bono professional staff to support initiative: • Partnership convening • Communications • Events, public presentations, programming • Advocacy • Corporate engagement	Establish a new regional social impact non-profit organization to support the collective vision for Rio Reimagined	Forum for collaboration, coordination, and outreach that furthers partners' goals related to natural and cultural resources of the Lower Gila River corridor
Timeline	Winter 2025 – Spring 2025 (phase one)	Fall 2024 – Fall 2026	Fall 2023 – Fall 2025 (option to renew through 2027)	Ongoing	2024/2025 start-up	Ongoing
Lead(s)	ASU, GPL, MAG, Ambassador	MAG	Ambassador	ASU	GPL	Buckeye Goodyear Avondale Phoenix Maricopa County GRIC AZDFFM AZGFD USFWS Facilitation: Southwest Decision Resources

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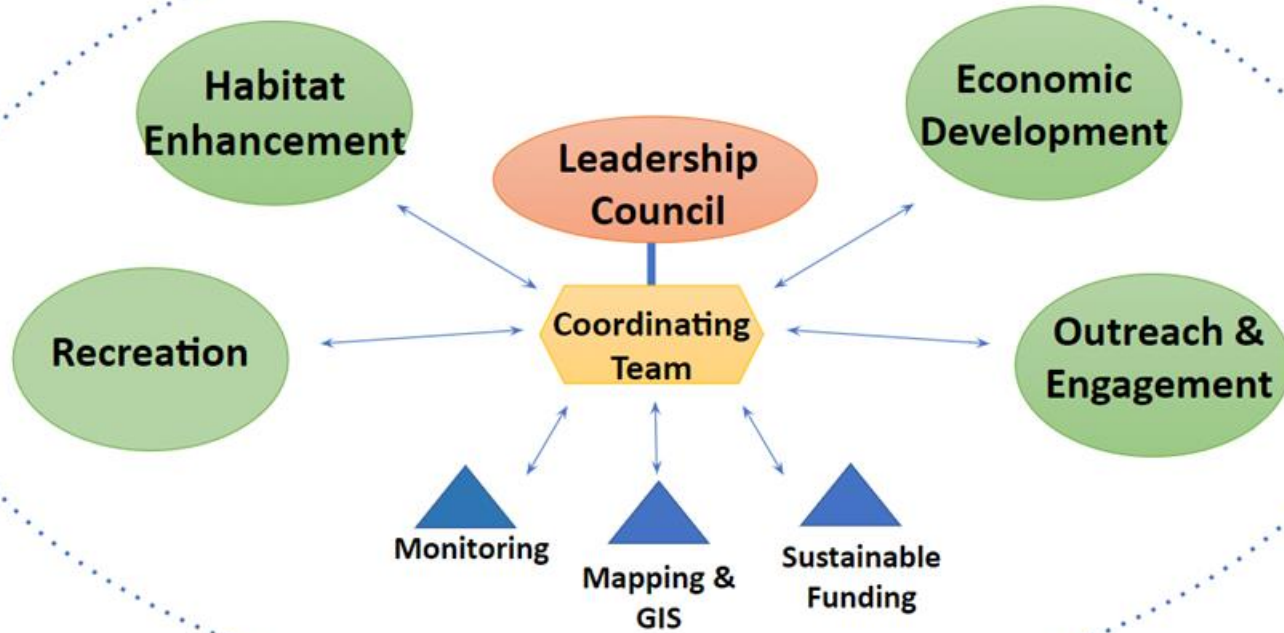
THANK YOU!

The Rio Reimagined

Lower Gila River Collaborative

Supporting El Rio and Rio Reimagined





Facilitation:
Southwest
Decision
Resources



Core leadership and funding partners



City of Phoenix



Lower Gila River Collaborative

Vision: A healthy Lower Gila River system with sufficient water resources to support functioning habitat, engaged and resilient communities, vibrant local economies and quality of life for present and future generations.

Mission: Serve as an ongoing forum for collaboration, coordination and outreach that benefits natural and cultural resources of the Lower Gila River corridor. Support natural resource restoration and enhancement, stewardship, nature-based recreation, and compatible economic development.

Overall Goals



Enhance

Enhance ecological function, habitat, and connectivity



Support

Identify viable water sources of adequate quality and quantity to support efforts



Connect

Strengthen community connections to the lower Gila River



Mitigate

Reduce negative impacts of flood and fire to the natural and built environment

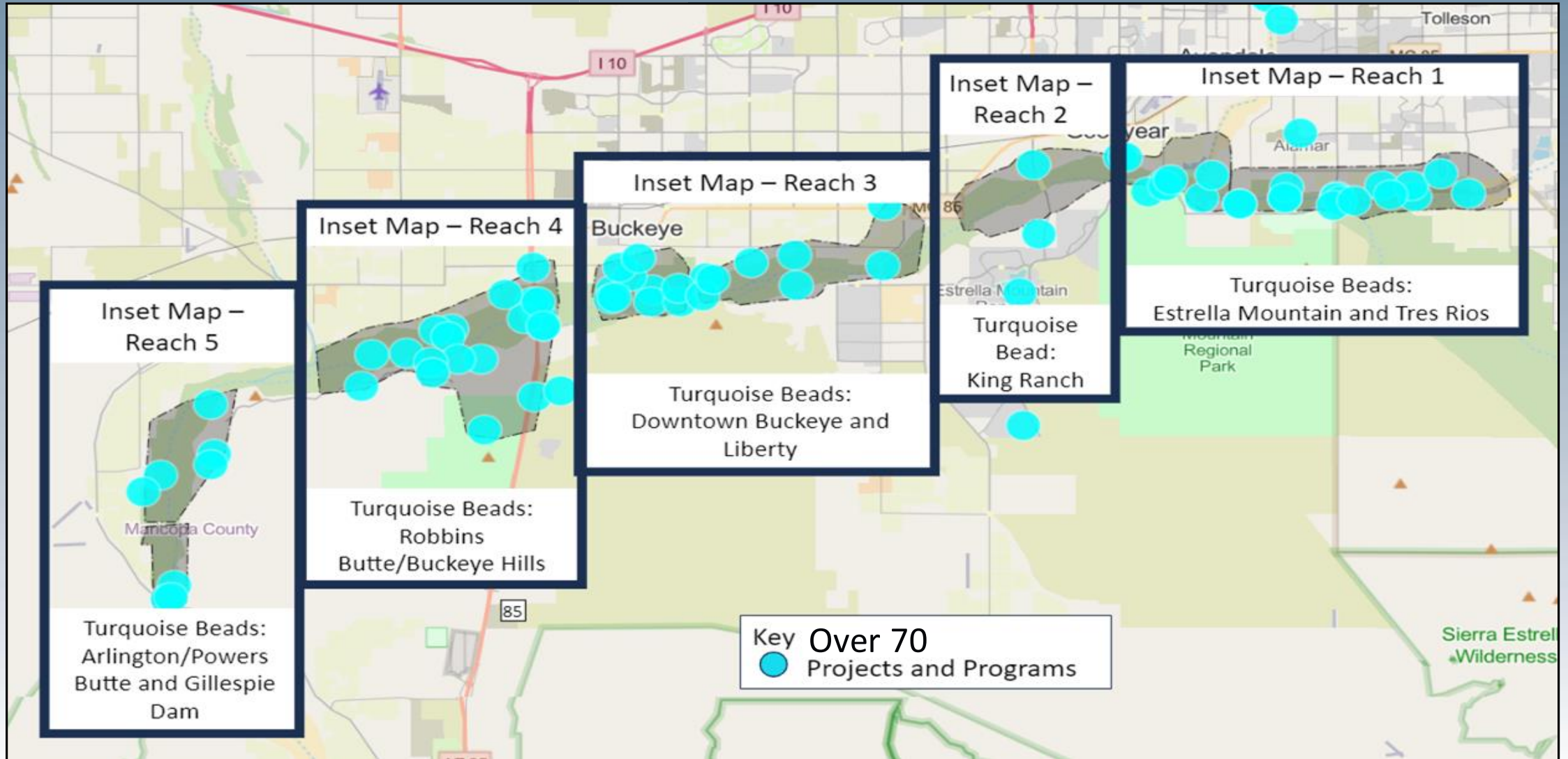
LGRC Strategic Action Plan

A non-binding, guiding document that provides focus and expectations for LGRC Partners for 5 years

- History and current conditions
- Map-based priorities and project descriptions
- Implementation strategies with specific supporting actions
- Resources and tools for partners



StrAP Elements: Turquoise Beads



Tracking Accomplishments Across the Lower Gila

In 2023:

212 acres of non-native vegetation managed

203 acres seeded with native vegetation

1,670 native plants and trees planted

\$424,600+ spent through contract work on habitat enhancement projects

275+ volunteers

4,600+ residents at river events





LGRC Takeaways for Buckeye

So far:

- **More effective projects** – *learning from partners*
- **Funding and implementation of projects** -- *DFFM invasives projects, USGS water study, drone monitoring*
- **Amplifying current and potential river amenities** – *projects dashboard, LGRC website, maps*

What's next?

- **Project implementation support**
- **Recreation and River Access** – *trails from downtown Buckeye to the river, Hidden Lake, 40-acre parcel, and beyond*
- **Planning and input** – *Buckeye General Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan*





Buckeye 40 Project Update

*Willie Sommers, Invasive Plant Program Coordinator
AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management
wsommers@dffm.az.gov*

Buckeye 40 project

A project partnership
between City of Buckeye
and Arizona Department
of Forestry and Fire
Management.

Learning how to stabilize
land after clearing and
removing salt cedar.



Project Overview

Background:

- Salt cedar was mechanically cleared from the entire site in 2016 (\$227,000 grant w/ DFFM)
- Salt cedar debris was incinerated with an air curtain burner
- Herbicide application was made in fall 2017 to control and prevent salt cedar regrowth
- Revegetation of the site did not occur

Project Overview (cont.)

Stinknet:

- In December 2022, major growth of stinknet at the site – stinknet is on the state noxious weed list and has spread all across Maricopa County
- It was decided to control the stinknet before it flowered and went to seed
- The following slides go over our stinknet mitigation and reseeding work at Buckeye 40

Stinknet mitigation

The problem - January 2023 the entire site was completely covered in stinknet.

Stinknet is highly invasive and does not have any wildlife value.



Herbicide applications

Step 1

- A contractor made the first application February 6-8, 2023 to the perimeter of the site
- Winter weather conditions delayed the second application several weeks, and a different formulation was used
- From March 10-13, 2023 the second application occurred
- The best time to spray stinknet is typically in early to mid February, but can vary depending on rainfall

Removal of dead stinknet

Step 2

- Starting in fall 2023, a DFFM Forestry Crew was tasked with clearing all dead and dry stinknet from the site
- They raked, piled, and hauled the stinknet debris to several roll off dumpsters provided by the City of Buckeye
- Completed in November, the site was cleared and ready for reseeding
- City of Buckeye staff completed a pre-emergent herbicide treatment of a 6 acre portion of the site

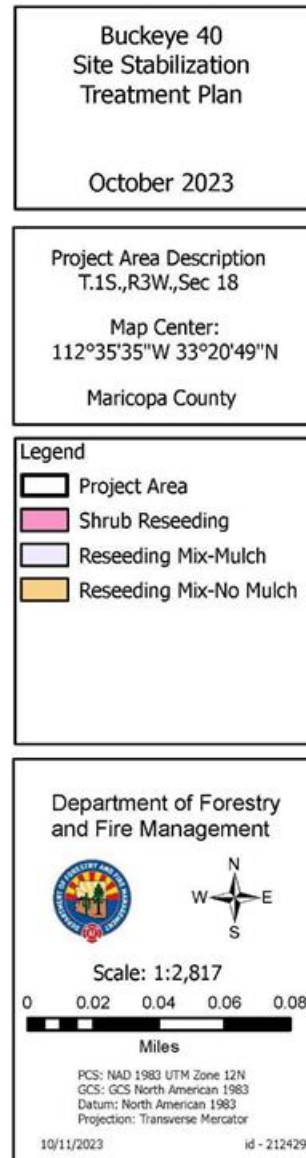
Reseeding

Stabilize the site by:

Reseeding fourwing saltbush (pink)

Reseeding a custom seed mix with mulch (purple)

Reseeding a custom seed mix w/o mulch (orange)



Reseeding results and observations

- Very limited establishment due to drought conditions
- No native plant establishment in the plot w/o mulch
- Mulch helped with establishing native species
- We have seen similar results with mulch at Pilot Site 2 of the Maricopa County Flood Control District



Brittlebush (l), desert marigold (m) and four wing saltbush (r)



Buckeye 40 project components

Herbicide treatment

Reseeding

Biomass removal

Takeaways...

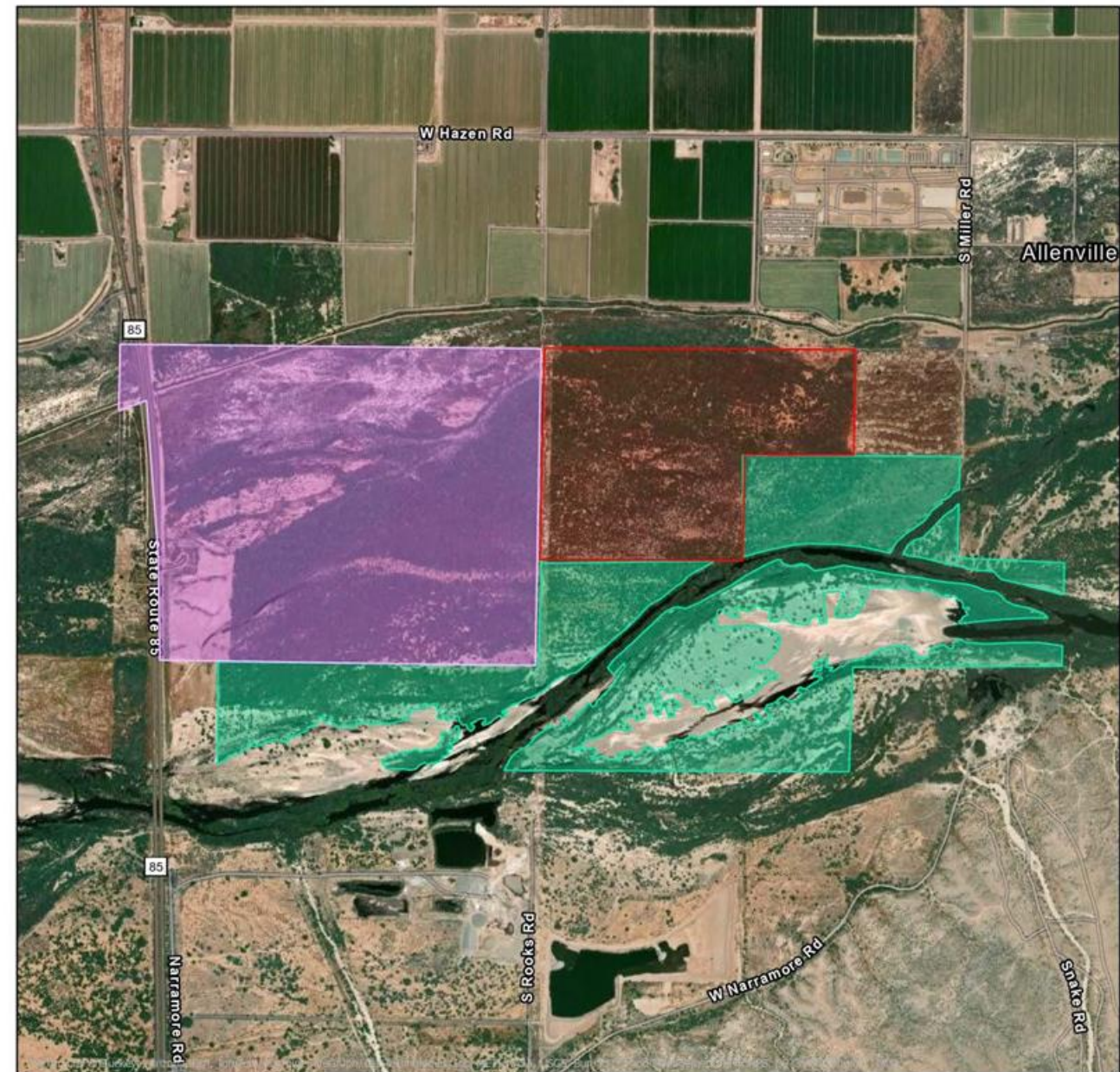
- Following the removal of invasive species, revegetation is essential to stabilize the site
- Revegetation is challenging in this environment; repeat reseeding is often necessary given drought conditions
- Stinknet at this scale is best controlled by timely herbicide application
- The addition of mulch has been shown to assist native vegetation and keep stinknet in check
- DFFM will take the lessons learned from this project and apply them to projects planned for FY 2026 and 2027

Next steps

ASU PhD student project to test the use of mulch

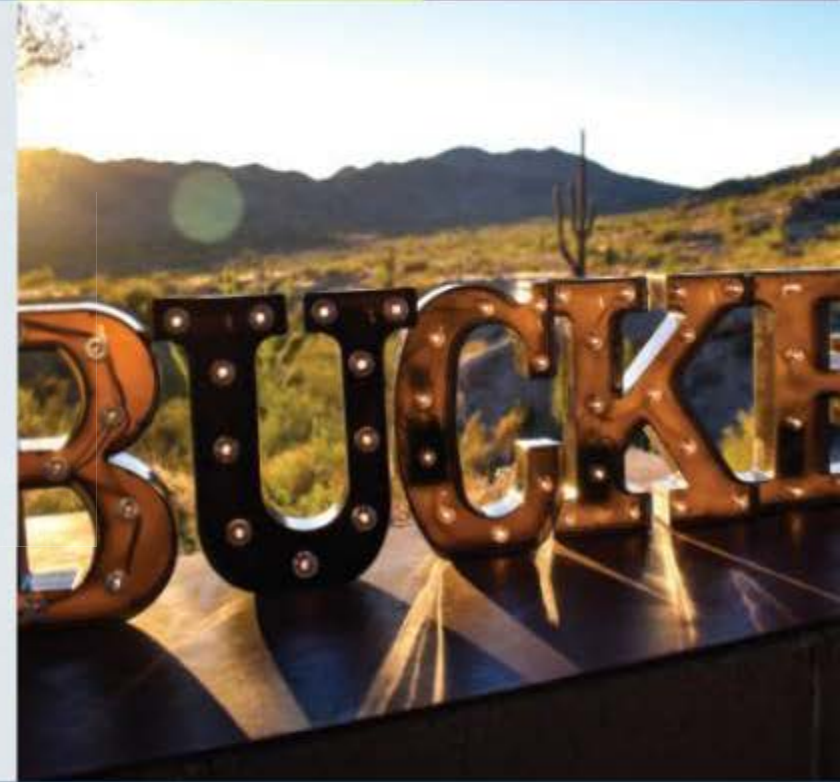
Mechanical clearing of salt cedar and reseeding west and south of Buckeye 40.

A total of 680 acres are planned for treatment over next two years.



40-Acre Parcel & Recreation Opportunities

Robert Wisener, Community Services Deputy Director

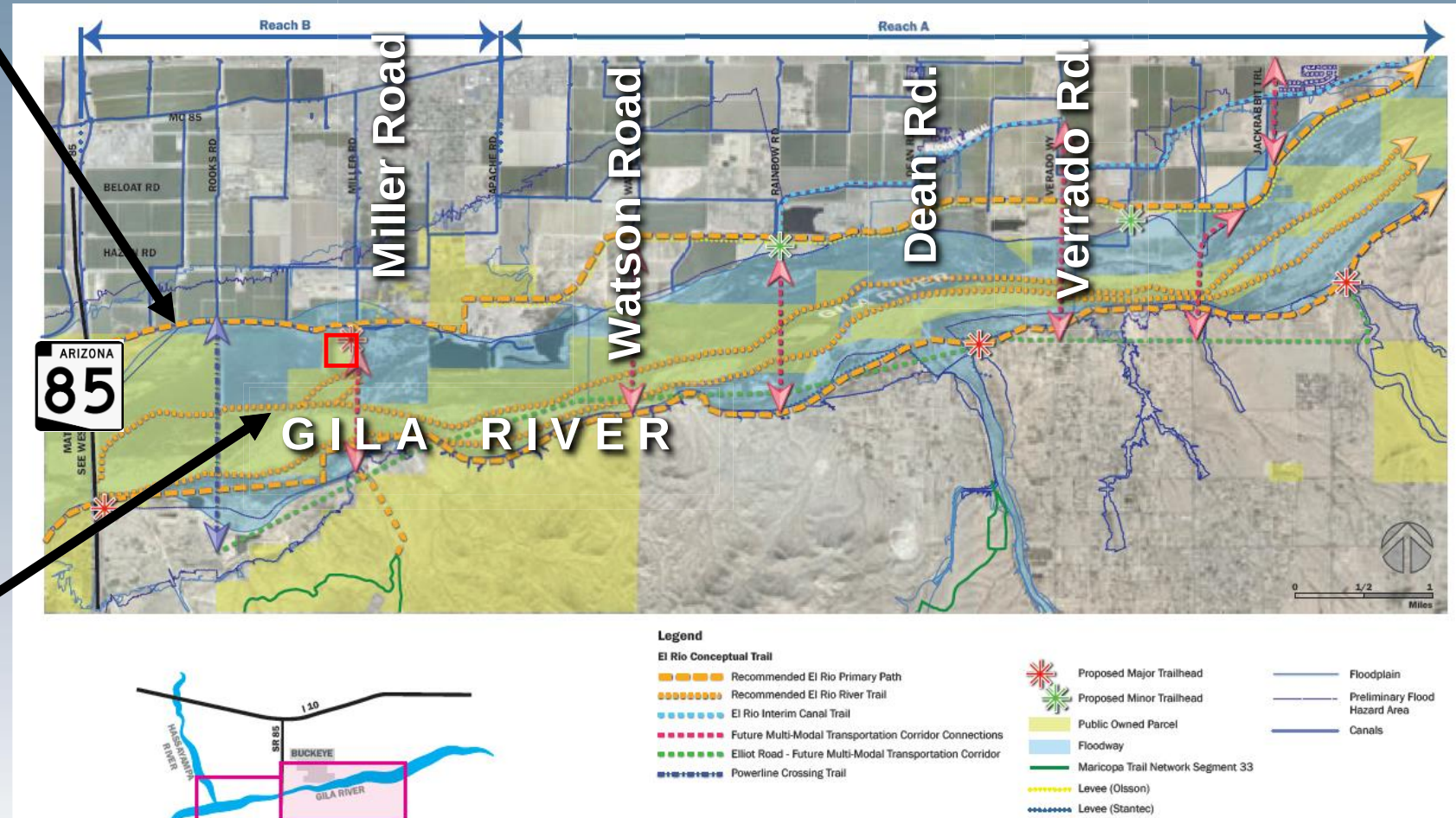
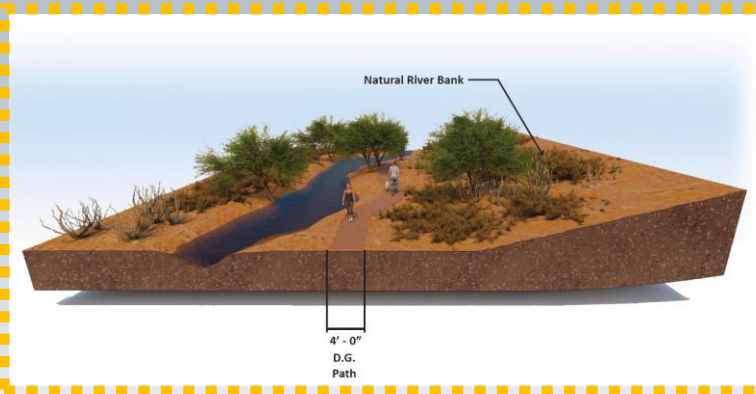
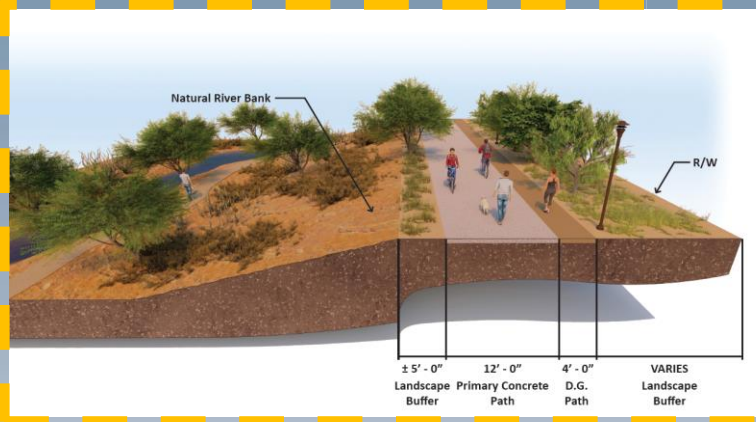


40 Acre Parcel Concept

2016 El Rio Design Guidelines & Planning Standards

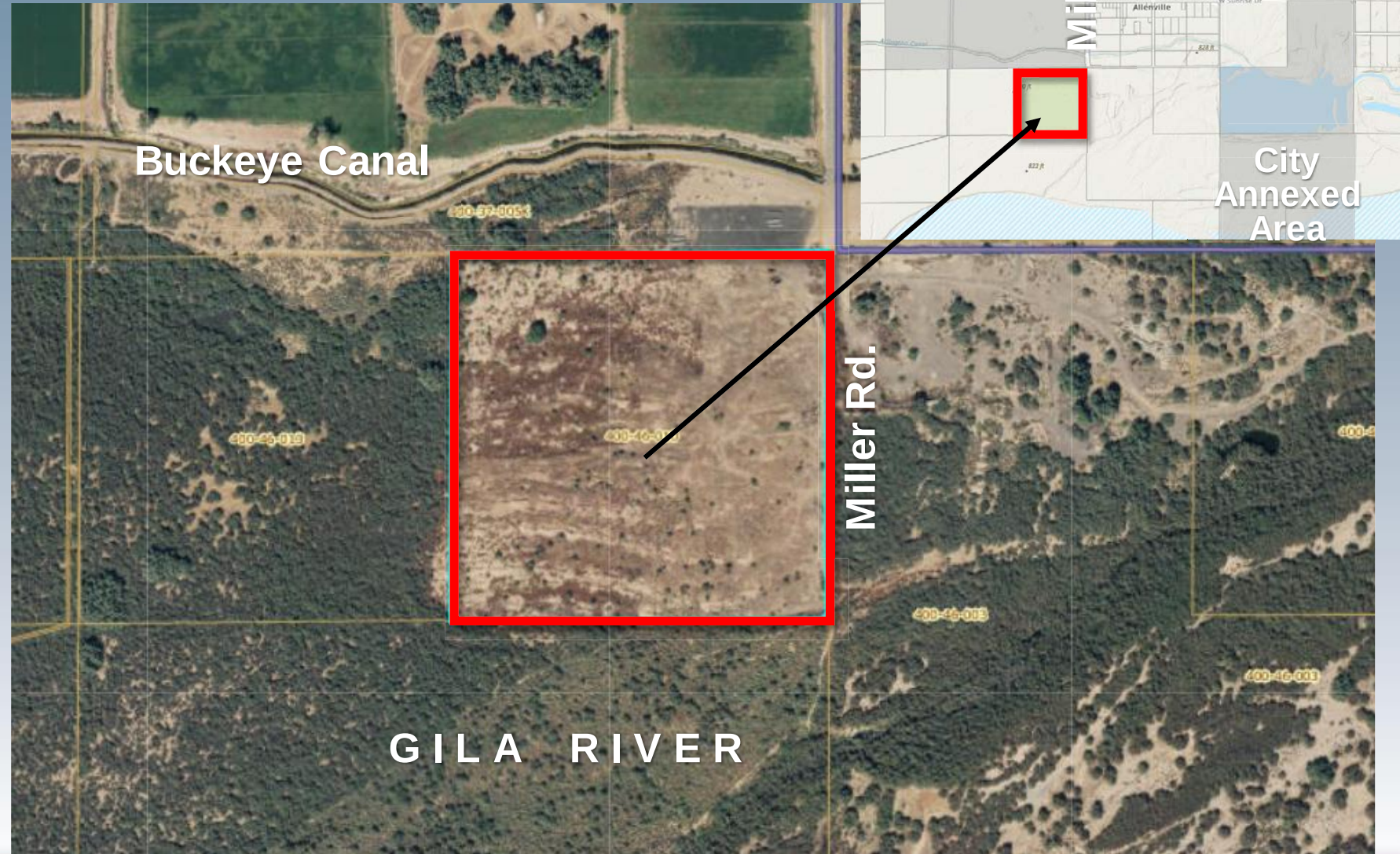


El Rio Trails (Planned)



Next Steps

- Annexation
- Right-of-Way



Questions?