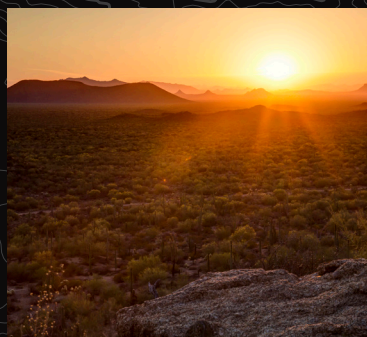


THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



Southern Arizona Project

2016 Border Report



A FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR

The men and women of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) take their responsibility as stewards of public lands very seriously, as well as our commitment to helping our nation secure the Southern border. Our work in Arizona benefits not only current but also future generations of Americans, as we address the resource impacts of illegal transnational smuggling on public lands in Arizona.

While BLM Arizona manages 44 miles of public land directly along the international boundary, we manage 3.8 million acres, nearly one-third of BLM-managed public lands in Arizona, within 100 miles of the U.S.–Mexico border.

These public lands, which include some of the nation's most significant desert landscapes, are used by Americans for a variety of activities, such as recreation, ranching, mining, energy transmission, cultural preservation, resource protection, and more. Unfortunately, this border region is also a hotspot for illegal drug and human smuggling.

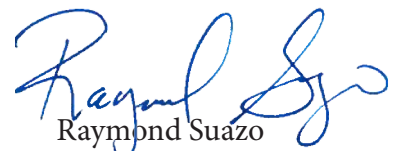
Our Arizona Border Strategy revolves around three main goals: 1) to provide a safe and secure environment for the public, employees and users of public lands, 2) to protect public land resources and values from the effects of smuggling, and finally 3) to coordinate and collaborate with others working on border safety, security, and environmental protection.

A key component to implementing our border strategy is the Southern Arizona Project (SAP). For more than 13 years, our SAP has focused on improving safety concerns and preventing and



repairing the damage inflicted on the natural landscape by illegal smuggling activities. By leveraging partnerships with the Department of Homeland Security, sister Department of the Interior agencies, partner organizations, and many other federal, state, tribal and local governments, we have made a dramatic difference on the ground. Innovative initiatives like Operation Reclaim Our Arizona Monuments (ROAM) and the Borderland Management Task Forces (BMTFs) promote collaboration and produce tangible operational results on the front line.

Please take a few moments to see an overview of our accomplishments from the past year contained in this report. Through the dedication of our partners, volunteers, and BLM employees, we have been able to complete a wide variety of projects. But, there is still more work to do and new challenges to be met in the future. Our focus is, and will remain, to keep these landscapes safe and healthy for the American people, today and always.


Raymond Suazo
State Director



Southern Arizona Project History

A Growing Concern

The U.S. Border Patrol's Tucson Sector in Arizona is the busiest in the nation for illegal drug smuggling and the second busiest (after the Rio Grande Valley) for human smuggling. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, Tucson Sector Border Patrol agents seized nearly 728,000 pounds of marijuana and made roughly 65,000 apprehensions. Much of this illegal activity occurs in the remote, rugged environment of the Sonoran Desert.



While smuggling has been a long term concern along on the border, by the late 1990s, illegal transnational activity was prompting safety concerns for public land users in Arizona, as well as causing adverse effects on the health of public lands themselves. Initially, most impacts were concentrated near major ports of entry such as Yuma and Nogales. However, as port enforcement increased, smugglers moved to more remote, isolated areas, including BLM-managed public lands.

As law enforcement patrols increased in these more remote areas, smugglers began traveling off-road in order to evade detection. These travelers leave more than

tracks. The traffic creates new, ad-hoc roads and trails, damages native vegetation and disturbs wildlife. Drug and human smuggling also generates tons of garbage, including discarded personal items, bicycles, tires and abandoned vehicles. Millions of pounds of trash and waste along with damaged roads, structures, and fences have impacted Wilderness areas, riparian habitat, and other back-country natural resources.

3.8 Million

**ACRES OF BLM-MANAGED
PUBLIC LAND IN ARIZONA
WITHIN 100 MILES OF THE
UNITED STATES - MEXICO BORDER**

A Strategic Approach

The BLM soon realized that combating both the public safety and resource impacts of smuggling in the border region would require a strategic framework that blends law enforcement with natural resource conservation, particularly on the National Monuments. This framework, known as the Arizona Border Strategy, has three primary goals:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for the public, employees and users of public lands.
2. Protect public land resources and values from the effects of smuggling.
3. Coordinate and collaborate with others working on border safety, security and environmental protection.

These border strategy goals are implemented through the Southern Arizona Project (SAP), and are detailed in the following pages.



Smuggling on Our Nation's Heritage Landscapes

These resource impacts have been particularly dramatic on two of Arizona's crown jewels, the 487,000-acre Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM) and 129,000-acre Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM), which are both located in a primary smuggling corridor. These National Monuments are popular family recreation destinations for local residents and international visitors alike.



The Sonoran Desert boasts the highest biological variety of any North American desert. These two National Monuments exemplify this tremendous diversity. The striking vegetation protected by these monuments - saguaro cacti, palo verde, ironwood and mesquite trees, wildflowers - shape the iconic images of the American Southwest. The Monuments also protect a record of human habitation dating back more than 10,000 years. These delicate sites are easily disturbed by off-road travel.



Border-related impacts are also felt on other significant public lands near the international border such as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Both areas contain intact examples of river and stream habitats that are rare in the Southwest. These riparian areas can also serve as expedient routes for illegal activity.

A key component of the SAP is Operation ROAM, which was chartered by the BLM Arizona State Director in 2010 to respond to an increase in illegal border impacts specific to several National Conservation Lands units in the state. Since its inception, the intent of the initiative is to integrate all necessary resources to increase public safety and remedy resource impacts affecting these units.

Under Operation ROAM, targeted law enforcement surges deter illegal activity and provide a window of opportunity for habitat restoration and mitigation projects to be completed. The BLM relies on partners such as the BMTE, State of Arizona, American Conservation Experience and tribal communities to prioritize and implement these projects.

8,000

**LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES
CONDUCTED DURING
OPERATION ROAM SINCE 2010**



BLM Arizona Border Strategy

PROVIDE A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PUBLIC, EMPLOYEES AND USERS OF PUBLIC LANDS

The BLM's primary concern is always the safety and security of the public and our employees who are visiting and working on our public lands. If not addressed, illegal border activity can damper recreational visits to public lands and can prevent routine land stewardship work from taking place.



Improving Public Safety

The BLM Arizona in partnership with other law enforcement agencies has increased patrols across public lands along the border to address public safety concerns. Visible law enforcement presence on the Monuments has provided a safer environment for the visiting public and for public land users conducting their daily operations. In addition, the BLM has provided information to the public on the risks of border-related activities by installing situational awareness signs for visitors to the area. In the past five years, over 215 safety signs have been installed on public lands. In FY 2016, the BLM maintained a total of 15 public information kiosks along the Interstate 8 corridor of the SDNM and installed 10 portal signs in the SDNM. Other areas frequently used by recreational visitors, like the main access roads on the IFNM, also feature signs that are regularly maintained.

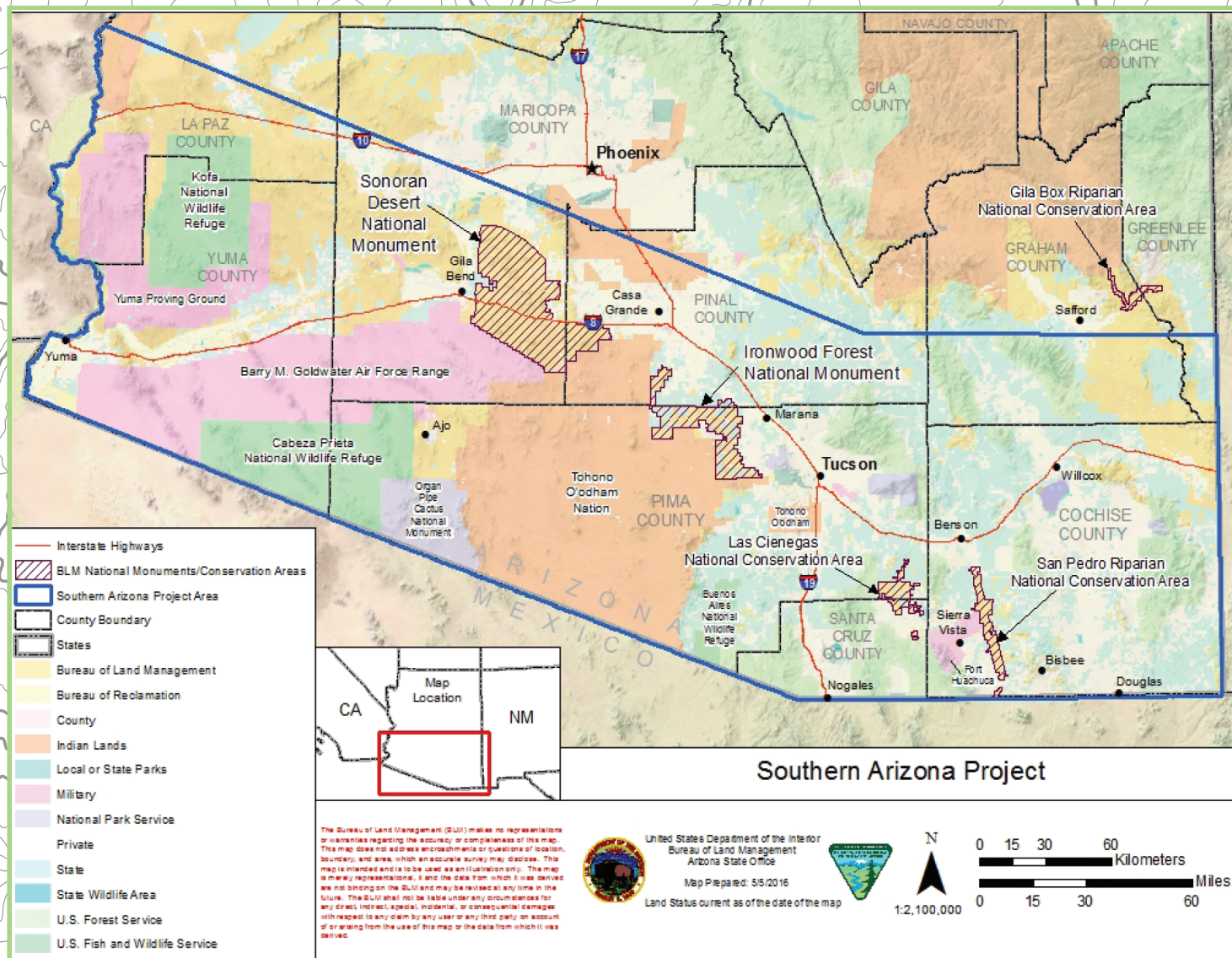


Improving Employee Safety

Increased law enforcement presence through Operation ROAM has facilitated the completion of SAP restoration and mitigation work by contributing to a safe work setting for volunteers and employees. The BLM Arizona has focused efforts on providing both our front line law enforcement personnel and resource and visitor service employees with improved tracking and communications tools. The BLM Arizona developed and manages the interagency Federal Law Enforcement Communication Center (FLECC) and Centralized Administrative Dispatch Office (CADO) in Phoenix. These two centers monitor all law enforcement and employee movement on public lands in Arizona, in order to ensure maximum employee safety while in the field. Additionally, BLM Arizona provides these services to all Department of the Interior (DOI) employees along the border conducting field operations through the Southwest Border Radio Demonstration Project.



Southern Arizona Project Area (outlined in blue)



BLM Arizona Border Strategy

PROTECT PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES AND VALUES FROM THE EFFECTS OF SMUGGLING

Arizona's public lands contain unique cultural and natural resources held in trust for all Americans. Arid lands along the U.S. - Mexico border are fragile and easily disturbed landscapes. These areas support habitat for hundreds of species of plants and animals, along with a deep record of human history. The BLM Arizona works closely with our interagency partners and volunteers to address the impacts of illegal transnational smuggling on our public lands. See the back cover for the SAP report accomplishment table.

Disrupting Smuggling Operations —Vehicle Barriers

In addition to increased law enforcement presences, illegal border activities are disrupted by reducing the overall level of traffic and making transportation more difficult for smuggling operations. The BLM Arizona employees, partners and volunteers work hard to decommission and restore illegal roads and routes created by unauthorized activities on public lands.

Vehicle barriers have been installed to obstruct cross-country travel in heavily used smuggling areas such as Freeman Wash and the South Maricopa Mountains



Wilderness in the Sonoran Desert National Monument. These barriers have been successful in reducing illegal transportation corridors and have had the added benefit of reducing the number of abandoned vehicles on public lands. In FY 2016, three abandoned vehicles were retrieved from public lands in the SAP focus area.



Restoring the Sonoran Desert

Unauthorized transportation networks destroy native vegetation and contribute to soil erosion. Once the vehicle barriers are in place and illegal routes are closed restoration of the area begins. This work involves the dedicated hard work of our BLM employees, partners and volunteers. The desert surface is de-compacted by scoring it with a disk or harrow pulled by an all-terrain vehicle. Crews then rake and apply vertical mulching techniques, which include placing boulders, dead and downed vegetation, and even the planting of some live vegetation such as cholla cactus. Only vegetation, rock and woody materials native to the immediate vicinity are used. The technique is designed to imitate the adjacent vegetation and terrain, while encouraging plant regrowth and route naturalization.



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***MILES OF UNAUTHORIZED
ROUTES DECOMMISSIONED
SINCE 2010***

New routes are prevented by maintaining barriers and signage. Ongoing smuggling activity, combined with the desert's annual monsoon season, lead to a recurring need for maintenance and replacement.

Trash Removal

Fighting the accumulation of trash and debris continues to be a major focus of SAP. Areas subject to border-related traffic have seen millions of pounds of waste over the past two decades. In FY 2016, SAP led to the cleanup of more than 200 tons of waste across the Monuments and Conservation Areas.

In addition, in FY 2016, the BLM Yuma Field Office continued the integration of SAP and border-related activities into their daily work. As interns and staff conduct field work throughout the field office, trash is gathered and deposited into bins. A key success in FY 2016, was a local Eagle Scout project which removed 16,000 pounds of trash left behind by illegal activities within the border corridor.



Wildlife Improvements

Windmill powered watering sites maintained for use by wildlife, specifically the endangered Sonoran pronghorn, make attractive stopover watering sites for undocumented aliens and drug traffickers. These sites are often vandalized. In the Ajo area, the BLM is converting several wells to solar power and placing buried water lines to sunken troughs to increase their value to pronghorn and decrease the potential for human competition for water.



Resource Impact Monitoring System

Monitoring and evaluating the success of SAP actions on-the-ground are important across the 3.8 million acres of public lands within the border region. The BLM Arizona uses the Resource Impact Monitoring System, to aid in the identification and measurement of impacts resulting from illegal immigration, drug smuggling, and recreation uses in the SDNM, IFNM and adjacent public lands. The Resource Impact Monitoring System is a remote sensing application that uses commercially available data to monitor several study sites using simple black-and-white panchromatic satellite images with a spatial resolution of 0.5-meter are suitable for detecting and monitoring linear human impacts down to the scale of roads and footprints. This data is relatively inexpensive and widely available and has been critical in gathering data in a timely and reliable manner. In FY 2016 BLM refined this tool through enhancement of the baseline digital imagery to 2.0 meter resolution for improved monitoring of imagery in the SDNM and areas west of Vekol Valley in the San Tank Mountains.



BLM Arizona Border Strategy

COORDINATE AND COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS WORKING ON BORDER SAFETY, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Borderland Management Task Forces (BMTFs)

The BLM's efforts to increase collaboration between border partners dates to 2002, when the Bureau helped charter the BMTFs in the Tucson sector of the Border Patrol. The BMTFs provides an intergovernmental forum for recognizing and resolving issues along the Arizona-Mexico border. Membership consists of land management and law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction or management responsibilities along the U.S. Arizona-Mexico border and borderlands within 100 miles of the border. The BMTF model has proven so successful the efforts were replicated in all Border Patrol Sectors in the nation.

Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT)

The BLM is a member of the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT) – Arizona Corridor. Established in September 2009, the Arizona Corridor was the first ACTT on the southern border due to the volume of illicit smuggling activity in Arizona at that time. The ACTT utilizes a collaborative cooperative enforcement approach that leverages the personnel, resources, capabilities, and jurisdictional authorities of more than 60 federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in Arizona. The ACTT partner agencies plan and conduct joint targeted law enforcement operations against common threats based on unified missions, priorities, goals, and objectives. These joint operations create an undesirable operating environment for Transnational Criminal Organizations conducting illicit smuggling operations in Arizona.

Southern Arizona Project Partners

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

The mission of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), an agency within the Department of Homeland Security, is to "... safeguard America's borders thereby protecting the public from dangerous people and materials while enhancing the Nation's global economic competitiveness by enabling legitimate trade and travel." The CBP has been a critical and core partner in BLM's effort to mitigate the impacts of illegal activity on public lands and often conducts joint patrols with BLM law enforcement on these lands. Border Patrol partners with the BLM to adopt wild horses for use in their mounted patrols. In addition, BLM Arizona works hard to ensure access to public lands as needed by the Border Patrol for their needs along the border.

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***BORDER PATROL SECTORS THAT
HAVE ADOPTED THE BMTF MODEL***



Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

Tackling border-related trash requires accurate tracking and reporting. Through the Arizona Border Trash Website (www.azbordertrash.gov), the Arizona's Department of Environmental Quality allows members of the public to view the same up-to-date information as agency and tribal partners.

Arizona Game and Fish Department

The Arizona Game and Fish Department works with partners to protect wildlife resources and to remove border-related trash throughout Southern Arizona as part of their overall mission to "... conserve Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and manage for safe, compatible outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations."

Tohono O'Odham Nation

The Tohono O'Odham Nation encompasses approximately 75 miles of the international border with Mexico. As a result, the Nation experiences a significant amount of illegal border-related activities. The BLM has worked with the Nation for approximately 12 years as a SAP partner, to help in the clean ups and restoration of Nation lands as part of the greater borderlands efforts to mitigate the impacts on natural resources. The Nation shares long stretches of boundary with BLM managed public lands. Much of this boundary is fenced to prevent unwanted movement of livestock. The fences are often cut



during illegal smuggling and immigration activities. These breaks allow livestock and feral burros from the Nation to cross onto public lands. In FY 2016, the BLM inventoried and maintained 59 miles of the fencing.

Pascua Yaqui Tribe

The Pascua Yaqui Tribe, which oversees land southeast of Tucson, has been an active and engaged SAP partner. The tribe organizes and executes several clean ups each year of tribal and non-tribal land. Approximately 7,250 pounds of trash within tribal and BLM managed public lands was cleaned up and disposed of during FY 2016 alone. Fence repair work occurred along the border between BLM and tribal lands, as these fences assist in protecting the IFNM from illegal smuggling and lay up sites.

Engaging America's Youth and Volunteers

As in previous years, the SAP continues to emphasize involvement of America's youth in these restoration activities. Through partnerships with youth employment and training organizations such as American Conservation Experience and the Arizona Conservation Corps and other organizations, individuals 25 years old and under get meaningful work experience. These youth work alongside BLM staff to mitigate the direct impacts of illegal activity by removing trash, eliminating evidence of vehicle travel and maintaining vehicle barriers. In FY 2016, over 140 youth were engaged in border-related work throughout three BLM districts.

In addition to the American Conservation Experience and Arizona Conservation Corps volunteers from a variety of public land stakeholders and friends groups are key to improving the visitor experience across public lands. These groups are an integral part of the many clean-up and restoration activities conducted as part of the SAP.

Conclusion

Thanks to our partners, volunteers and employees, BLM Arizona accomplished significant work on the ground in FY2016 benefiting public safety and public lands in the Arizona borderland region. But we cannot become complacent. We will continue our focused efforts to Make America Safe by securing the Southern border, in order to keep these American public lands safe and healthy for the American people, today and always.



Southern Arizona Project - Accomplishment Summary

| Activity | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 | FY 2015 | FY 2016 | Total |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Trash collected/removed (lbs) | 64,000 | 48,715 | 79,100 | 56,615 | 13,000 | 436,080 | 794,320 |
| Fence repaired/installed (ft) | - | - | - | 1,731 | 279,840 | 308,230 | 589,801 |
| Bicycles collected/removed | 112 | 61 | 4 | 2 | - | 15 | 194 |
| Tires collected/removed | 110 | 242 | | 1 | 134 | 524 | 1,011 |
| Fence breaks identified | - | 218 | 6 | 12 | 17 | 33 | 286 |
| Signs repaired/installed | 12 | 99 | 9 | 68 | 25 | 25 | 238 |
| Roads/trails rehabbed (miles) | 5.6 | 22+ | 12 | 10 | 15 | 53+ | 117+ |
| Weeds treated (acres) | - | - | 40 | - | 5 | 5 | 50 |
| Marijuana seizures | 18 | 58 | 12 | 9 | 15 | 10 | 122 |
| Marijuana seized (lbs) | - | 27,454 | 8,980 | 14,813 | 13,724 | 7,679 | 72,905 |
| Law Enforcement events | 1,000 | 2,040 | 1,284 | 1,448 | 931 | 2,040 | 8,805 |
| Illegal aliens apprehended | - | 1,234 | 279 | 93 | 271 | 283 | 2160 |
| United States citizens arrested | - | 30 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 68 |
| Vehicles seized | 45 | 60 | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 116 |

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