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For immediate release

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Pima Association of Governments among partners recognized in national watershed conservation award

Pima Association of Governments (PAG) is among 29 partners recognized for a U.S. Department of Interior 2013 Partners in Conservation Award presented to the Cienega Watershed Partnership (CWP).

The national award recognizes conservation achievements that result from collaborative engagements of many partners across the region. The award is one measure that shows that the CWP, along with its partners, are moving forward in watershed sustainability. CWP was recognized for its work in Youth Engaged Stewardship (YES!), frog conservation, regional climate-change scenario-planning and oral history projects.

Mead Mier, PAG Lead Watershed Planner, was involved as a guest field guide for youth field trips, for oversight of frog and water monitoring grants, and as co-lead on the riparian portions of the scenario planning. "The scenario planning effort was a valuable exercise for our broader region to understand how riparian areas are affected by the types of potential climate impacts, and how we can collaborate to prioritize options to minimize impacts," Mier said.

PAG has a long-term history with Cienega Creek, monitoring water levels and flow since 1989 in Pima County's Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, which is at the northern end of the Cienega watershed. A watershed of approximately 450 square miles is situated along the Cienega Creek corridor. The creek flows in perennial segments from the Sonoita plains northwesterly to Vail. The Cienega watershed is extremely important to the Tucson region, contributing significantly to the natural recharge of the aquifer and having high value riparian habitat resources, rare and critical to wildlife.

PAG data is used for presentations, coordination and outreach. "Working with CWP expands this reach to youth," Mier said. "CWP enhances the youth's experience by allowing the students to work on the land and make real restoration decisions, so that we can ensure the future of this watershed."

In addition, PAG connects with many different stakeholders on various efforts through the CWP's collaborative engagements. For example, for comparable data across the watershed,

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PAG coordinates hydrologic monitoring with the Bureau of Land Management which manages the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area in the upstream end of the creek.

The Cienega Watershed Partnership was founded in 2005 to facilitate cooperative actions that steward the natural and cultural resources of the watershed while enabling sustainable human use. CWP adapted core values of ecosystem approach, diverse stakeholder involvement, collaborative partnerships, adaptive management practices, sustainable use, science-based actions, and active stewardship. Full descriptions of the CWP programs is available at www.cienega.org

Pima Association of Governments is an association of local, state and tribal governments with a mission to build consensus among its members and the public on regional planning for transportation, energy, watershed and air quality. PAG's staff gather and analyze data, provide accurate information, and coordinate an open and cooperative planning process to promote good decision-making for the region. Please visit www.PAGregion.com for more information or www.facebook.com/PAGregion

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