

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EPAC)

TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES LIST 2019

Following is the Top Environmental Issues List compiled by Pima Association of Governments (PAG) in coordination with its Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC). These top issues will guide topics to be addressed during EPAC and its subcommittee meetings in 2019. PAG staff will track issues, provide regional coordination and, together with EPAC, may create or advise on initiatives that address regional issues such as resolutions, best practice inventories and partnerships.

Healthy Environment

Clean Water: EPAC will review the update to the PAG Areawide Water Quality Management Plan (208 Plan). The 208 Plan's action items will guide future committee meeting topics to assess regional coordination opportunities that can include *E. coli* in stormwater, brownfields, contaminants, solid waste and septic issues. PAG's 2017 *Heritage Desert Waters Resolution* continues to encourage riparian preservation and enhancement efforts that are mutually beneficial to diverse stakeholders, including effluent recharge.

Clean Air: The Tucson region generally has healthy air, with pollution levels meeting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) standards. The Tucson region was recently designated in attainment by the EPA for the ozone standards, based on the 2014-2016 monitoring data. However, preliminary monitoring data from Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) indicate that several exceedances occurred at a monitor in 2017 and 2018 that could result in a violation of the health standards. Final data was submitted to the EPA for review in the spring of 2019. Federal, state and local activities related to ozone will be tracked and reported.

Vibrant Economy

Environmental Branding: The Sonoran Desert's unique natural resources contribute to the region's economic vitality, sense of place and quality of life. The issue of stewardship of the viewshed aesthetics of transportation corridors and gateways to city and town centers may be explored by the committee. Our region's economic vitality benefits from partnering with local businesses and diverse stakeholders in building our environmental brand to encourage tourism and attract new talent and business opportunities.

Sustainability Coordination

Preservation and Enhancement: Efforts to encourage native species and remove invasive species, such as fire-prone buffelgrass, are important, given the ongoing risk to natural resources, urban infrastructure, and our cultural and environmental identity. Jurisdictional efforts connecting environmental health and quality of life to transportation and land use planning can be shared.

Integrated Planning: The integration of planning areas leads to more efficient use of resources by recognizing opportunities for mutual benefits. For example, a green infrastructure (GI) approach to surface drainage on roads can reduce flood nuisance, increase transportation safety, improve wildlife linkages, save water, provide shade, and mitigate stormwater and air pollutants. Coordination opportunities can be explored to address the needs and strengths of each jurisdiction. PAG's GI prioritization and return-on-investment tools provide assessments to support decision making that informs regional planning efforts.

Regional Resiliency

Water Reliability: The Bureau of Reclamation's Lower Santa Cruz River Basin Study is a multi-year planning effort that builds on the region's strong water management track record. Stakeholders will evaluate projected water supply/demand imbalances to 2060, modeled climate scenarios and future water infrastructure needed to enhance resiliency in various sectors including the environment. EPAC and its Watershed Planning Subcommittee (WPS) serve as hosts of the public forums, and committee members serve as key stakeholders on the study teams. As the odds of a Colorado River shortage declaration have continued to increase, regional efforts addressing water reliability will be tracked.

Climate: PAG's *2015 Resolution for Regional Resilience to Climate and Weather Variability* continues to guide regional efforts. Updates will be given on PAG's regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory and regional programs related to climate mitigation and adaptation, such as renewable energy efforts.