

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EPAC)** **TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES LIST 2017**

*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 be addressed and input gathered during EPAC and subcommittee meetings in 2017. PAG staff will track issues, provide regional coordination and, together with EPAC, may create initiatives that address regional issues.*

### **Healthy Environment**

**Clean, Reliable Water:** PAG program areas include wastewater quality planning, stormwater pollution mitigation policy recommendations for riparian areas, and the Conserve2Enhance program. PAG committees will coordinate, advise and respond to regional watershed efforts. A Heritage Desert Waters Resolution was drafted recognizing the value of our riparian areas and aims to create mutually beneficial strategies among stakeholders.

**Clean Air:** The Tucson region generally has healthy air, with pollution levels below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. With EPA's lowering of the ozone standards in 2015, areas meeting the new standard will be determined using 2014 through 2016 air monitoring and other data. State and local activities related to ozone will be tracked and reported.

### **Regional Resiliency**

**Climate:** With local efforts underway to become a resilient community through climate mitigation and adaptation, PAG approved a Resolution for Regional Resilience to Climate and Weather Variability. Updates will continue on the regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory, the urban heat island effect, and related issues.

**Livability:** A green infrastructure approach to stormwater management and complete streets makes beneficial use of public spaces while beautifying streetscapes and enhancing safety, mobility and accessibility. Priority opportunities will be evaluated for regional green infrastructure planning, to include efforts to significantly increase the tree canopy of the Tucson region.

**Water Projections:** With EPAC serving as a forum for stakeholders for the Bureau of Reclamation Basin Study, members will consider potential water supply/demand imbalances, climate change impacts, and future water infrastructure needs to enhance resiliency.

**General Plans:** Jurisdictional planning efforts that address the environment will be shared to raise awareness and highlight local efforts that strive to benefit the region, with an opportunity to discuss possible policy development to support these efforts and promote urban enhancements.

### **Sustainable Economy**

**Environmental Branding:** The Sonoran Desert's unique natural resources and watchable wildlife contribute to the region's economic vitality and sense of place. Benefits include attracting tourists, expanding existing and adding new businesses, and improving the quality of life for employees and their families. EPAC will work to raise understanding of triple bottom line economics and return on investment as it relates to the environment and its conservation that enhance our community.

**Renewable Energy:** Local programs promote renewable energy use, energy conservation and efficiency, and the accompanying environmental benefits. EPAC will be updated on these efforts in our region.

### **Environmental Integration**

**Preservation and Enhancement:** Natural corridor connections through healthy urban and rural landscapes and open space help to meet the needs of community livability and biodiversity. This will become increasingly important with climate variability. EPAC will be updated on planning efforts, including Habitat Conservation Plans and Regional Transportation Plans that recognize these important elements.

**Invasive Species and Safety:** The rapid spread of invasive species, given the high rainfall experienced in 2015 and 2016 relative to current drought levels, presents a persistent threat. Buffelgrass, in particular, poses a wildfire risk to wildlife habitat and urban infrastructure. EPAC will remain informed on regional efforts and promote events including Beat Back Buffelgrass Day set for January 21, 2017.