GOAL 4

COORDINATE & ELEVATE



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GOAL 4: COORDINATE & ELEVATE

Build upon the CAZCA foundation to ensure and amplify regional open space collaboration, coordination, management, and conservation successes.

Background and Rationale

Conservation efforts in the Sonoran Desert have produced many notable successes. The passage of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act in 1990 with bi-partisan support resulted in the protection of more than 1.1 million acres of natural spaces in our state. From the early-20th century through today, visionaries from across the region have lead efforts to conserve and protect a compilation of urban and suburban parks and preserves that boasts more than 200,000 acres – making it the largest set of urban protected areas in the nation. Large and small, these actions and others have resulted in a rich heritage of stewardship, safeguarding not only these incredible landscapes, but also our region's identity, sense of place, and quality-of-life.

However, significant and nearly continuous population and infrastructure growth together with a range of other urban pressures challenge our ability to protect, connect, and sustain intact Sonoran Desert habitat and high-quality outdoor opportunities for recreation, social gathering, personal renewal, and connecting with nature. Infrastructure expansion has encroached upon and often isolated previously protected open space. Continued expansion is beginning to do the same with once-remote protected areas and remaining intact desert habitat. Many spaces that were acquired for conservation are now, or will soon be, islands, threatening their long-term capacity for ecological sustainability and resilience. Ecological and wildlife connectivity, in particular, has been dramatically reduced.

In addition, many of our parks and preserves are facing a range of similar challenges including incursions of invasive species, misuse of resources, vandalism, littering, and other impacts. Some groups across the region are tackling these issues in their local areas and seeing notable success, but more often than not, the knowledge and experience gained in these local efforts is not shared across the region. This results in a myriad of agencies and organizations duplicating the same kinds of projects and programs, competing for limited resources to pursue the same kinds of objectives, without the benefit of knowing what has been learned by peers.



Moreover, nearly every city and town, tribal community, county and federal agency, conservation-based non-profit organization, land trust, and conservancy has their own plan, projects, policies, funding mechanisms, and priorities for open space management and conservation. Broadly, efforts tend to focus on very local issues or immediate opportunities with limited understanding of regional context or impact.

There clearly is a vital need for a concerted regional effort to establish strategic open space conservation and connection priorities, take advantage of habitat protection and connection opportunities, fund these efforts, and address the challenges facing our open spaces to restore, maintain and sustain Sonoran Desert ecosystems and high-quality outdoor experiences for present and future generations.

The objectives and actions outlined in pursuit of this goal build on the advances that CAZCA has made toward developing a regional, collective responsibility to the future of Maricopa County. Using the tools developed in Goal 1, we will advance high priority conservation and connection actions within our area of focus. Within the region we will collectively act to protect and restore our treasured open space as discussed in Goal 2, and we will work together to ensure that all present and future residents have access to open space and the opportunity to understand its value as outlined in Goal 3.

This goal, Goal 4, focuses on creating regional mechanisms to support implementation of these regional objectives. These include data sharing, a regional data/GIS repository, and regional conservation planning tools. Goal 4 actions also focus on supporting and sharing existing work and expertise on key regional challenges like invasive species and regional needs like restoration, to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Finally, and most importantly, this goal involves convening appropriate regional leadership to coalesce around regional conservation, connectivity, and sustainability priorities and develop tangible and sustained initiatives to achieve them.



OBJECTIVE 4.1
Continue to develop and foster culture of collaboration both within and beyond the CAZCA partnership.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	SUGGESTED LEAD ORGANIZATION(S)	OTHER PARTICIPANTS	TARGET YEARS
4.1.1	Continue to convene and encourage cross- sector, cross-agency, cross-disciplinary conversations around conservation of open space in the Central Arizona region.	DBG	WTMC, SI, MSC, MCPRD, CoTPRD, CoPCSD, CoBCSD, BOAZ, AAEE, DFLT, SALT, AGFD, MCFCD, MAG, CFA, MT+PF, existing and expanded CAZCA partnership	*2017-
4.1.2	Evolve CAZCA partnership, committees, and structures to continue to address regional issues and opportunities.	DBG with input from the CAZCA partnership	CAZCA, MAG, CFA	2018-2019
4.1.3	Develop a mechanism whereby the coalition is formalized to encourage shared responsibility, advancement of regional goals, and financial stewardship.	DBG with input from the CAZCA partnership	CAZCA, MAG, CFA	2018

^{*} Implementation began as the strategy was being developed

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Develop and/or enhance tools, mechanisms, programs, and structures for sharing and collaboration.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	SUGGESTED LEAD ORGANIZATION(S)	OTHER PARTICIPANTS	TARGET YEARS
4.2.1	Identify and prioritize needs for knowledge/data sharing and collaboration.	DBG	SI, MSC, MCPRD, TNC, AGFD, MAG, CFA, Goal Teams, CAZCA, ASU, MT+PF, DFLT, SALT, AudAZ, USFS, BLM, ASP, other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	2018-2019
4.2.2	Identify, evaluate, train, and implement available tools, models, best practices.	DBG, MSC, MCPRD, WTMC, CAZCA Labs	CAZCA, ASU, MT+PF, DFLT, SALT, AudAZ, USFS, BLM, ASP, Other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	2018-2019
4.2.3	Develop a digital collaboration space. Develop or adopt shared digital tools for collaboration, data-sharing, GIS, project management, calendaring, knowledge-exchange, etc.	DBG	MSC, SI, MCPRD, WTMC, Goal Teams, CAZCA, ASU, ACNC- SOMO, BOAZ, MT+PF, DFLT, SALT, AudAZ, USFS, BLM, ASP, other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	2018-
4.2.4	Develop, transform, or expand non-digital CAZCA collaboration and support mechanisms through the development of focused "labs," continuation and expansion of workshops, and mentor opportunities.	DBG	MSC, MCPRD, WTMC, Goal Teams, CAZCA, ASU, ACNC-SOMO, BOAZ, MT+PF, DFLT, SALT, AudAZ, USFS, BLM, ASP, other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	2018-

OBJECTIVE 4.3 Plan and develop mechanisms for Regional Open Space Strategy implementation.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	SUGGESTED LEAD ORGANIZATION(S)	OTHER PARTICIPANTS	TARGET YEARS
4.3.1	Broadly and continually outreach the ROSS to state and local governments, Maricopa Association of Governments, the research community, the business community, planners, economic development professionals, public health professionals, stakeholder groups, professional associations, and the broader regional, national, and international conservation community, etc.	DBG, CAZCA Steering Committee	ASU, AZF, Local First, GPEC, CAZCA partners, depts. engaged in tourism and economic development, other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	*2017-
4.3.2	Evolve CAZCA partnership, committees, and structures to carry out ROSS implementation.	DBG	CAZCA Steering Committee, TBD	2018-2019
4.3.3	Work with regional partners to obtain commitments for specific actions.	DBG, CAZCA Steering Committee	CAZCA parters, other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	2018-
4.3.4	Support aligned actions, as appropriate, that share common objectives.	DBG facilitated	CAZCA partners, other conservation and environmental education organizations, tribal communities, and local, state, and federal agencies and departments	2018-



