

Arizona County Links Development, Conservation

According to the recently approved Babocomari Area Plan, new subdivision plans submitted to Cochise County in southern Arizona must indicate what design features are included for reducing overall water use, such as excluding water features and open water storage facilities, reported the *Sierra Vista Herald*. The plan covers a region in southern Arizona that is rapidly converting from ranching-dominated land use to residential lots of four acres or larger, the paper said. The Babocomari area extends from the Huachuca Mountains east to the San Pedro River, whose world-renowned ecosystem is threatened by development in the watershed.

According to the *Herald*, the plan states that new developments, both residential and nonresidential, “will have to meet standards that will preserve existing watercourses and protect them from erosion, pollution, and alteration of natural drainage patterns. No new wells will be allowed in the Babocomari alluvial aquifer.” In addition, nonresidential developments will be required to incorporate “water harvesting and storm water filtering and recharge facilities... along with waterless urinals in employee and public restrooms. Landscaping plans shall include drought-tolerant vegetation. Irrigated turf is prohibited in parking areas, roadway medians, and landscape features. Air conditioning shall replace evaporative coolers,” the article said. New swimming pools and water spas may not use potable water, according to the newspaper, but developers could treat gray water to meet standards for use in those facilities. Car washes and other high-water-use businesses are not prohibited under the new plan, but they face restrictions: if they use more than a net 200 gallons per day, they must recycle or recharge the water.

Pat Call, chair of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors, told the *Herald* that “to the best of my knowledge, this is the

most progressive effort by any county in Arizona to link development with water conservation.” He added that developers in the area helped develop the plan and they understand the issues faced by the region.

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Security Concerns Overrule Wetlands Protection

Border security took precedence over the environment in the Tijuana River watershed last fall as Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff exercised his authority and for the first time waived environmental laws to allow the 14-mile fence along the California-Mexico border to be completed, reported the *Los Angeles Times*. The final 3.5-mile section to the Pacific Ocean will include two new roads, fencing, stadium-style lighting, and surveillance cameras, and will run through the Tijuana Estuary, which various groups on both sides of the border have been working to restore.

The newspaper article indicated that environmental groups and the federal agency had long been at loggerheads. A coalition of organizations, including the Sierra Club, the San Diego Audubon Society, the California Native Plant Society, the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, San Diego Baykeeper, and the Center for Biological Diversity, earlier filed a lawsuit alleging that an environmental

impact statement had not been issued for the project. Congressional Republicans became disgruntled with what they viewed as obstructionism by environmentalists and pushed through the Real ID Act in May, “authorizing the Homeland Security secretary to waive any legal requirements that he ‘determines necessary to ensure expeditious construction’ of barriers, like border fences,” wrote the *Times*.

In his comments reported by the *Times*, Jim Peugh of the San Diego Audubon Society indicated that the environmental groups were fighting for a border that could still be protected, but that would take into account the biology and ecology of the wetlands rather than cutting off hilltops and filling in valleys to create a straight, freeway-type border.

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Flood Concerns Shake Up Californians; Governor Replaces Flood Board

Images from Hurricane Katrina’s devastation on the Gulf Coast woke up Californians to their own vulnerability to flooding and disaster. California’s Sacramento-San Joaquin delta area has many features in common with the New Orleans area, as pointed out by University

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HydroFacts

Huge quantities of water can be locked up or released via geologic actions such as volcanoes venting steam. And water is constantly created and destroyed via biologic and chemical processes. Consider:

Water destroyed by photosynthesis in creating 1 pound of cellulose: **0.6 pounds**

Water vapor emitted by a car burning 1 gallon of gasoline: **about 1 gallon**

Water generated by burning of the 930 billion barrels of oil produced since the start of the Industrial Revolution: **123 million acre-feet**

Sea level rise caused by burning oil and natural gas since the start of the Industrial Revolution: **0.15 inch**

Percent of water on Earth originating from comets, from two competing theories: **10 percent, 80-90 percent**

Source of calculations: Gary Woodard, SAHRA, University of Arizona