



Santa Cruz River near Rio Rico, AZ
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Community Priorities for the Santa Cruz River

Results from surveys, workshops, and discussions.

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Agenda

- Context
- Sharing Community Engagement Results
 1. Values and Perceived Challenges
 2. Research Priorities
 3. Activity Hot Spots and suggested improvements





Who is Sonoran Institute?

- Community-based conservation organization
- Nexus of natural resources, economic prosperity, & community well being
- Providing communities with tools to make their best decision with land and water.

EFFLUENT-DEPENDENT REACHES OF THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER



The Living River Project

- Tracking river health improvements in both effluent dependent reaches
- Improved water quality has made the river into a community amenity.
- But this water is not secure.



Community Engagement Goals

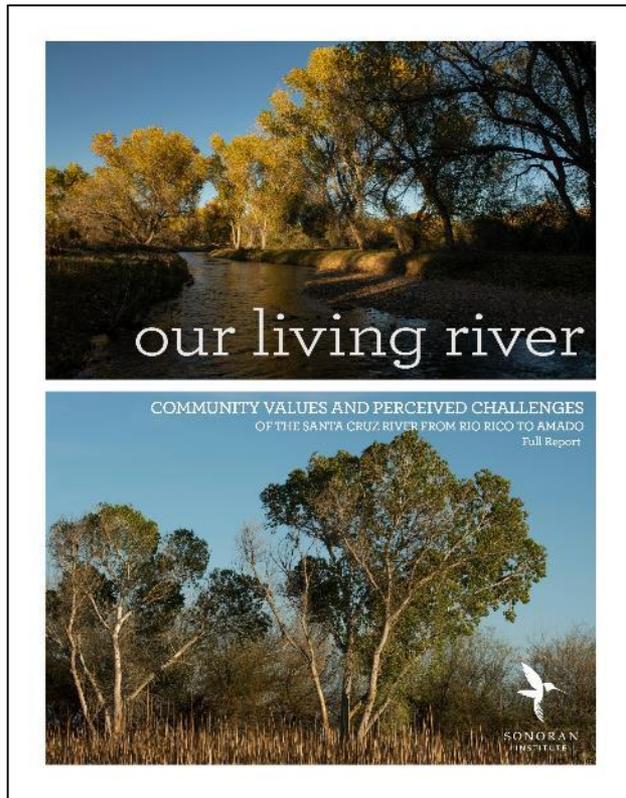
1. Determine community values and concerns, activity patterns
2. Identify priorities for protection, restoration, and investments



Projects

- 2016 - 2017 (Completed) – Values and Challenges Workshops and Online Survey
- 2018 (Completed) – Community Research Priorities
- 2019 – “Where do you go?” Interactive Map
- 2019 – Storytellers and River Awareness

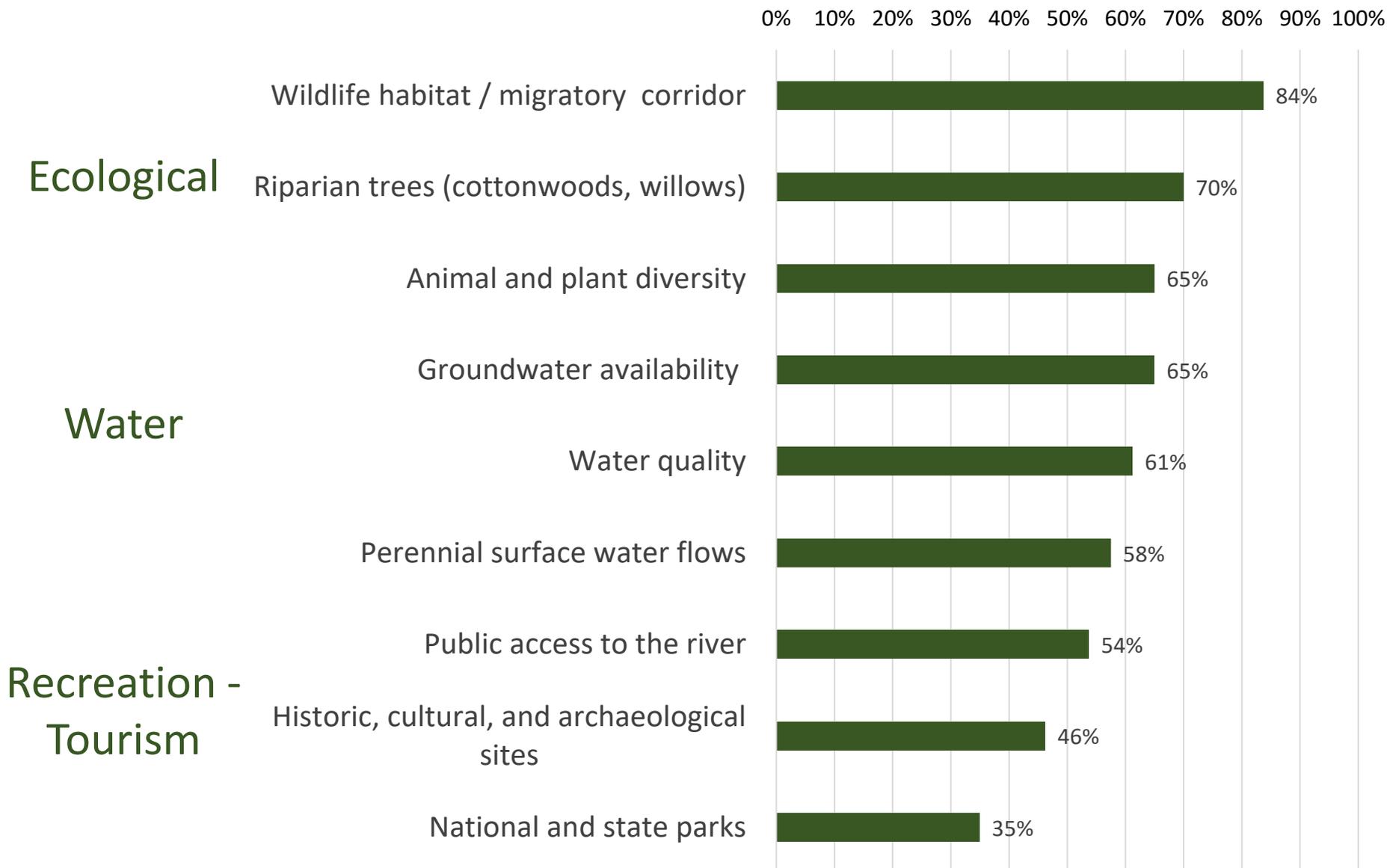
Values and Perceived Challenges



What valued qualities of the river should be maintained or supported?

What are some of the most significant challenges facing the Santa Cruz River?

Most valued qualities:

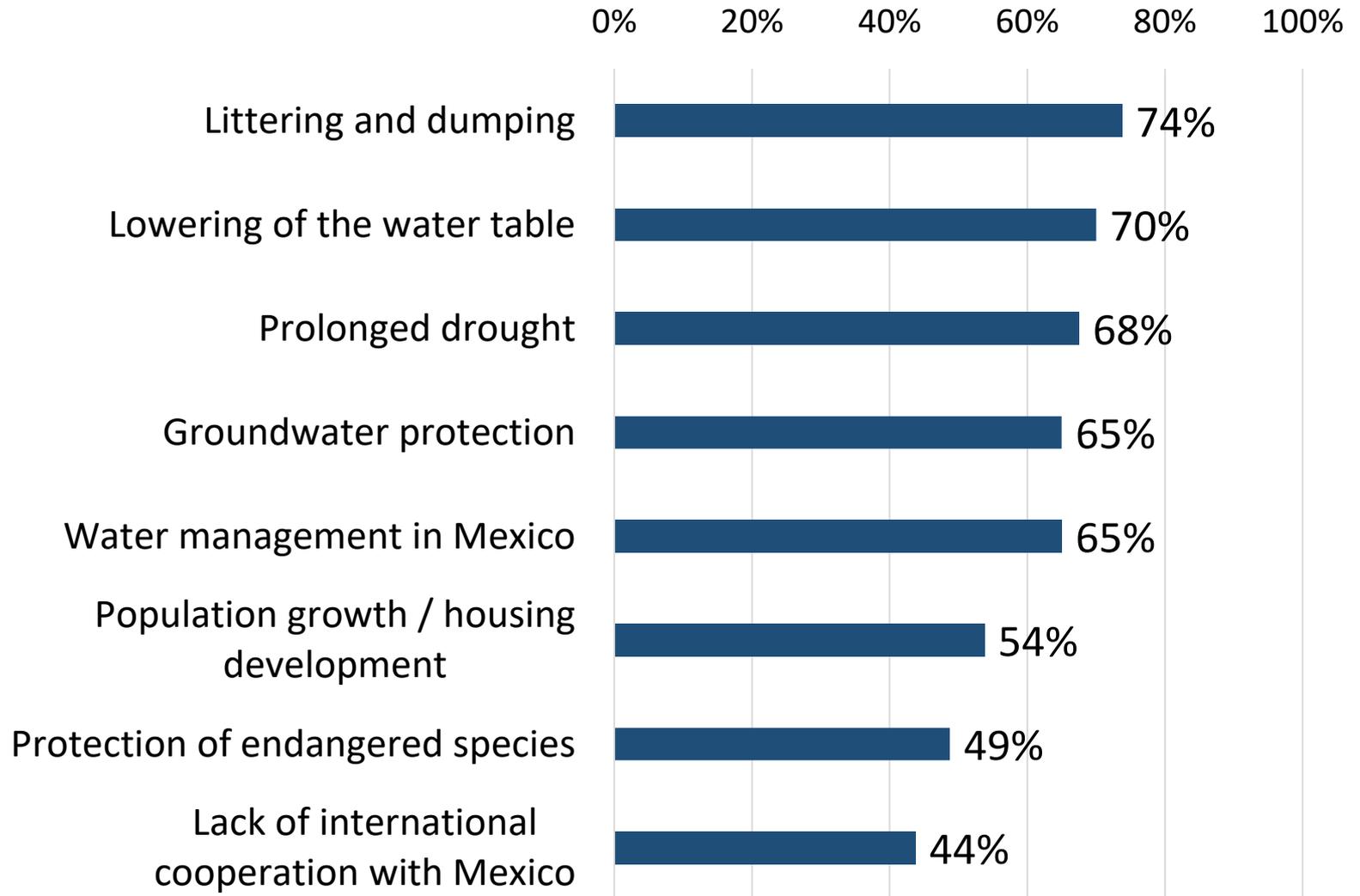


Additional Values, in descending order of popularity:



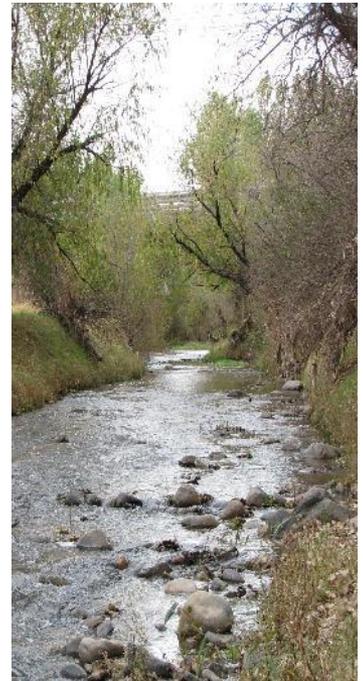
9. Open space
10. Rivers role in regulating floods and erosion control
11. Birding
12. Rare, threatened or endangered species
13. Stewardship of the river
14. Natural aesthetics / viewshed
15. Responsible development & land use
16. Educational opportunities
17. Recreational opportunities
18. Opportunity for seclusion and solitude
19. Economic value of recreation (ecotourism & hospitality)
20. Rural character
21. Tribal connections
22. Source of drinking water*
23. Access control along the river
24. Agricultural use
25. Cultural diversity
26. Economic prosperity
27. Private property rights
28. Industrial use

Most significant challenges:



Additional Challenges, in descending order of significance:

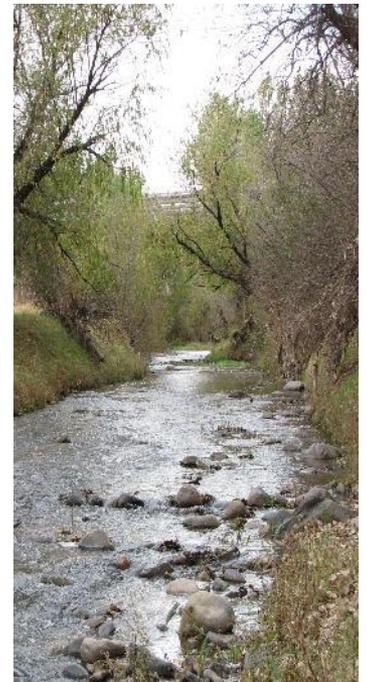
9. Competition for effluent
10. Cottonwood regeneration
11. Flooding and erosion control
12. Exotic plant and animal species
13. Off-road vehicle use
14. Aging Infrastructure*
15. Lack of major storms or "pulse flows"
16. Public Education*
17. Access control / trespassing



*smaller sample size

Participant comments:

- Support for protecting the water.
- Generally in agreement about top findings.
- “Source of drinking water” and “Aging infrastructure” ranked surprisingly low.
- Economic value of ecotourism, birding, park tourism are understood by residents
- Private ownership has reduced community access and awareness.
- Tubac, Rio Rico, and Nogales communities engage in different ways, require different approaches, have different needs



Research Priorities



**SANTA CRUZ RIVER
RESEARCH PRIORITIES**
A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH AGENDA
Spring 2019

What research questions should future efforts explore to best meet the needs of Santa Cruz River communities?

As a part of the 10th annual Santa Cruz River Research Days, Sonoran Institute asked decision makers, community leaders, and members of research institutions to identify priority research needs and questions.

The results provide a fresh perspective and informed starting place for the next decade of conservation and management efforts along the Santa Cruz River.

Understanding our Living River

The Santa Cruz River is an endangered waterway, but it is far from lost; it is a Living River that must be monitored, studied, understood, and valued.

The Santa Cruz River has provided life-sustaining water to humans for more than 12,000 years, a fact that can be hard to believe when you look at much of the river today. Flowing intermittently through arid communities, the Tolono Clodham Nation, and urban Tucson neighborhoods, the Santa Cruz River unites us. As a community, we need to better understand this natural resource, and we must work together to maintain the benefits it provides.

Santa Cruz River Research Days was founded ten years ago to promote the sharing of research and discoveries across institutions and disciplines. This annual event has drawn over one hundred attendees each year and inspired national award-winning collaborative projects. Working together has helped better define and develop the research that will further conservation efforts along the river.

Sonoran Institute's collaborative assessment results reflect diverse concerns and suggest the need for interdisciplinary research focused on the intersections of ecology and economics, water quality and infrastructure, and land management and policy-making.

"I've noticed a new paradigm in natural resources. Fewer people are talking about single-issue research, and there's more interest in linkages across research areas and professions. I've also seen an increased interest in using art and immersive experiences to talk about research findings."

Sarah Rowlett
Assistant Director, Manager, Urban County Ball and Field, Tucson, Arizona, Technical staff



Community leaders,
what new research or
information about the
Santa Cruz River
would be most
helpful in your
community?



Santa Cruz 
RIVER
RESEARCH DAYS

Collaborative Research Agenda, Community Leaders Panel

Santa Cruz River Research Days Special Session,
Fall 2018

Important Research Questions from Speakers in Nogales – Amado



What are the **opportunities for infrastructure maintenance and expansion** that would accommodate the increased stormwater near the border?

We need a comprehensive multi-criteria **geospatial analysis to determine all possible options for relocating** the aging IOI infrastructure.

Can we identify the **sources of river-borne trash to further target our education?** What are the local communities' attitudes around littering and illegal dumping? Can we arrange additional garbage disposal to meet local needs?

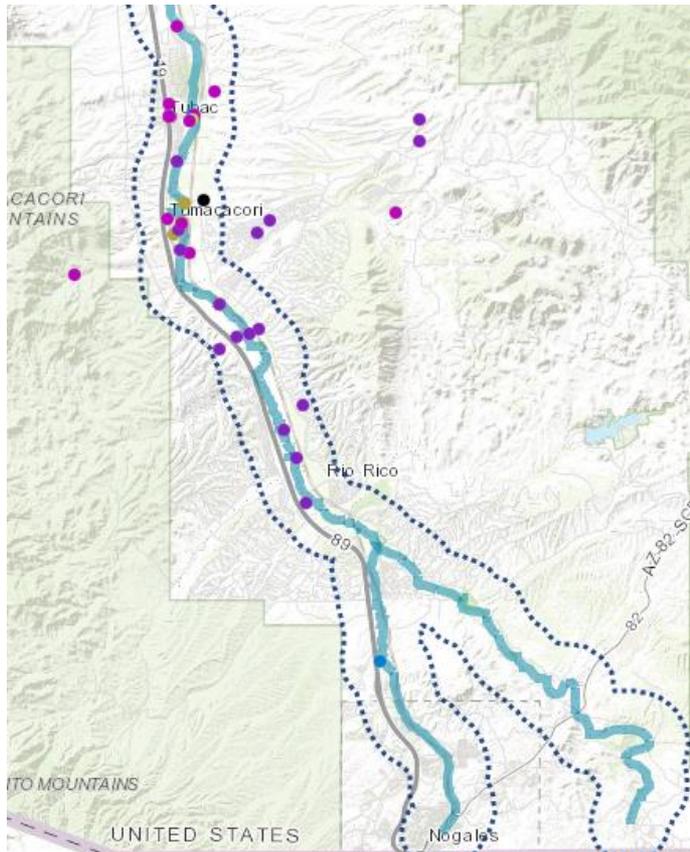
Are there best practices for addressing trespass cattle? What are the **local ramifications to obtaining a “no fence” designation** for areas around Tubac, Tumacácori, and Rio Rico?

What are the **ecological impacts of chemicals** such as pharmaceuticals and personal care products that remain in the water?

What is the **status of and the habitat needs of our protected species?** How might these change with different flow regimes?

How many **historically straightened tributaries have adjacent land uses that can accommodate added meanders?** In doing so, what would be the potential increase in flood mitigation and recharge?

Mapping Activity Hot Spots



Are you a fan of the Santa Cruz River? Where along the Santa Cruz River do you visit, and why? What improvements would you like to see?



How it will be used

- Hotspots of activity indicate high valued areas – what to protect or enhance
- Low activity levels may indicate a barrier to use – potential problem to be solved
- Specific suggestions for improvements, including restoration or infrastructural investments
- Activity maps make great outreach tools



Do you have a cell phone?
Take the survey now!

- www.tiny.cc/scrmap
- Available in Spanish and English
- Takes 3 minutes per “point”
- Promote among your networks!



The Next Steps in this area

- Nogales Area *Living River* report released Fall 2019
- Storytellers & River Awareness Campaign
- Publishing map results

learn more:
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