

Section Five—Recreational Resources Element

5.1 Introduction

Recreational resources are different from open space preservation and resources namely in scale, though that is not always the case. Additionally, whereas open space is typically the lack of development and is always found outside recreational resources, opportunities sometimes involve highly developed parcels of land and can also be found indoors. Recreation, whether in its passive or active form, is essential to the maintenance of the human body in a physical, emotional, educational and spiritual sense. Therefore, it is essential that Yuma County commit to a high priority in the maintenance of existing recreational facilities and for the development of new ones as time passes and as Yuma County continues to grow in population. History shows the County has done just that, but future plans need to be laid via this planning document to help ensure high quality recreational opportunities and facilities for all the citizens of Yuma County.

Examples of recreational resources are parks, open space areas and trails, as well as golf courses, swimming pools, aquatic centers and more specialized examples such as archery and gun ranges. Of course, the types of activities that can be conducted at these locations is lengthy, ranging from the simple and traditional picnic areas to more modern and sophisticated facilities such as equestrian centers, race tracks and boating and fishing areas. For the most part, open space facilities in Yuma County are addressed in the Open Space Element of this Plan, but some of the above listed recreational activities can and do take place in traditional parks, too.

This element of the *Yuma County 2020 Comprehensive Plan* will be organized in the following manner: 1) Introduction, 2) Delineation of Parks, 3) Trails, 4) Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan, 5) Analysis of Recreational Needs, 6) Citizen Advisory Group Recommendations, 7) Proximity of Parks to People, 8) Recreational Resources Policies and Priorities and 9) Recreational Resources Actions. They are presented on the following pages.



Mohawk Mountains

5.2 Delineation of Parks

The *Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan* which was adopted by the Yuma County Board of Supervisors in March 2006, breaks parks into five (5) categories:

1. Pocket Parks
2. Neighborhood Parks
3. Community Parks
4. Regional and Conservation Parks
5. Special Use Parks

Pocket Parks

Pocket parks range in size from 2,500 square feet to two acres. This type of park is not recommended unless park space is significantly lacking in an existing developed area. This is because these small spaces have a tendency to create additional administrative and maintenance difficulties for the County unless maintained by a private entity. On the other hand these small specialized facilities can effectively serve a concentrated or limited user group. Desirable site location characteristics include neighborhoods in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse development or housing for the elderly where a population ranging from 500 to 2,500 persons can be adequately served. A pocket park in Yuma County is the Foothills Optimist Park located in the Foothills on the west of Camino del Sol near the Mesa Del Sol Golf Course consisting of one (1) acre.



Foothills Optimist Park Location

Foothills Optimist Park

Foothills Optimist Park is a small local park located in a retention basin that is about one acre in size. It contains a small turf area and a ramada with picnic tables. This park is made possible through efforts of the Optimist Club. It is the only developed park and recreation facility located in the Foothills area

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks range in size from two (2) to ten (10) acres and are programmed for areas of intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus, skating and picnicking. Desirable characteristics include relatively flat, well-drained sites suited for intense development. Neighborhood parks should be easily accessible to surrounding neighborhoods and within safe and accessible walking and biking distance. These neighborhood parks should serve a population ranging from 2,000 to 10,000 citizens.

Currently there are two existing neighborhood parks used mainly as recreational parks in unincorporated Yuma County: 1) the Gadsden Park located in Gadsden between Arizona Street and South Highway U.S. 95 consisting of eight (8) acres, and 2) the Kiwanis Park located in Tacna north of Kansas Avenue and east of Avenue 40E consisting of approximately ten (10) acres.

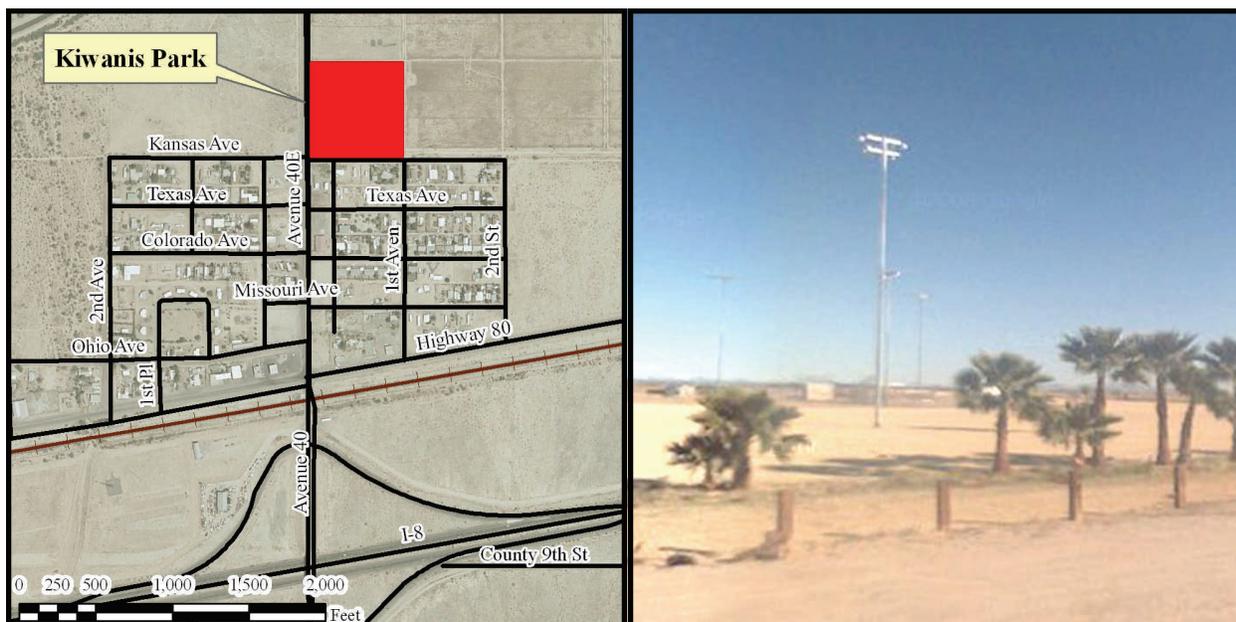


Gadsden Park Location

Gadsden Park

The Gadsden Park is maintained and operated by the Gadsden Community Development Board and the Gadsden School District through an intergovernmental agreement with Yuma County. Gadsden Park contains ball fields, picnic ramadas and playground equipment. In 2009 a grant from the Arizona Department of Housing paid for the construction of a full-sized basketball court at Gadsden Park.

Neighborhood Parks (continued)



Kiwanis Park Location

Kiwanis Park

Kiwanis Park is approximately a ten-acre park located on the north side of Tacna. The park contains ball fields, picnic ramadas and a playground. The park is located on land owned by Yuma County and maintained by the Wellton-Mohawk Valley Kiwanis Club.

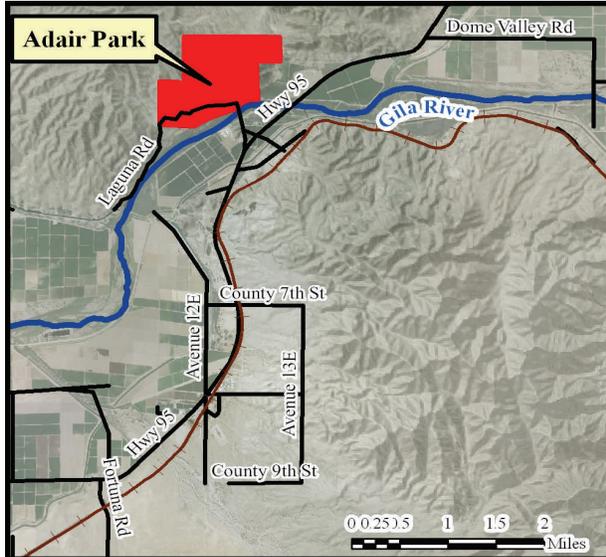
Community Parks

Community parks range in size from ten (10) to twenty-five (25) acres. These larger sites should, if possible, consist of areas exhibiting diverse environmental quality and may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities. Community parks may be areas noted for their natural qualities for outdoor recreation or may be a combination of both active and passive pursuits. Community parks may also include natural features such as water bodies.

There is one potential community category park in Yuma County, the Riebe Retention Basin, located northwest of the City of Yuma north of County 8th Street and at the end of Riebe Avenue consisting of ten (10) acres. It functions as a retention basin, but has a potential recreational component to it when dry.

Regional and Conservation Parks

Regional and conservation parks are more than likely to be managed by or in conjunction with another lead agency or organization and range from twenty-five (25) to 1,000 acres. These parks are generally large parks that provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities and facilities to serve 50,000 or more people. They may also be reserved for conservation and natural resource management. These parks are primarily natural, developed for recreational activities or a combination of both depending upon the needs of the population.



Adair Park Location



Adair Park

The only park in Yuma County of this type, Adair Park, consisting of 660 acres, has nine rifle, pistol and archery ranges. There is also a baseball diamond, radio-control model airplane strip, picnic areas and camping sites available. Though owned by Yuma County, Adair Park is operated by a concessionaire.

Special Use Parks

Special use parks may include single purpose recreational activities, such as golf courses, gun ranges, skate parks and historic areas that preserve and maintain buildings, or sites and objects of archeological significance. The service area, desirable size and population served will depend on the type of special uses, user characteristics and facility standard requirements. These parks may be classified as another type of park, also.

5.3 Trails

Open lands, historic trails, cultural sites, canals, rail lines, drainage ways and municipal trails when linked together can create a setting that is perfect for a county-wide trail system. The County is in a unique position to establish a trail system that will be a point of pride for future generations.

Such an opportunity exists with the potential linking of natural and cultural resources located within Yuma County: 1) the Juan Bautista de Anza Trail, 2) the Butterfield Trail, and 3) the El Camino del Diablo Trail.

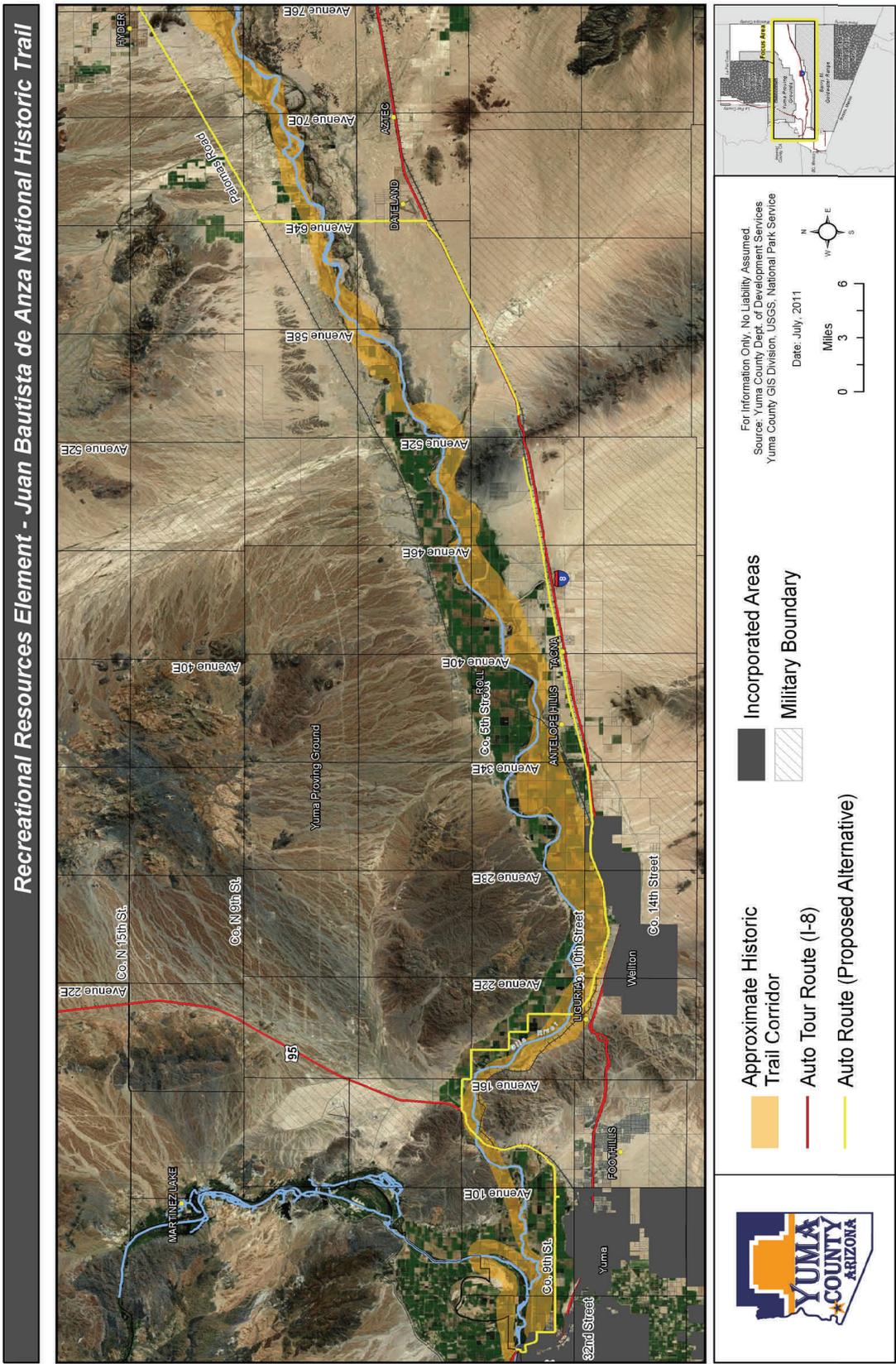
Important items to remember in the formation and usability of any trail are the following: 1) providing trailhead access to partnered resource areas, 2) connecting to existing and future trail systems as may be provided with the Cities of Yuma, Somerton, San Luis and the Town of Wellton, and 3) updating the Zoning Ordinance and development standards to provide for trails within developments which connect to an overall trail system. These were identified in the 2006 *Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan*.

Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail

In 1990, Congress established the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, a 1,210-mile historic route from Nogales, Arizona, to San Francisco, California, running east-west through Yuma County. The trail commemorates the story of the 1775-1776 Spanish Expedition whose members, consisting of some 30 families, founded and established San Francisco. They also established a mission in the Yuma area, the first attempted European settlement in the area.

Congress established the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail not only to commemorate the significance of Anza's colonizing expedition to San Francisco Bay, but also to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. The ultimate goal is to create a recreational trail to provide a multiuse, non-motorized, off-road, continuous trail from Nogales to San Francisco. The National Park Service is tasked with forming partnerships with nonprofit support groups to develop a unified, continuous trail and to promote public awareness of its history and to contribute to economic vitality along the route by linking historic sites along a marketed tourist route. Federal components and high potential segments will be key elements of this route. These segments will be linked with trails which parallel the historic route to provide the potential for a continuous recreational and commemorative trail. If linking routes meet the criteria, they can be certified as recreational components of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.¹

¹*Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Use Plan*. National Park Service. 1996.



Map 1: Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail

Recreational Resources Element

A five mile segment of trail along the Yuma Canal in the City of Yuma is pending certification as part of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The National Park Service (NPS) is working with the City of Yuma and the Yuma Crossing Natural Heritage Area on a plan for more trails along the Colorado River. In January 2010, 2.5 miles of trails in the Yuma East Wetlands just east of the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge were eligible for certification as components of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

In addition to the multiuse, non-motorized and off-road trail component of the trail, National Historic trails can contain an auto route. An auto route is a route that is designated and marked along existing roads and as closely as possible parallels the historic trail corridor. With the cooperation and assistance of road-managing agencies, auto route signs are intended to be placed along federal, state and county roads at appropriate road junctions (consistent with the sign regulations of the managing highway department). Signs will indicate "Historic Route" or "Auto Route" as appropriate. As a general rule, the NPS will help fund the initial auto route signs, but states will be encouraged to manufacture, install, maintain and replace the auto route markers according to the specifications of their respective highway departments.²

The Butterfield Trail is the trail that was used from 1857 to 1861 by stagecoaches to transport mail from St. Louis to San Francisco. Fort Yuma was used as a terminal between Tucson to the east and Los Angeles to the west and as expected, the trail makes its way in an east-west orientation across Yuma County.

The El Camino Del Diablo Trail, literally, the highway of the devil, was used for centuries as a route tracing a south to north orientation across Yuma County as a part of a longer trail from present day Caborca, Sonora, Mexico to Yuma, Arizona. It was named as such because of the high risk of attack and because of the extreme physical demands travelers would typically encounter along its route. It was used though because it was a much shorter route than going the way of Tucson and Gila Bend, Arizona, before traveling on to Yuma. According to historical accounts, the trail is appropriately named.



Members of the Quechan tribe help to protect the Anza expedition's men, women and children during their Colorado River crossing on November 30, 1775, on Anza's way eventually to San Francisco. Graphic by Wade Cox.

²Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Use Plan. National Park Service. 1996.

Recreational Resources Element

Three photos depicting scenes found along El Camino Del Diablo Trail as it runs through Yuma County.

Photos used courtesy of Monty Stansbury.



5.4 Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan

On March 20, 2006, the Yuma County Board of Supervisors adopted the *Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan*. The creation and adoption of a parks master plan was the first act of the parks department which was reestablished in 2004. The intent of the *Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan* is to define the park, recreation, and trail and open space needs of the residents of unincorporated Yuma County. In November 2005 the Yuma County Parks Department commissioned a survey of Yuma County citizens to determine support, use and need for parks, open space and trails. Responses to this survey were used to create the *Yuma County Parks and Open Space and Trail Master Plan*. Action points listed from that survey regarding parks are presented below.

Parks

- Establish a funding system
 - Capital funds for land acquisitions and construction
 - Operating funds for staffing, operations and maintenance
- Refurbish existing parks to current codes, safety requirements and community need.
- Acquire land and construct two multi-use community parks in the:
 - Foothills Planning Area
 - Gadsden Vicinity
- Acquire additional lands around Adair Park in the Laguna Mountains to create a regional park. The McPhaul Bridge should be included in this park.
- Require neighborhood parks and trails in all new developments that are developer constructed and maintained by a homeowners association.
- Fill neighborhood park needs with parcel acquisition and new park construction

5.5 Analysis of Recreational Needs

The next two pages contain tables that delineate the approximate number of acres in Yuma County that are in parks, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas, management areas and other assorted recreational areas. As can be seen, Yuma County contains many varied recreational resources.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards suggest that from 6.25 to 10.50 acres of park land should be provided for every 1,000 residents. Using the current 2010 U.S. Census population base of 195,751 permanent residents and a seasonal population of 284,000 persons, the county would require approximately 1,225 to 2,980 acres of park land.

Since 1980, the average growth of the entire county population per decade through 2010 is 30.8%. Extrapolations are always difficult because of the number of variables that may come into play over a ten year period of time. In this case, the largest variables likely at play with making a population projection for the year 2020 is the downturn in the overall health of the U.S. and Arizona economies versus the fact that the first baby-boomers officially have started to retire as of January 1, 2011, and Yuma County has a lot of retirees. It is impossible to know for sure which will dominate as the decade of 2010 to 2020 plays out, but population growth can be expected to continue. If a 31% countywide population growth is anticipated between 2010 to 2020, then using the previously stated NRPA standards of 6.25 to 10.50 acres of park land that should be provided for every 1,000 residents, Yuma County would need between 1,600 (6.25 acres per 1,000 population) and 2,688 (10.5 acres per 1,000 population) acres of park land. A 2010 population of 195,751 times .31 (31%) equals an additional 60,683 residents, thus a projected population of 256,434 residents in Yuma County by 2020.

As can be seen from Table 1, the amount of parks only lands is below the standard as suggested by the NRPA for even the year 2010. However, Yuma County is unique in that it also contains many recreational features and areas not available in other places of the United States, such as national wildlife refuges and wildlife areas. These ease the deficient amount in the parks category. Granted, these lands are not parks per se, but nonetheless offer recreational opportunities to Yuma County residents.

As can be seen from Table 2, the County contains over one-million acres of recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities. Even by taking the higher suggested standard of the NRPA of 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents for the 2020 projection year, when considering all of these acres Yuma County exceeds the suggested amount by over 400 times.

All these calculations do not even take into consideration the park and recreational opportunities provided by the Cities of San Luis, Somerton, Yuma and the Town of Wellton ranging from standard parks to specialized recreational facilities such as aquatic centers, skateboard parks, and golf courses, both private and public. Public recreational opportunities are not mutually exclusive, meaning that Yuma County residents can freely access city parks and residents of cities and towns located in Yuma County can use parks and recreational facilities located in the unincorporated area of Yuma County.

Table 1: Yuma County Parks and Park Acreage			
<u>Park/Retention Basin/Name:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Size (in acres):</u>	<u>Category/Type:</u>
Foothills Optimist Community Park	El Camino del Sol in Mesa del Sol	1	Pocket
18th Street Retention Basin	18th Street	5	Neighborhood
Gadsden Park	Gadsden	8	Neighborhood
Kiwanis Tacna Park	North side of Tacna	9.4	Neighborhood
Adair Range	Confluence of U.S. Highway 95 & Gila River	660	Regional or Conservation (Also, could be considered a Special Use-type of park.)
Total Acreage		683.4	

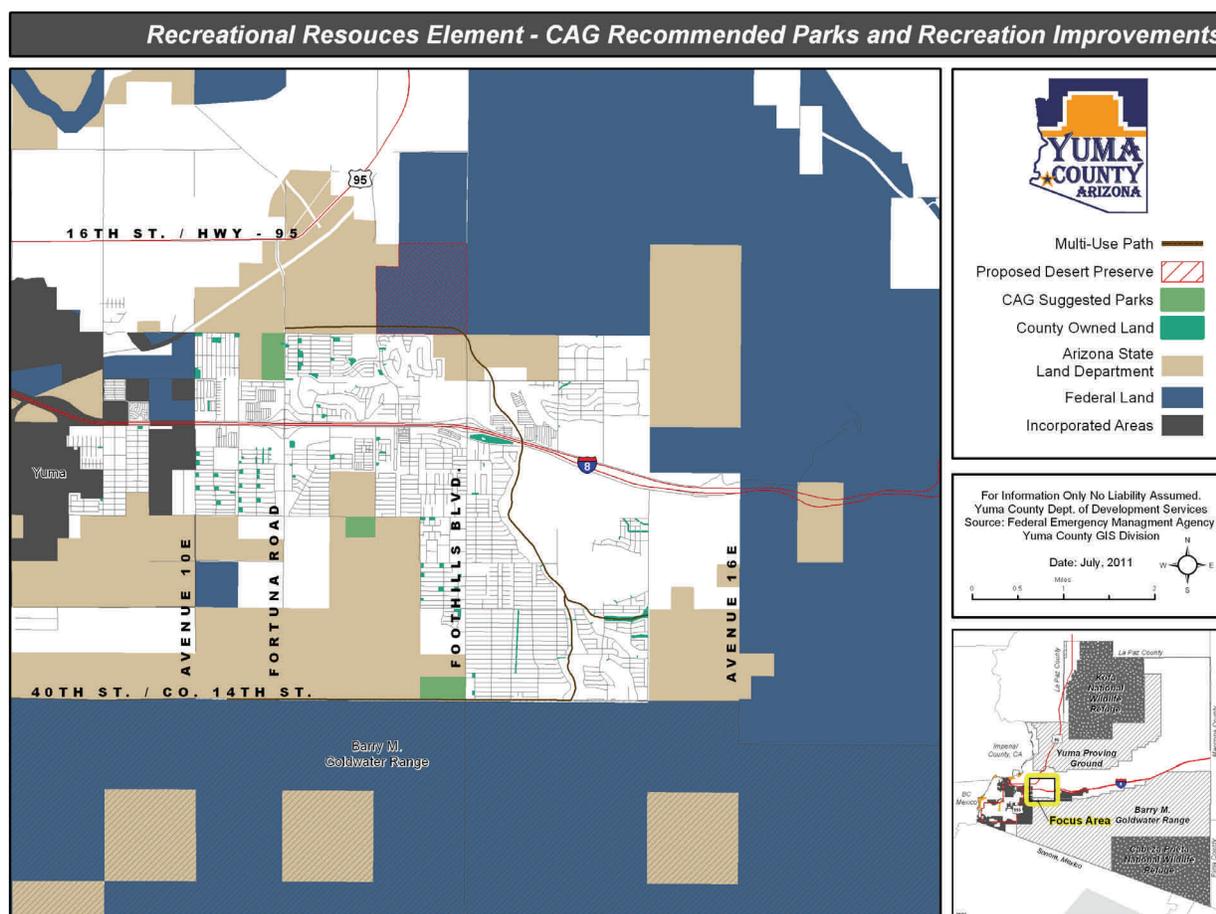
Yuma County operated a Parks Department until it was disbanded in 1982. It was re-established by action of the Yuma County Board of Supervisors in 1997. It is still a portion of the Public Works Department, but budget cuts over time have reduced its size. Today, it mainly manages the following parks in Yuma County: 1) Gadsden Park, 2) Foothills Optimist Park, 3) Kiwanis Tacna Park, 4) Adair Range, and 5) the BMX Track located on the east side of Pacific Avenue and slightly north of 32nd Street in the City of Yuma.

The final analysis is that more traditional parks and recreational opportunities are needed and will be needed in the future, but the open space and recreational diversity of Yuma County compliments and offsets this deficiency for the time being.

Table 2: Open Space, Wilderness, Wildlife Refuge and Recreational Management Areas in Yuma County		
<u>Name of Entity:</u>	<u>Size (in acres):</u>	<u>Jurisdiction:</u>
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area	562,159	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge	455,256	USFWS
Yuma Desert Management Area	31,700	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Eagletail Mountains Wilderness Area	24,580	BLM
Muggins Mountains Wilderness Area	7674	BLM
Imperial National Wildlife Refuge	4089	USFWS
Sears Point ACEC (core)	3700	BLM
Mittry Lake Wildlife Area	3575	Arizona Game & Fish Department (AGFD) and BLM
Yuma East Wetlands Restoration	1392	Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Engineers
Quigley Wildlife Management Area (Quigley Ponds)	612	AGFD
Hunters Hole Management Area	435	BLM and Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area
Redondo Pond Recreation Area	68	BLM and AGFD
Fortuna Pond Management Area	30	BLM, AGFD, & Bureau of Reclamation
Total Acreage:	1,095,270	

5.6 Citizen Advisory Group Recommendations

Between 2007 and 2010, Citizen Advisory Groups (CAG) composed of area residents for each planning area within Yuma County reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and made recommendations on updating it to reflect the concerns of area residents regarding open space and recreational resource issues. This process began with a town hall style meeting. Each CAG then identified a list of issues regarding open space and recreational resources they considered critical to their planning area. The county shall work towards addressing the issues whenever possible. The issues are presented under the Recreational Resources Policies and Priorities and Recreational Resources Actions portion of this Element.



Map 2: Foothills Planning Area Citizen Advisory Group Recommended Parks and Recreation Improvements

5.7 Proximity of Parks to People

An important land use planning issue is the proximity of parks to people. For people to be able to realistically use and enjoy parks and other recreational facilities, they must be relatively near to one another.

Figure 1 shows, in pie-chart form, the percentage of people within certain distances to parks and the percentage of people within three (3) miles of a park, respectively. Maps 3 and 4 show in graphical form the distance of the populous to community, neighborhood or regional parks and pocket parks.

In the future more needs to be done to ensure that parks are available to the public at reasonable distances, for example, at no more than three miles. Maps 5 and 6 depict County owned parcels that mainly function as storm water retention basins, but at times double as small de-facto recreational spaces.

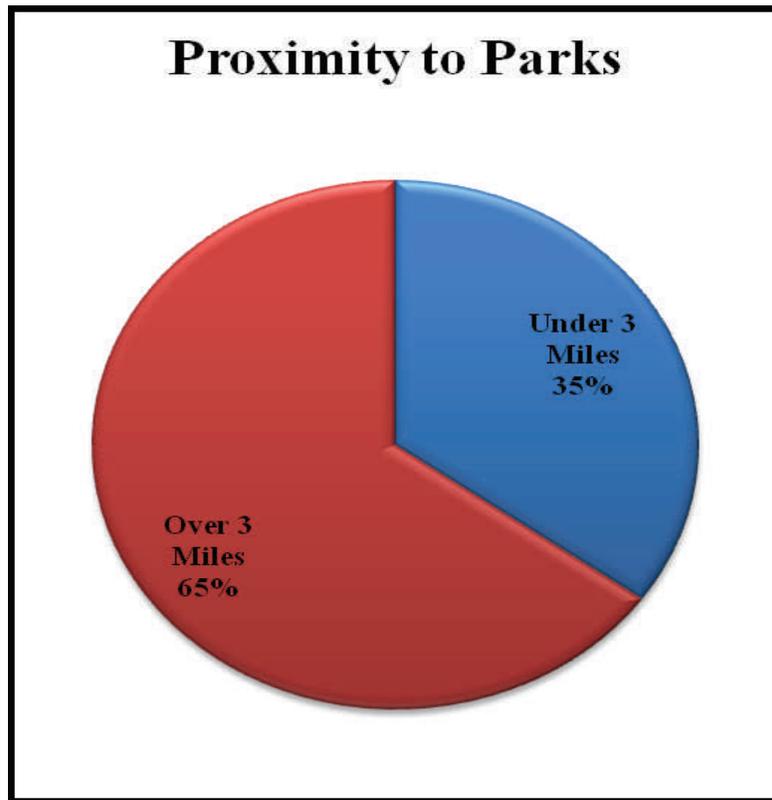
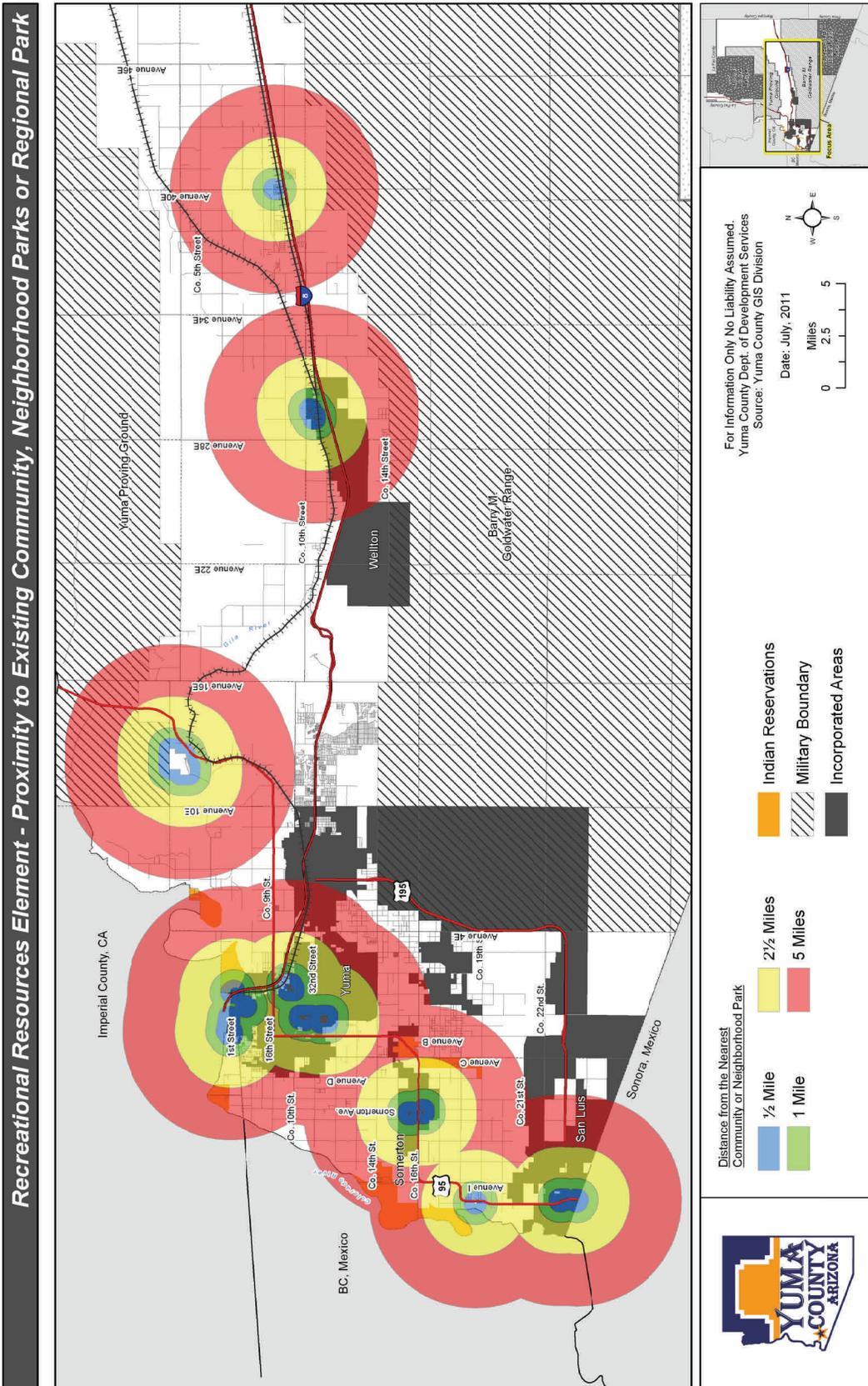
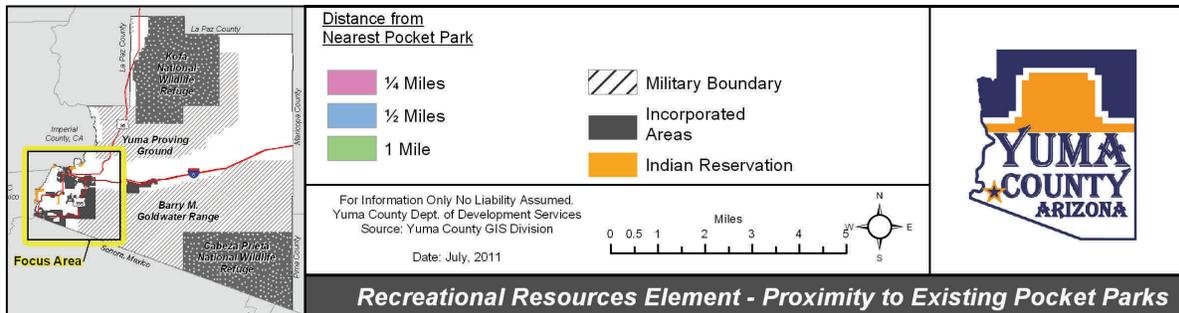
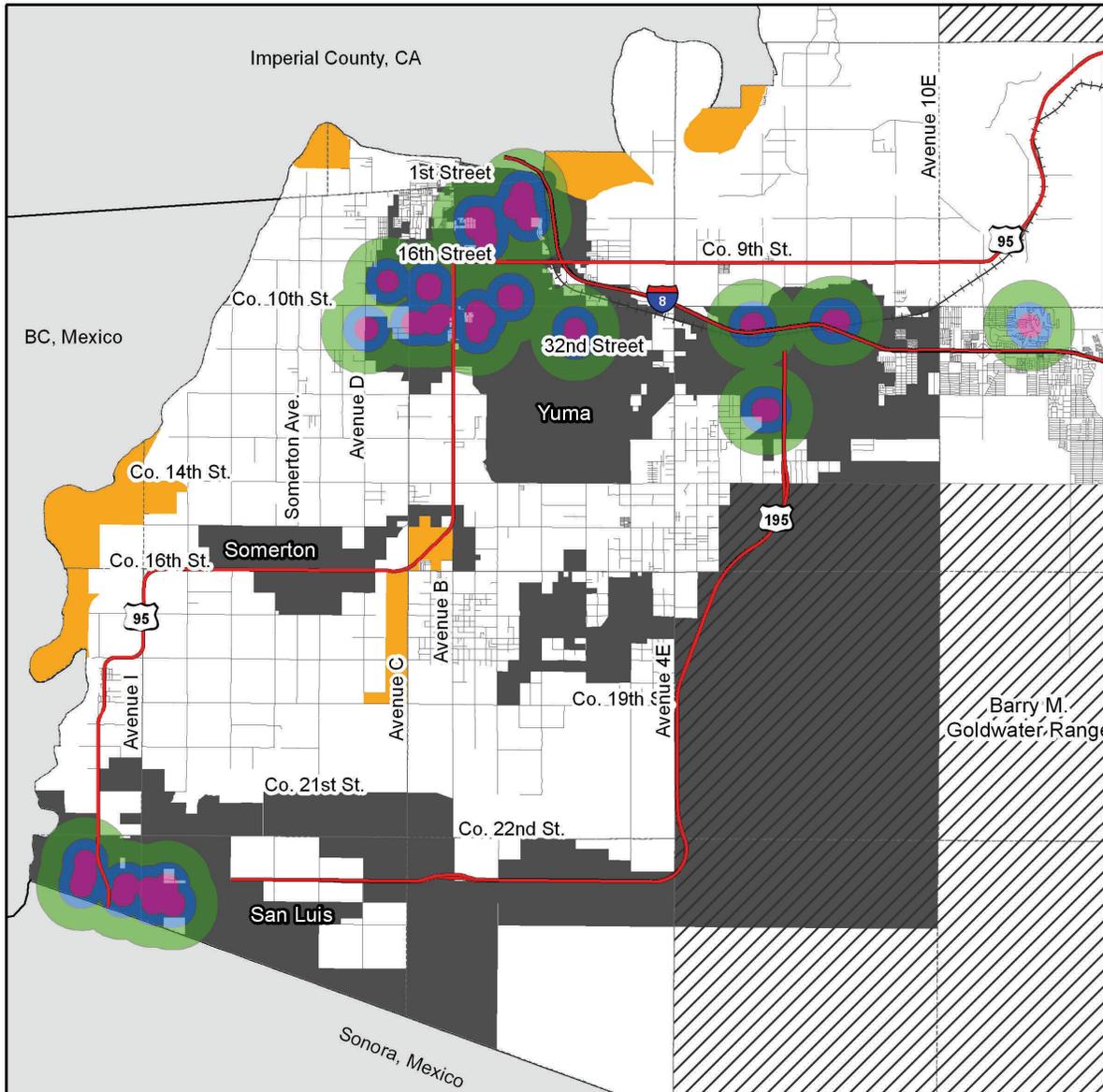


Figure 1: Proximity to Parks

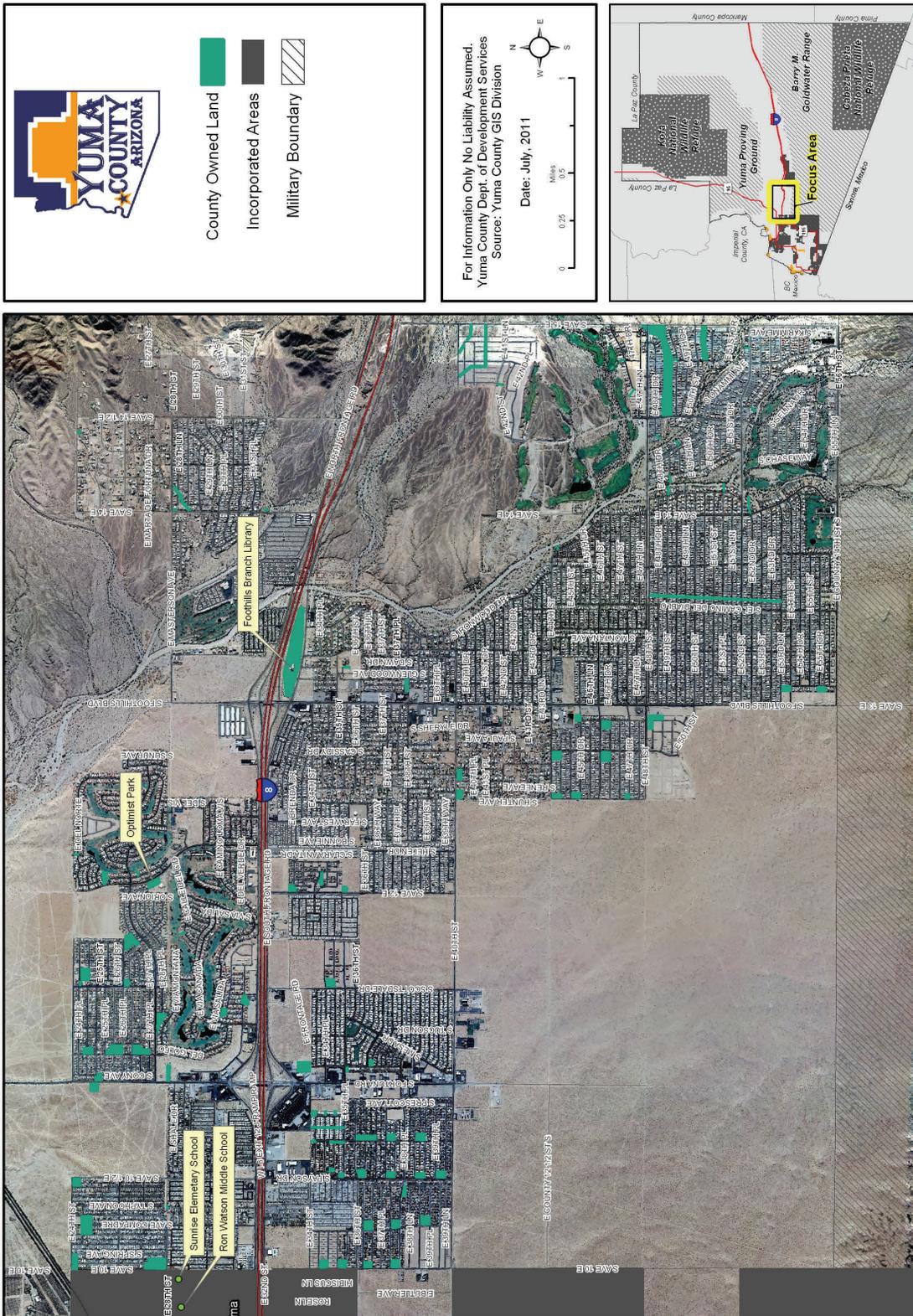


Recreational Resources Element



Map 4: Proximity to Pocket Parks

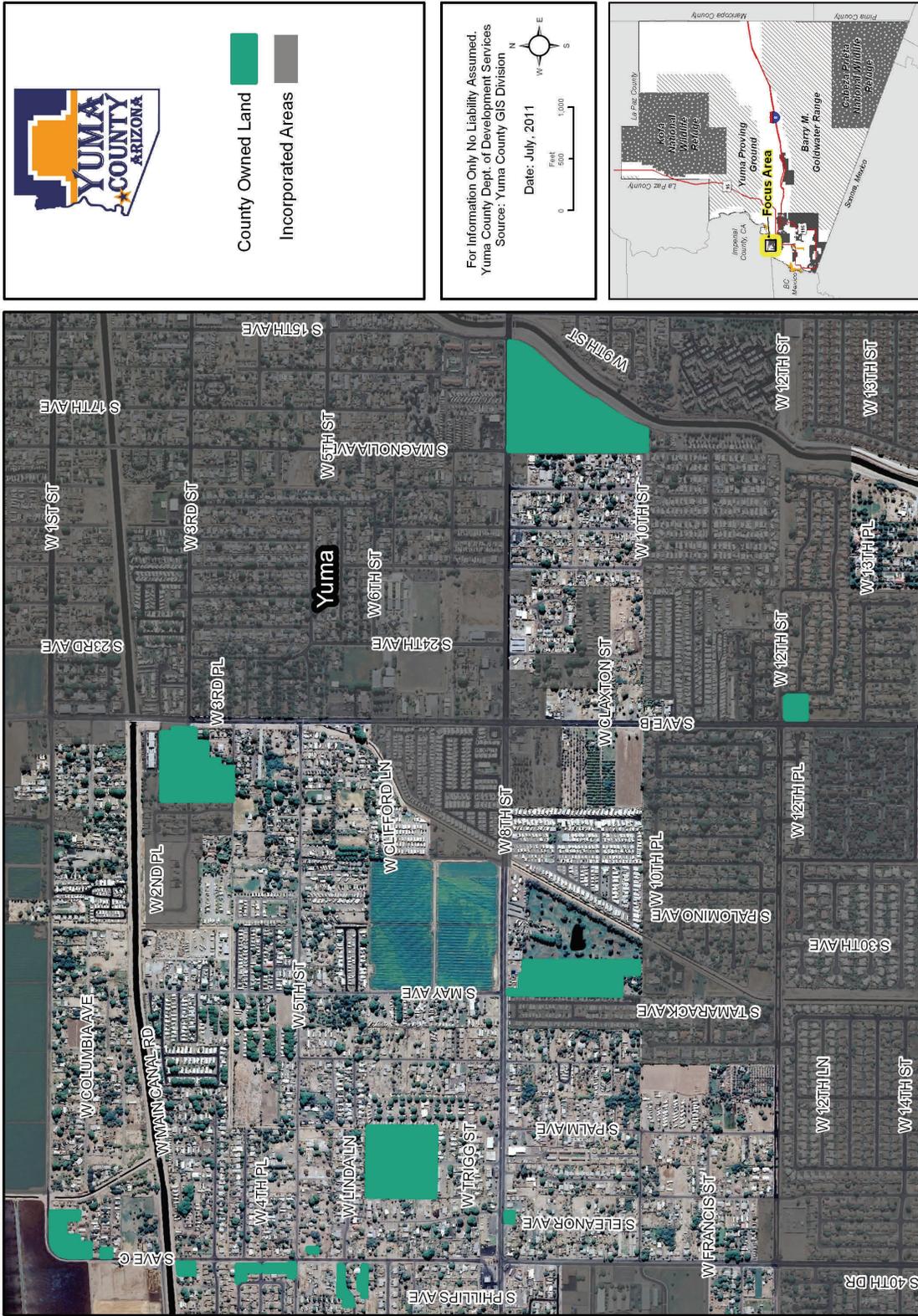
Recreational Resources Element - County Owned Parcels



Map 5: County Owned Land, Foothills Area

Recreational Resources Element

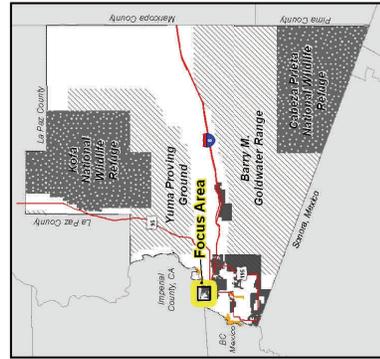
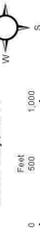
Recreational Resources Element - County Owned Parcels



County Owned Land
 Incorporated Areas

For Information Only No Liability Assumed.
 Yuma County Dept. of Development Services
 Source: Yuma County GIS Division

Date: July, 2011



Map 6: County Owned Land, Avenues B & C Colonia Area

5.8 Recreational Resources Policies and Priorities

- RRPP.1:** Reduce the percentage of the population of unincorporated Yuma County that lives more than five miles away from a developed park.
- RRPP.2:** Where practicable and desirable and when a funding mechanism for construction and operations has been established, utilize retention basins in new residential developments as neighborhood parks
- RRPP.3:** Adopt polices and regulations that encourage the development of parks and recreational facilities.
- RRPP.4:** Yuma County will promote parks by permitting flexibility and providing bonus density in design standards for residential development.
- RRP.5:** New residential development should occur in a manner that enhances parks and recreation opportunities.
- RRPP.6:** Yuma County will work at partnering with Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Land Department, Cocopah Indian Nation, irrigation districts, school districts and other governmental entities in promoting the maintenance of existing parks and the establishment of new parks.
- RRPP.7:** Using the 2006 Yuma County Parks, Open Space and Trail Master Plan as a starting point, continue to identify and plan for desired park, recreational facility and trail improvements.
- RRPP.8:** Yuma County will work to identify ideal locations for parks, recreational facilities and trails.
- RRPP.9:** Encourage and work with all relevant parties to complete specific parks and recreational projects that have been suggested by and identified as highly desirable by Yuma County citizens.
- RRPP.10:** Yuma County will prepare a study of parks and recreation facility needs for the Foothills Planning Area.
- RRPP.11:** The Foothills Parks and Recreation Study will identify the need for athletic fields, passive parks playgrounds, dog parks and community facilities in the Foothills Planning Area.
- RRPP.12:** The Foothills Parks and Recreation Study will identify potential funding options for potential parks and recreational facility enhancement in the Foothills area which will include the identification of potential funding sources for identified parks and facilities.

5.8 Recreational Resources Policies and Priorities: (continued)

- RRPP.13:** Develop a partnership between Yuma County and Hyder Elementary School District No.16 to develop a community park at Dateland School.
- RRPP.14:** Yuma County will encourage and work with all relevant parties to restore a portion of the Gila River and include along with this restoration recreational facilities such as trails and ramadas.
- RRPP.15:** The need for additional boat docking, storage and trailer parking will be considered when any changes are made to a land use designation or zoning district at Martinez Lake.
- RRPP.16:** Yuma County will work with community leaders to facilitate the creation of parks in the Yuma Valley.
- RRPP.17:** Partner with local schools including Arizona Western College in developing recreational resources at school sites that could be used by the entire community.
- RRPP.18:** Work with the Marine Corps Air Station to keep the authorized recreational trails on the Barry M. Goldwater Range open to the general public in such a way as to protect the natural environment.
- RRPP.19:** Keep the northern Mohawk Mountains open.
- RRPP.20:** Develop impact fees on new development as a method of financing the construction of new parks, other recreational resources and for preserving open space.
- RRPP.21:** Work with local Native American nations to better identify culturally sensitive lands.
- RRPP.22:** Protect culturally sensitive historical sites.
- RRPP.23:** Enhance stewardship of historical artifacts and develop incentives (tax breaks) for preservation.
- RRPP.24:** Amend the Subdivision Regulations to require the establishment of parks with new development and create a mechanism that would provide for their upkeep.
- RRPP.25:** Develop a means to discourage inappropriate ATV usage.
- RRPP.26:** Examine the possibility of working with the Yuma Union High School District to develop joint use recreational facilities at the potential new high school on Fortuna Road.

5.8 Recreational Resources Policies and Priorities: (continued)

- RRPP.27:** Designate areas within or near the Drysdale area to a land use designation that would promote the development of green areas (parks).

- RRPP.28:** Designate government owned property along the Colorado River Open Space and Recreational Resources or as Sensitive Areas and Resource Lands.

5.9 Recreational Resources Actions

- RRA.1:** Identify all county owned land that has potential to be developed into a park.
- RRA.2:** Establish methodologies that will allow and encourage dedication of land for parks and recreational resources.
- RRA.3:** Yuma County will review future residential development plans for potential park sites.
- RRA.4:** Establish subdivision standards for open space in large residential developments. Establish requirements for improvement and maintenance.
- RRA.5:** Coordinate open space conservation and recreational resource efforts within all county departments, municipalities, other counties, state and federal agencies, private organizations and individuals.
- RRA.6:** Identify and map publicly owned land suitable for parks and recreation development.
- RRA.7:** Identify and map right of way corridors suitable for construction of multi-use paths.
- RRA.8:** Enhance park and recreational facilities in the Dateland/East County Planning Area.
- RRA.9:** Improve recreational boating facilities at Martinez Lake.
- RRA.10:** Yuma County will work with local residents, other governmental entities and non-profit organizations to identify possible funding sources and grants to improve and expand publicly accessible boat launch facilities at Martinez Lake.
- RRA.11:** Yuma County will encourage and work with all relevant parties to establish a publicly accessible boat washing facility in order to prevent the spread of invasive species into the Colorado River.
- RRA.12:** Yuma County will encourage and work with all relevant parties to improve existing boat ramps to make them usable at all water levels at Martinez Lake.
- RRA.13:** Yuma County will encourage and work with all relevant parties to maintain and upgrade the Meers Point boating and recreational area.
- RRA.14:** Yuma County will encourage and work with all relevant parties to create and install a kiosk displaying information about recreational facilities, opportunities and regulations in a prominent public place.
- RRA.15:** Yuma County will encourage and work with all relevant parties to construct a waterfront picnic area.

5.9 Recreational Resources Actions: (continued)

RRA.16: Yuma County will develop a detailed recreational plan for government land south of County 19th Street. This would include separate and appropriate areas for off road vehicle recreational, equestrian and hiking uses.

RRA.17: Yuma County will construct trails for walking, biking and hiking as opportunities arise in the Dome Valley/Wellton area.