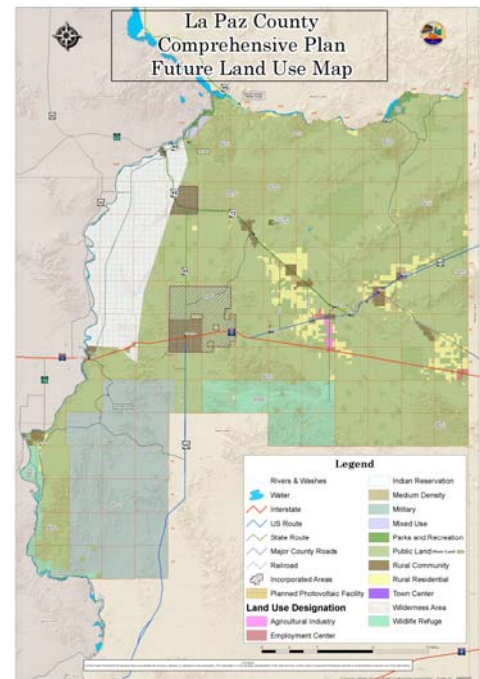


# La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

Adopted May 2005

Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010





## ***Acknowledgements***

In addition to the citizens that participated in public events, focus groups, and workshops, La Paz County would like to recognize the following individuals and organizations that provided input and assistance during the Comprehensive Plan development process.

On behalf of La Paz County, we would like to officially acknowledge all of those individuals who help develop this plan.

### **Board of Supervisors**

District 1 Supervisor Eugene M. “Gene” Fisher

District 2 Supervisor Clifford Edey

District 3 Supervisor Mary A. Scott

District 3 Joyce Barker (former)

District 3 Supervisor Jay Howe (former)

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## *La Paz County Comprehensive Plan*

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**La Paz County would like to thank the approximately 300 local citizens that participated in the discussion and Comprehensive Plan works sessions held throughout the County, including public hearings and special meetings.**



## **1.0 PLANNING OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 Overview of the Comprehensive Plan**

The La Paz County Comprehensive Plan is the first overall plan for development countywide. Due to the passage of new state requirements and a desire to plan for the future, the La Paz County Board of Supervisors contracted with Partners for Strategic Action, Inc. (PSA) to develop the county's first comprehensive plan. The consulting team was directed to solicit broad community participation, study the county planning area, and develop a plan that would be an easy-to-understand policy document that will guide La Paz County's development in the future. PSA served as the Prime Consultant and Lima and Associates, Inc. provided multimodal transportation planning as well as graphic support.

The first two decades of existence as the State of Arizona's newest county was focused on developing an organizational structure to efficiently perform day-to-day operations and provide basic services. The county is now entering an exciting period where it is turning its attention to strategic, long-range thinking to ensure the best possible future for residents, businesses, the environment, and economy.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a new tool to evaluate development proposals based on sound planning principals and also provides direction for additional planning efforts that will support the implementation of this plan.

### **1.2 Legal Framework**

The passage of the Growing Smarter Act in 1998 followed closely by the Growing Smarter Plus Act in 2000 ushered in new requirements for county comprehensive planning. Historically, counties were required to prepare comprehensive plans as were cities and towns throughout the state. As a result of the new laws, requirements were specifically described and increased public involvement was required. La Paz County is required by state law to prepare a comprehensive plan "to bring about coordinated physical development in accordance with the present and future needs of the county." Additionally the plan shall be developed "to conserve the natural resources of the county, to ensure efficient expenditure of public funds, and to promote the health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of the public." (A.R.S.11-806)

### **1.3 Comprehensive Plan Elements**

The La Paz County Comprehensive Plan is comprised of a series of elements that are intended to work together to provide policy direction on the county's growth and development. It is important that these elements do not stand alone but are interrelated to provide the whole picture of the county's resources, its needs and desires, and policies that will guide decision-making.



## ***La Paz County Comprehensive Plan***

The comprehensive plan, according to state law (A.R.S. 11-806) “may include but not limited to, among other things, studies and recommendations relative to the location, character and extent of highways, railroads, bus and other transportation routes, bicycle facilities, bridges, public buildings, public services, schools, parks, open space, housing quality, variety and affordability, parkways, hiking and riding trails, airports, forests, wildlife areas, dams, projects affecting conservation of natural resources, air quality, water quality and floodplain zoning.”

The La Paz County Comprehensive Plan contains three elements:

***Land Use Element*** (Chapter 3.0) that provides the proposed general distribution, location, and extent of land for housing, business, industry, public facilities, and open space.

***Multimodal Transportation Element*** (Chapter 4.0) identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed roadways as well as other forms of transportation including transit.

***Environmental Element*** (Chapter 5.0) identifies environmental issues and provides strategies to preserve, conserve and enhance the natural environment.

In addition to the three elements, there is an Implementation Plan (Chapter 6.0) that outlines specific efforts that need to take place to support the Comprehensive Plan’s long-term implementation.

### **1.4 Historical Perspective**

The northern portion of Yuma County became La Paz County on January 1, 1983 based on a voter initiative that was passed in May 1982. At that time, the Town of Parker was designated as the county seat which it remains today.

La Paz means “the peace” in Spanish and has historic significance as the name of a boom town on the Colorado River. The Colorado River town of La Paz was founded in 1862, after the discovery of rich gold deposits nearby. By 1863, there were probably 5,000 people working in the gold mines, making La Paz one of the largest settlements in what was to become the Arizona Territory. The decline of La Paz was caused by two factors – the mines dried up and the Colorado River changed its course in 1870, leaving the town “high and dry.”



The Colorado River was “tamed” many years later by a series of dams and reservoirs making the river useful for recreational activities and irrigation.



## ***La Paz County Comprehensive Plan***

Parker Dam, which created Lake Havasu was completed in 1928 and regulates the flow of Colorado River water through La Paz County.

In addition to Parker, the river communities of Ehrenberg, Cibola, Parker Strip and the inland communities of Bouse, Brenda, Harcuvar, Hope, Poston, Quartzsite, Salome, Vicksburg, *Blue Water Resort and Casino (CRIT)* and Wenden are located in La Paz County. The County's rugged landscape, the Colorado River, and the numerous designated wilderness areas and wildlife refuges attract thousands of visitors annually, making tourism the number one industry in the area. Agriculture is the second largest contributor to the county's economy.

The Town of Parker, incorporated in 1948 as part of Yuma County, was the only incorporated community in the county when the County was created in 1983. This remained the case until the Town of Quartzsite's incorporation in 1989.

### **1.5 Public Involvement**

Ensuring residents and stakeholders have ample opportunity to provide input into the development of the comprehensive plan was critical for its success. At the onset of the planning process, a La Paz County Public Involvement Plan was created and adopted by the Board of Supervisors. This plan meets the state requirements of adopted "written procedures to provide effective, early and continuous public participation in the development and major amendment of comprehensive plans from all geographic, ethnic and economic areas of the county." (A.R.S. 11-806 D) The La Paz County's public involvement plan includes the following techniques for involvement outlined in Table 1.1, Public Participation Program.

PSA worked very closely with the La Paz County Planning and Zoning Commission, county staff, community leaders, and the public throughout the process. The Planning and Zoning Commission was the lead group directing the comprehensive plan process and served as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). All meetings were posted and open to the public. The TAC played a key role in providing direction and guidance to PSA during the process. Additionally, the TAC assisted PSA in ensuring that all interested parties were informed of and had the ability to participate in the process. The Planning and Zoning Commission ultimately made policy and plan recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The TAC met nine times during the process.





## ***La Paz County Comprehensive Plan***

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### **Public Involvement Events and Activities**

As mentioned previously, the Planning and Zoning Commission was used extensively to provide input into the process. The Planning and Zoning Commission also completed an initiation survey early in the process to identify and prioritize key issues.

In addition to this input, significant additional public input was received through a variety of techniques. In the summer of 2006, staff conducted four community public meetings in Salome, Bouse, Ehrenberg and Parker. These advertised meetings were conducted to allow residents and citizens to comment on proposed revisions and make suggestions for the Comprehensive Plan. These meetings were attended by approximately 250 people. Many of the suggestions and comments from these meetings are included in the 2006 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan text and Land Use Plan Map. La Paz County staff also met with the local School Superintendents and Salome Chamber of Commerce.

### **Focus Groups**

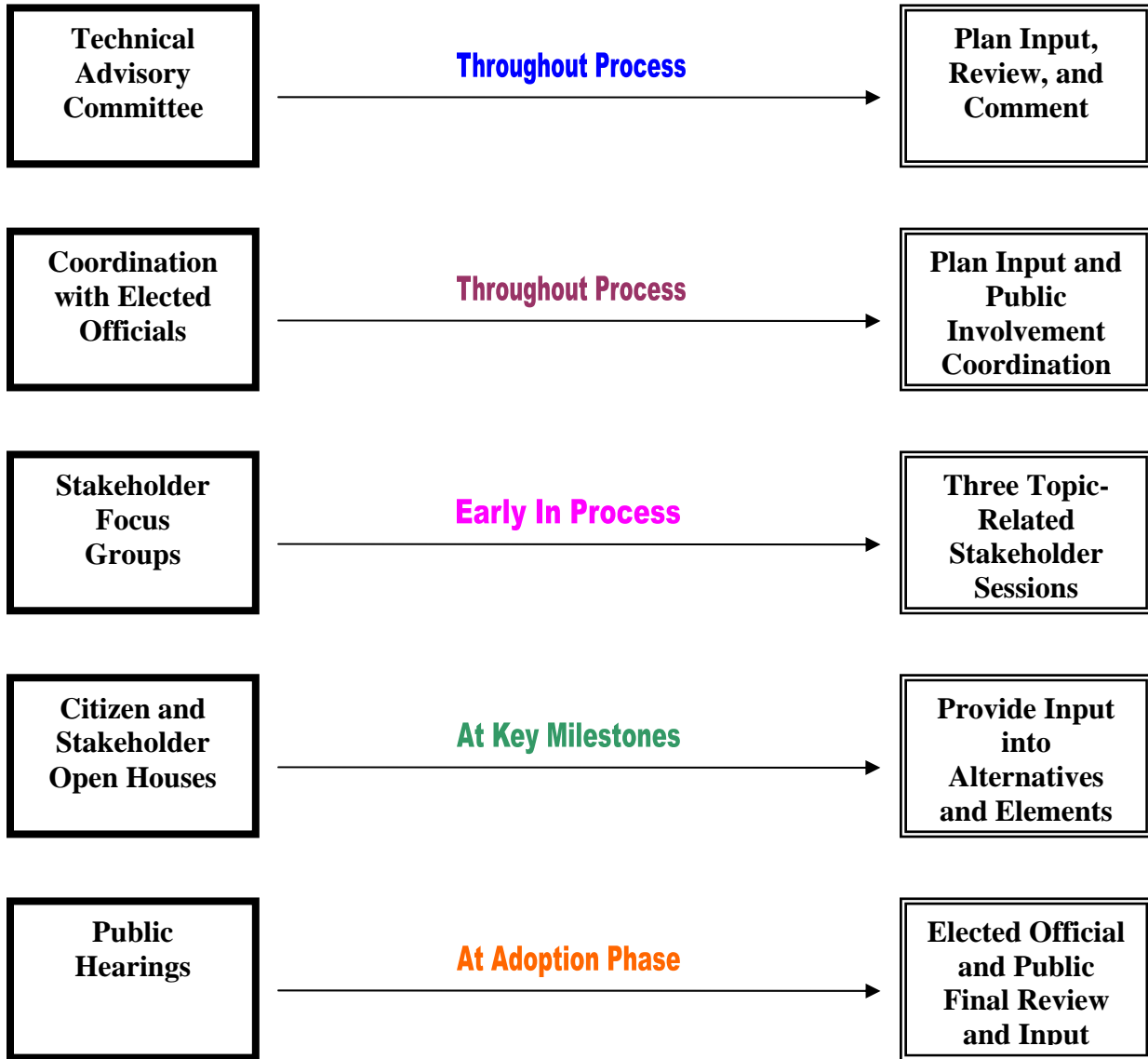
Early in the plan development process, focus groups were held to open a dialogue with stakeholders about the issues facing the county that should be addressed in some way by the Comprehensive Plan.

The focus groups were organized around three themes: Agriculture and Mining Interests, Residential/Commercial, and Industrial Development, and Tourism and Economic Development. Individuals representing these interests participated in a facilitated forum that provided input to the planning team.

Focus Group participants also completed a brief survey as part of the event.



**Table 1.1, Public Participation Program**







### **Public Workshops**

A series of public workshops was held throughout the county to obtain feedback on the land use alternatives and transportation, and environmental elements. These events were held in Salome-Wenden, Bouse, Quartzsite, Ehrenberg, and the Parker Strip.



Participants were given a brief presentation on the features and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan and were given the opportunity to comment on the information presented and provide feedback. Participants also completed a survey which was summarized and analyzed for use in refining planning alternatives.

### **Public Hearings**

As part of the adoption process, public hearings were held with the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

## **1.6 Using the Comprehensive Plan**

The La Paz Comprehensive Plan provides the guide for development decisions by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The plan will provide direction to the county staff in making their recommendations to these official county bodies. However, the comprehensive plan will also serve as an important reference for landowners, residents, and investors in making informed investment decisions.

The plan is intended to be “flexible” enough to respond to the changing environment within La Paz County but “focused” in such a way as to provide clear direction to elected and appointed officials. The plan will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to respond to changes occurring within the county. It is the goal of the comprehensive plan to reflect the “consensus” achieved through the public involvement process and respond to the needs and desires for La Paz County through 2020. A major revision shall take place in 2011 to include the results of the 2010 census and make needed revisions according to identified development patterns and County needs.



## **1.7 Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

The goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan are not static; as conditions change and new issues emerge, the Board may need to modify them. To be truly effective, this plan requires regular review and updating to incorporate citizen opinions and to track our progress. A regular review process also motivates us to carry out the plan's goals and policies. As such, the Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure its consistency with our overall vision for La Paz County.

The plan's goal is to require amendments prior to approval as project size and potential impacts increase rather than to impose undue burdens on small developers.

Likewise, although the Arizona Revised Statutes specify requirements for reviewing proposed amendments, they leave the definition of "major" to the discretion of each jurisdiction. La Paz County defines a major amendment as any proposed project of 3,000 acres or more that is substantially out of compliance with one or more goals and policies in this plan or that represents a substantial alteration to the county's land use mixture and balance.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The requested change must benefit the county or a specific community and address conditions that were unforeseen during the plan's update process.
- Conditions have changed substantially since the last update; such conditions may involve surrounding land uses or economic factors.
- The amendment will effectively help us implement the plan's other goals or the county vision.

Anyone may request amendments to the Comprehensive Plan after submitting an application and fee. Although citizens may request minor amendments at any time, Growing Smarter states that the County should only consider major amendments once per calendar year. Such applications will be accepted up to a specified date before the end of each year, as determined by the Community Development Director.



## **2.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of the Policy Framework is to present the overall county-wide vision and critical data used in the development of the plans goals and policies. The vision, goals, and policies will be used to guide decision-making regarding development and redevelopment county-wide. Specific policies shall be included in the Comprehensive Plan and used to establish the principles for development within La Paz County.

### **2.1 La Paz County Vision**

The vision statement is intended to provide long-term development guidance when making decisions about growth and change in La Paz County. The statement is presented in the future tense; an ideal future state.

*La Paz County, Arizona retains its rural character by effective management of growth and has made great progress early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People visit and move to the area to enjoy the wide open spaces and bountiful recreational activities on land and water.*

*Due to the unique land ownership pattern, the County maintains close working relationships with the Colorado River Indian Tribes, Arizona State Land Department, Bureau of Land Management, and other federal agencies to ensure that the region can jointly plan for the area and take advantage of economic opportunities.*

*The economy is more diversified by building on the County's central location between the Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles metropolitan areas, an improved transportation system, and utilization of rail service. Though tourism and recreation are still an important component of the County's economy, new, clean industry and manufacturing, small businesses, and agriculture are located in appropriate areas throughout the County. Water is a key economic engine for both recreation and irrigation and this asset is vigorously protected by the County and its residents and businesses.*

*New municipalities have been created as economic and residential activity areas and the County is supportive of residents who wish to form their own local governments and tax bases.*



### **2.2 Critical Planning Issues**

The following critical issues facing La Paz County that are discussed and addressed in the plan include:

- Protection of agriculture and agricultural airports
- Reservation lands - coordination/compatibility/interface
- Creation of jobs, increased property values, and raising residents' standard of living
- Improving the general appearance of the built environment in the County and thus improving the visual image
- Facing the challenge of maintaining the status quo versus growth. Some residents do not want to see significant change (want to retire in peace) while others welcome new growth and increased economic opportunities
- Planning for youth because they will inherit this county
- Winter visitors that visit and the many that eventually become permanent residents
- Coordination with the many jurisdictions (e.g., Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT), Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Land Department, etc.) to understand their plans
- Lack of privately-held land
- Establishing and maintaining viable access and transportation circulation plan
- Obtaining special funding from state, federal and other sources in the form of grants that seek to better the built environment of La Paz County
- Ensure a wide variety of access to public lands for recreation purposes
- Plan for additional public parks and upgrades to existing public parks

### **2.3 Socio-Economic Analysis**

This following data is provided to present a current profile of the county's residents and how the county's demographics and socio-economics have changed since 1990. Comparison data for other governmental entities in the region and the State of Arizona is also provided to place the data in context. This baseline information was used during the Comprehensive Plan development process.

#### **Population**

La Paz County's population growth rate from 1990 was almost identical to that of the State of Arizona. The rate was slightly slower than neighboring Yuma County and significantly below the growth rate of rapidly growing Mohave County to the north.



## La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

**Table 2.1, Population**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>La Paz County</b>	19,715	13,844	42.4%
<b>State of Arizona</b>	5,130,632	3,165,432	40.0%
<b>Town of Parker</b>	3,140	2,897	8.4%
<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>	3,354	1,876	78.8%
<b>Mohave County</b>	155,032	93,497	65.8%
<b>Yuma County</b>	160,026	106,895	49.7%

*Source: 2000 United States Census*

### Demographics

La Paz County has slightly more males than females with 51.3% males and 48.7% female. The State of Arizona is overall 50.1% female. The median age of the residents of La Paz County is 46.8 years of age. This median age is more than 12 years higher than the state's of 34.2 years reflecting the County's significant retirement population.

**Table 2.2, Percent per Age Group**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Under 5</b>	4.9%	7.5%	7.6%	1.1%
<b>5-14</b>	12.0%	15.0%	18.8%	3.3%
<b>15-19</b>	6.1%	7.2%	9.5%	2.1%
<b>20-24</b>	4.2%	7.1%	6.4%	1.0%
<b>25-34</b>	8.6%	14.5%	10.6%	2.8%
<b>35-44</b>	11.8%	15.0%	14.8%	4.8%
<b>45-54</b>	12.2%	12.2%	14.4%	9.5%
<b>55-59</b>	6.8%	4.7%	5.5%	8.5%
<b>60-64</b>	7.5%	4.0%	2.9%	11.9%
<b>65-74</b>	16.6%	7.1%	5.4%	33.7%
<b>75-84</b>	7.8%	4.6%	3.0%	18.3%
<b>85+</b>	1.4%	1.3%	1.0%	3.0%

*Source: 2000 United States Census*

The Town of Parker is by far the younger of the two municipalities in the County with over 50 percent of its population between the ages of 20 and 59. Quartzsite has over two-thirds of its population age 60 and over.

La Paz County has nearly twice as many residents by percentage of population over age 64 (25.8%) than the State of Arizona (13.0%).



**Housing**

La Paz County’s average persons per household figure is well below that of the state and Town of Parker but well above that of Quartzsite. Just over half of the residents lived in the same home from 1995 until the 2000 Census. More people moved to the County from out of state than the state’s overall rate. There is a significantly higher ratio of houses built since 1990 in the unincorporated areas of La Paz County compared with the two municipalities in the County. See tables 2.3, 2.4, 2.5.

**Table 2.3, Occupied Housing**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	8,362	1,901,327	1,064	1,850
<b>Population</b>	19,715	5,130,632	3,140	3,354
<b>Persons per Household</b>	2.36	2.70	2.95	1.81

*Source: 2000 United States Census*

**Table 2.4, Residence in 1995**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Population 5 years and older</b>	18,774	4,752,724	2,913	3,356
<b>Same house in 1995</b>	54.2%	44.3%	61.4%	50.7%
<b>Different house in U.S. in 1995</b>	44.1%	51.9%	37.6%	47.8%
<b>Same county</b>	17.3%	30.6%	24.1%	13.6%
<b>Different county</b>	26.8%	21.2%	13.6%	34.2%
<b>Same state</b>	4.6%	4.6%	5.3%	3.0%
<b>Different state</b>	22.2%	16.8%	8.4%	31.2%
<b>Elsewhere in 1995</b>	1.7%	3.9%	.8%	1.5%

**Table 2.5, Age of Housing Stock**

<b>Year Built</b>	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>1999 to March 2000</b>	4.8%	5.1%	1.0%	2.3%
<b>1995 to 1998</b>	14.0%	13.7%	5.4%	7.6%
<b>1990 to 1994</b>	8.3%	10.5%	5.3%	12.2%
<b>1980 to 1989</b>	23.6%	24.7%	16.1%	26.2%
<b>1970 to 1979</b>	30.8%	23.6%	33.7%	35.6%
<b>1960 to 1969</b>	10.9%	10.6%	15.9%	7.9%
<b>1940 to 1959</b>	6.0%	9.6%	18.5%	5.4%
<b>1939 or earlier</b>	1.6%	2.2%	4.1%	2.8%

*Source: 2000 United States Census*



## La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

The two municipalities showed very low new housing stock growth since 1990 compared to the state and county overall. La Paz County’s population growth, which has been very similar to the state’s rate over the past two decades, is mirrored by the growth in new housing stock.

### Education

Attainment levels in the County are similar to those of the County’s two municipalities. There are more La Paz County residents that have attained a high school diploma and went on to attain some college credits than the average for the State of Arizona (56.2% vs. 50.7%) See Table 2.6.

**Table 2.6, Population 25 years old and older**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	9.9%	7.8%	10.4%	8.1%
<b>9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> no diploma</b>	20.8%	11.2%	19.2%	21.9%
<b>High school diploma</b>	33.9%	24.3%	27.3%	34.1%
<b>Some college</b>	22.3%	26.4%	21.2%	22.8%
<b>Associates degree</b>	4.4%	6.7%	6.4%	3.2%
<b>Bachelor’s degree</b>	5.5%	15.2%	10.0%	6.1%
<b>Grad/prof. degree</b>	3.2%	8.4%	5.4%	3.8%
<b>High school grad and higher</b>	69.3%	81.0%	70.4%	70.0%
<b>Bachelor’s degree and higher</b>	8.7%	23.6%	15.5%	10.0%

*Source: 2000 United States Census*

### Employment

The County has a small workforce compared to the rest of the state with less than half of its residents considered in the workforce. Only one in five Quartzsite residents is considered part of the workforce. The unemployment rate in the county is much higher than in the state overall, but is similar to the rate found in much of rural Arizona.

**Table 2.7, Employment 16 years old and older**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Employed</b>	40.7%	57.2%	63.9%	18.9%
<b>In labor force</b>	44.3%	61.1%	70.0%	20.2%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	55.7%	38.9%	30.0%	79.8%
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	8.0%	5.6%	8.5%	6.2%

*Source: 2000 United States Census*



**Commuting**

Commute times for the workforce in La Paz County were less than the state overall average by more than seven minutes. Those who carpooled to work reflected a similar percentage as the state.

**Table 2.8, Commuters 16 years old and older**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Drove alone</b>	70.3%	74.1%	75.8%	56.1%
<b>Carpooled</b>	15.8%	15.4%	11.9%	19.5%
<b>Public transit</b>	0%	1.9%	0%	0%
<b>Walked</b>	6.9%	2.6%	6.4%	14.3%
<b>Other means</b>	3.1%	2.3%	3.0%	3.4%
<b>Worked at home</b>	3.8%	3.7%	3.0%	6.7%
<b>Mean travel time</b>	17.2 minutes	24.9 minutes	10.5 minutes	17.3 minutes

*Source: 2000 United States Census*

**Occupations**

Management and professional occupations in the County and both municipalities lagged behind the state percentages with more jobs being held in the service sector than in the state. Over five percent of jobs held in the County were related to agriculture with less than one percent holding similar positions in the state illustrating the importance of agriculture to the County’s economy.

Construction, mining, and maintenance, and production and transportation occupations were in very similar percentages to those in the entire state.

**Table 2.9, Occupations**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Management, professional</b>	23.8%	32.7%	28.2%	18.4%
<b>Service</b>	23.4%	16.2%	24.4%	25.3%
<b>Sales and office</b>	23.8%	28.5%	24.7%	32.6%
<b>Farming, fishing</b>	5.3%	.6%	2.5%	.8%
<b>Construction, mining, maintenance</b>	11.1%	11.0%	8.8%	11.0%
<b>Production, transportation</b>	12.6%	10.9%	11.4%	11.8%

*Source: 2000 United States Census*





**Household Income**

La Paz County’s median household income lagged 36 percent below that of the state, was below the Town of Parker but above Quartzsite. More than a quarter of households were below the \$15,000 per year household income figure and less than four percent were above \$100,000 compared with nearly ten percent in the state.

**Table 2.10, Household Income**

	<b>La Paz County</b>	<b>State of Arizona</b>	<b>Town of Parker</b>	<b>Town of Quartzsite</b>
<b>Less than \$10,000</b>	15.8%	8.6%	9.1%	15.3%
<b>\$10,000 - \$14,999</b>	10.4%	6.4%	6.0%	12.8%
<b>\$15,000 - \$24,999</b>	21.9%	13.9%	17.6%	27.5%
<b>\$25,000 - \$34,999</b>	15.8%	14.0%	17.8%	18.5%
<b>\$35,000 - \$49,999</b>	16.4%	17.5%	19.0%	16.0%
<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	11.9%	19.2%	18.6%	6.2%
<b>\$75,000 - \$99,999</b>	4.1%	9.7%	8.3%	2.2%
<b>\$100,000 - \$149,999</b>	2.4%	6.9%	2.3%	.8%
<b>\$150,000 - \$199,999</b>	.6%	1.9%	.8%	.2%
<b>\$200,000+</b>	.6%	2.0%	.5%	.5%
<b>Median Income</b>	\$25,839	\$40,558	\$34,625	\$23,053

*Source: 2000 United States Census*



## **3.0 LAND USE ELEMENT**

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to present the general layout of appropriate land uses throughout the County and the guidelines to determine how the land can and will be developed over time. The following Land Use Element includes the following:

- Discussion of existing land ownership
- Overview of land uses within the County
- Outline of goals and policies that will guide further development
- A Land Use Plan that presents the appropriate mix and location of land uses that will meet potential County growth.

### **3.1 Introduction**

The La Paz County planning area (the entire county) covers 4,518 square miles comprised of different sub-areas with a mix of land uses and character. It is the third smallest of Arizona's counties and has the lowest population density with slightly more than four persons per square mile. La Paz County has over 100 miles of frontage on the Colorado River with nearly half of that in the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Reservation.

The County's land area is characterized by sandy beaches, rugged mountains, open desert, and vast agricultural lands. Many of these areas can be found adjacent to each other with sheer cliffs rising from the Colorado River channel and irrigated farmland abutting open desert. Recognizing the uniqueness of these areas and weaving them together into a 10-year plan was the challenge of this project.



The County is located in the north-central portion of the Sonoran Desert and exhibits both very arid and lush desert characteristics. Elevations range from 5,691 feet at Harquahala Peak on the far eastern edge of the County to just a few hundred feet above sea level at the Colorado River. The County is home to over a dozen designated Wilderness Areas and Wildlife Refuges as well as the northern portion of the Yuma Proving Grounds owned and operated by the United States Military.

### **3.2 Regional Context**

La Paz County is located on the western boundary of Arizona along the Colorado River (Figure 3.1, Regional Location). Two municipalities are included within the planning area. According to the 2000 United States Census, the Town of Quartzsite is the County's most populous municipality with 3,354 residents followed by the Town of Parker with 3,140 residents.



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The County abuts on its eastern border Arizona's largest population center in Arizona, Maricopa County. Yuma County is located to the south, Mohave County to the north separated by the Bill Williams River, Yavapai on the northeast and San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial Counties across the Colorado River in the State of California to the west.

The County is strategically positioned between the rapidly growing metropolitan areas of Phoenix, Las Vegas, and southern California with rail and interstate highway access.

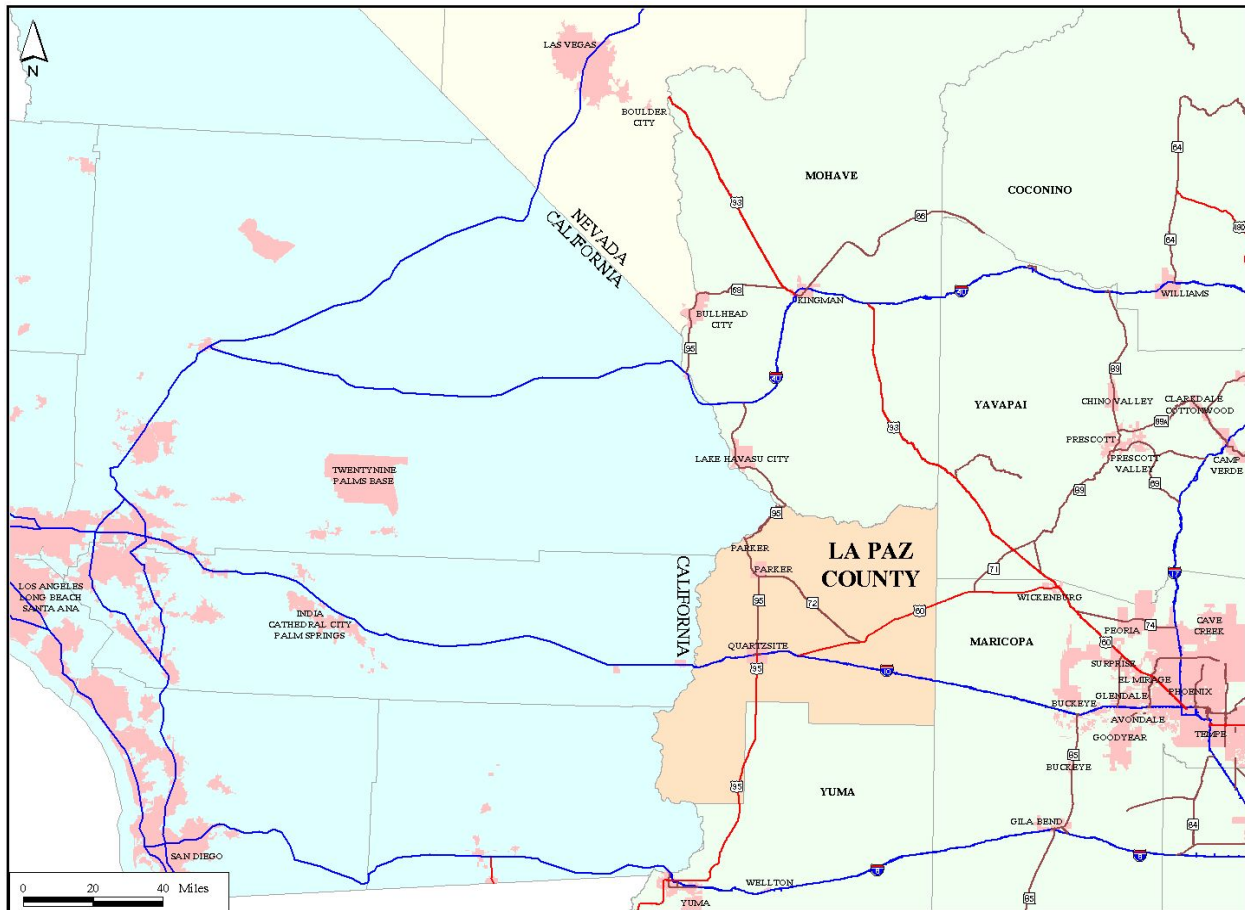


Figure 3.1, Regional Location

### 3.3 Land Ownership

Of the 4,518 square miles in La Paz County, only a small percentage of the land is privately held. As shown in Table 3.1, Land Ownership/Jurisdiction in La Paz County, the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) controls 57.8 percent; the state of Arizona 8.8 percent; 13.7 percent the United States Military, 5.8 percent in Wildlife Refuges, and 5.3 percent of the land is owned privately or by corporations, with 8.6 percent of the county's total land area is found within the CRIT reservation. Table 3.2, Percentage of Land Ownership shows the percentage of ownership graphically, and Figure 3.2 Existing Conditions – Planning Area Land Ownership indicates the County's various land ownership patterns.



## La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

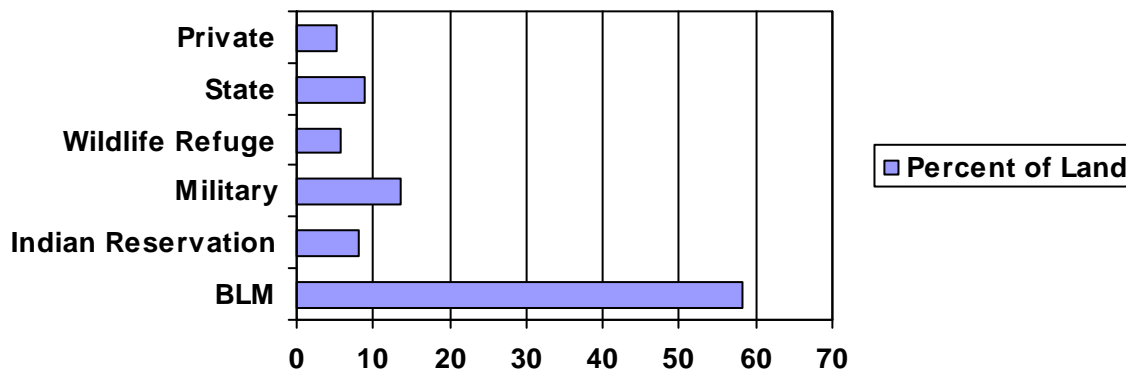
**Table 3.1, Land Ownership/Jurisdiction in La Paz County**

Land Owner/Jurisdiction	Acres	Percentage
Bureau of Land Management	1,683,489	58.3
Colorado River Indian Tribes	232,627	8.1
United States Military	396,819	13.7
Private	149,075	5.3
State	255,195	8.8
Wildlife Refuge	168,616	5.8
Other	4,144	.1

*Source: PSA, Inc.*

The vast majority of privately held land is located in the eastern half of the County intermixed with holdings from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). There is good access to most of the privately held land since most of the parcels are within a few miles of either Interstate 10, US 60, SR 72 or SR 95.

**Table 3.2 Percent of Land Ownership**

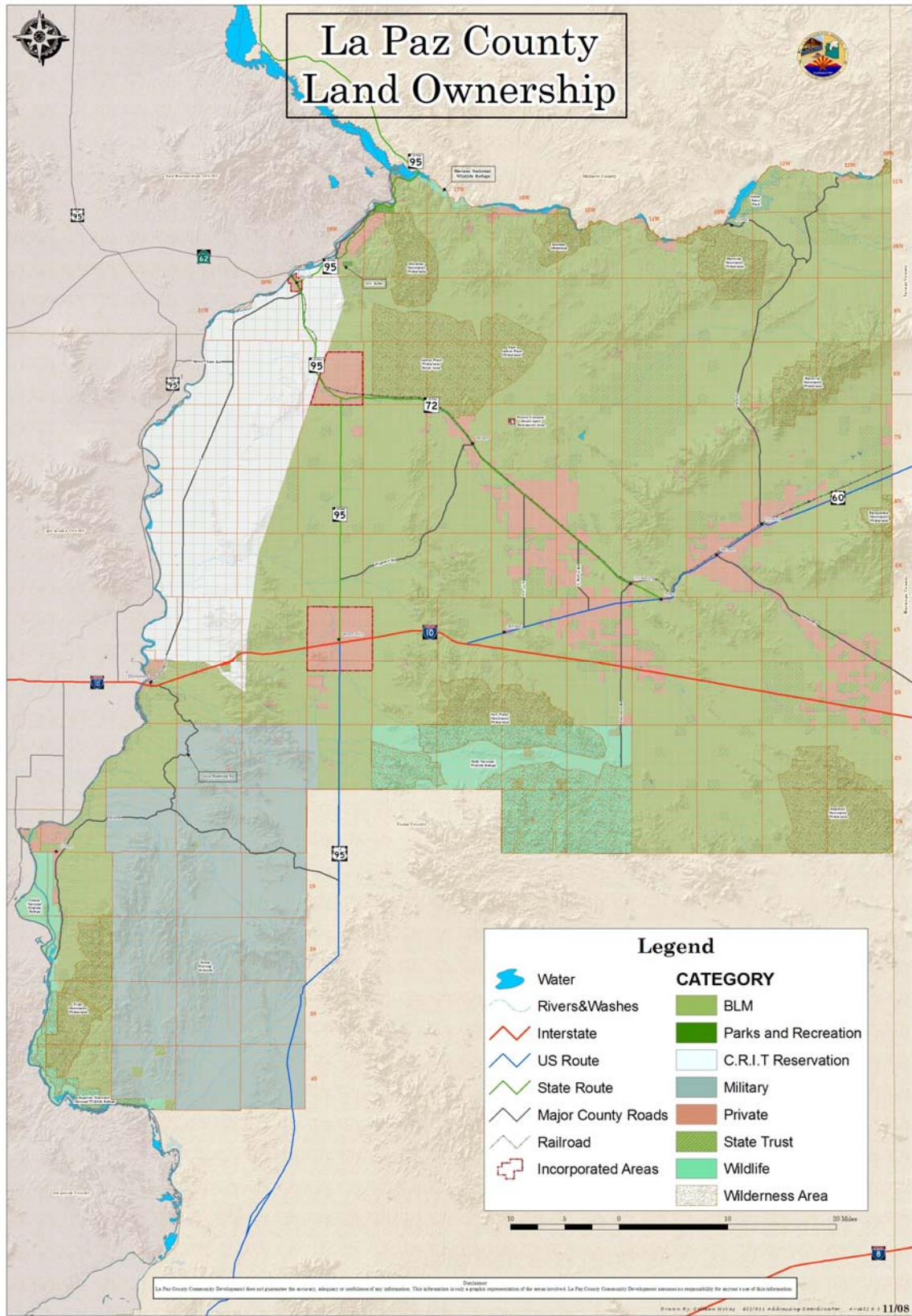


There are several large ASLD parcels in La Paz County including one of several hundred square miles ten miles east of Bouse and a large holding on either side of SR 95 south of Parker South. ASLD also has holdings along the Colorado River north and south of the CRIT Reservation. Sale or leasing of this land in the future could result in significant development adjacent to the river.



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Figure 3.2



*Adopted May 2005*  
*Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010*



### **3.4 Current Land Assessment**

Following is a brief analysis of the current major land uses and potential future trends within La Paz County.

#### **Residential Development**

The County is currently very sparsely populated with about a third of the County's population living within the two municipalities of Quartzsite and Parker. Overall, residential development would be considered low density except in the Town of Parker, Parker Strip, and some small pockets of development within Quartzsite, Salome, Wenden, and Ehrenberg.

Due to the lack of privately-held land, residential densities should be expected to increase as the population grows. It is anticipated that increased population densities will be concentrated in dispersed pockets throughout the County. While this trend will provide more affordable and efficient infrastructure and services, it may change the County's rural character in some areas. Careful planning and managed growth is critical to ensuring residential development is compatible with the County's character.

Residential lot splitting has been occurring in some areas of the County and this practice can lead to incompatible development and future challenges. Lot splitting and "wildcat" subdivisions occur in many of Arizona's rural areas and the results of this practice have proven to be very challenging for long-term planning and provision of services. The County should seek to limit the number of new rezoning approvals in rural areas to limit land divisions to 5 acre parcel sizes. Developments under 5 acres in size require greater levels of service and infrastructure needs and it is for this reason that the County Subdivision procedure should be followed. Rezoning property to allow parcels less than five acres creates an implied precedent and encourages the avoidance of Subdivision procedures. In any event, Land Divisions will continue to be allowed in accordance with State law on property already zoned, regardless of location.

In cases where property is re-zoned for more than 5 parcels, the zoning should revert unless progress, satisfactory to the County, toward subdivision development is made.

#### **Commercial Development**

Commercial development is located throughout the County to varying degrees. The majority of commercial development is located in the Town of Parker and on SR 95 just north of Parker on the CRIT Reservation. There is also considerable tourism related commercial development in the area along the Colorado River called the Parker Strip area.





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Significant commercial development can be found in Quartzsite and Ehrenberg mostly related to I-10 motorist support services. Small commercial and convenience store development is found in the rural, unincorporated communities.

In Quartzsite, seasonal commercial activity occurs serving the influx of winter visitors and tourists. The Quartzsite area annually hosts one of the largest gem and mineral shows in the nation that attracts people from around the world. Normally quiet streets are filled with exhibitors and temporary shops during this event and the balance of the winter months. Significant retail leakage occurs due to the lack of commercial development, population base, and the County's proximity to larger and more diverse commercial areas located in Lake Havasu City, Blythe, California, and the west side of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area. Until the County achieves population centers large enough to support more substantial commercial uses, retail leakage will continue to be an issue. La Paz County shall continue to work closely with the Arizona Department of Commerce and other economic development groups to support commercial development in key areas of the county.

### **Industrial/Employment Development**

There is very little traditional industrial/employment type development in the County as most jobs are in the governmental and services sector. There is some warehousing and transportation-related industrial development in conjunction with the agriculture industry, trucking, casino (CRIT) and railroad activities. Significant industrial parcels are available particularly in the Parker South area. The County has excellent, multimodal transportation facilities and available land to accommodate future industrial/employment opportunities. Appropriate new industry should be considered when compatible with agricultural objectives, including alternative fuels and solar technologies. Any new industrial development should be located along a major arterial corridor, rail connection, state highway or in close proximity to the Interstate corridor. Adequate environmental safeguards shall be considered with all industrial development. The corridor between New Hope (Vicksburg Road at I-10) and Vicksburg Junction is identified as a special agricultural/industry corridor in the Land Use Plan.

### **Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Reservation**

The CRIT Reservation encompasses over eight percent of the County's total land area. A variety of activities are found in this area including residential development, governmental, and agri-business. Some of the residential development is located in the vicinity of the governmental complex, schools, and medical facilities just on the west side of the Town of Parker but the majority of the housing is found scattered throughout the reservation.





### **Wildlife Refuges and Wilderness Areas**

There are vast Wildlife Refuges and Wilderness Areas throughout the County. These passive recreation sites have been designated by the federal government to protect wildlife habitats and sensitive lands from encroachment and disturbance. Several species of plants and animals are exclusive to these areas and unique microclimates exist in several of the mountainous areas. Few services are available in close proximity to most of the sites and most of the use is by hearty hiker and backpackers during the non-summer months. More information about these areas can be found in Chapter 5.0 Environmental Element.

### **Yuma Proving Grounds**

A portion of this massive military installation is located in southwest La Paz County. The facility is used by the armed forces for training and military equipment testing. Unlike many of the bases around the country threatened by closure, it can be assumed that the remoteness of this facility and its “one of a kind” desert location will probably ensure that this facility will be in operation for some time into the future. La Paz County shall seek available funding through grant opportunities to make improvements related to the proving ground impacts within the County, including road improvements.

### **Arizona State Land Trust**

As part of Arizona achieving statehood, significant portions of Arizona’s land base were placed into a land trust. The ASLD manages this land and it can sell or lease these lands to generate revenues for the beneficiaries of the trust, the largest being the public school system. The state’s Constitution allows for the lease or sale at auction of this land for the “highest and best use” in order to raise funds for trust beneficiaries. In La Paz County, the majority of state land that has been leased is for agricultural uses.

State law requires that counties confer with the ASLD “for the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated adjusted, and harmonious development of the County.” ASLD is required to develop conceptual land use plans for all state lands. To date (2004) no such plan has been developed by the ASLD in La Paz County.

Additionally, the Growing Smarter Initiative established the Arizona Preserve Initiative that allows state lands with high environmental and open space values to be temporarily reclassified for conservation while entities (municipalities, counties, or other groups) raise funds to purchase the lands. To date (2004), there have been no requests for reclassification of lands within La Paz County.





### **Renewable Energy**

Much of the energy used in La Paz County is generated by renewable sources. Much of the renewable energy used in the County is produced by the Hoover, Davis, Parker and Head Gate Rock Dams hydroelectric power. The County is a crossroads for several major natural gas lines, including field stations located in Ehrenberg. Despite the presence of so much natural gas running through the County, very little is used by the residents of La Paz County, due to the lack of local distribution systems.

Local government entities can encourage the efficient use of energy and promote the energy production from clean, renewable sources. They can also model good energy use by supporting enhanced building construction designed to provide additional energy efficiencies. Sound energy policies provide both economic and environmental benefits for county residents.

La Paz County has abundant sources of renewable energy in the forms of solar energy and hydroelectric. Wind and potential biomass conversion are less abundant. Energy derived from passive solar, photovoltaic panels and solar thermal generators are likely to be proposed in the future. The viability of developing these renewable sources depends on how much energy the source can provide and how much it will cost to obtain and transmit it safely to a market.

### **3.5 Land Use Goals and Policies**

A set of goals and policies provide a guide for future development on the County's land. These goals and policies are supported by the other Comprehensive Plan Elements.

#### ***Goal 1: Maintain the rural character of La Paz County***

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Policy 1.10 | Changes and/or amendments to the land use plan will be closely scrutinized to ensure consistency with the County's rural character and compliance with identified plan designations for development purposes.   |
| Policy 1.20 | Lot splitting outside of sewer districts will be discouraged by developing and implementing a lot split or minor subdivision ordinance.   |
| Policy 1.21 | Rezoning of property to accommodate a Land Division up to a gross density of one unit for each five acre parcel shall be consistent with the intent of this Comprehensive Plan. Rezoning of property for the purpose of land divisions below five acres shall be discouraged. Rezoning that would allow for more than five parcels is evidence that a subdivision will be required, including a provision that zoning be rescinded if a tentative map hasn't been approved within one year. |



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- Policy 1.22 To be considered for approval, rezoning applications to allow parcels smaller than five gross acres (density greater than 1 unit per gross 5 acres) shall be required to submit a subdivision request within one year or the zoning will revert.
- Policy 1.30 La Paz County Government will work closely with the development community to design and create quality subdivisions and a wider range of housing opportunities.
- Policy 1.40 Wildcat subdivisions will be discouraged by developing and implementing subdivision policies and by implementing minor land division policies designed to result in quality, economically-sound development.
- Policy 1.50 Work with the BLM and ASLD to ensure that significant open space is maintained throughout the County. La Paz County will continue to explore land acquisitions from BLM and ASLD and other state and federal agencies as land needs are identified.
- Policy 1.60 Support the County's agricultural base by allowing only appropriate compatible land uses nearby.
- Policy 1.61 Encourage the recording of a proximity to agricultural activity acknowledgement form by the seller of newly formed parcels. Encourage new developers to provide a copy of the "code of the west" to new residents.
- Policy 1.70 Support the Town of Parker's efforts in the development of Parker South that will provide needed additional housing, services, and employment opportunities.
- Policy 1.80 Support efforts by existing towns and more urbanized areas throughout the County to concentrate higher intensity development (e.g., commercial and employment activities) there rather than haphazardly dispersed development in the County's rural and remote areas.

### ***Goal 2: Maintain the character and lifestyle of La Paz County***

- Policy 2.10 Determining ways to minimize the visual impact of the built environment on desert vistas and mountain views will be part of the evaluation process for proposed new development.
- Policy 2.20 Support equestrian activities including large lot equestrian-friendly subdivisions and the development of an equestrian trail system.



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- Policy 2.30 Support and protect ranching activities by working closely with public agencies and approving only appropriate, compatible land uses. Promote fencing and cattle crossings of major public roads through range lands.
- Policy 2.40 Identify and encourage continued mining activities in appropriate areas and ensure that abandoned mines are made safe.
- Policy 2.50 Protect existing residential neighborhoods from encroaching industry and commercial development through the use of buffering, master planning and consolidation. Avoid zone district changes that meet the definition of spot zoning or that will disrupt the traffic, parking and/or health safety or welfare of an existing neighborhood.

### ***Goal 3: Maintain and enhance recreational areas countywide.***

- Policy 3.10 Work with regional partners to ensure continued access and recreational uses on the Colorado River.
- Policy 3.20 Work with CRIT to explore potential additional access points to the Colorado River.
- Policy 3.30 Work with the BLM to designate/develop off highway vehicle (OHV) areas in La Paz County.
- Policy 3.40 Encourage the BLM to develop publicly available maps of approved OHV and equestrian trails, and mark trail heads and branches with Geographic Positioning Satellite (GPS) location identification.
- Policy 3.50 Encourage planning, development, maintenance, and operation of County parks and recreation facilities.
- Policy 3.51 Provide for upgrades to all park sites, including camping, boat launches/ramps and day uses. Explore a park impact improvement fee to enhance existing park lands and public open space areas to accommodate new population growth.
- Policy 3.52 Add new County Parks with a focus on boating, camping, hiking, walking, biking and equestrian uses. Implement a land acquisition program or fee in lieu system that provides needed public park and open space lands.
- Policy 3.53 Seek input from park users to determine the success of existing development and gauge the need for future park facilities.



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- Policy 3.54            Make provisions for the development of new County parks at Bouse Lake, Ehrenberg River Access, Lake Havasu Take Off Point Access, Camp Bouse and Cibola River Access areas.
- Policy 3.55            Encourage the creation and use of man made lakes for both recreation and physical beauty at the Bouse Lake site. Promote the re-capture of future highly treated effluent to supply water to proposed lake systems. Any water loss associated with a man made lake for the purpose of recreation or conservation will not be considered detrimental if previous (retired) agricultural use of water exceeded the amount anticipated to be lost through the lake.
- Policy 3.56            Seek grant funding for the improvement of boating access facilities, including the surrounding recreational facilities and associated improvements.
- Goal 4:            *Support the continuation and diversification of La Paz County's agricultural land uses.***
- Policy 4.10            Work with the agriculture industry to preserve farming in the County as long as it remains economically viable by addressing the industry's needs and attracting support businesses to the area.
- Policy 4.11            Protect the existing and continued agricultural uses of the McMullen Valley and discourage development not adjacent to existing rural community or medium density developments.
- Policy 4.20            Protect and enhance the water supply to ensure adequate quantity and quality to meet current and future residents' and business' needs.
- Policy 4.30            Buffer agricultural uses from residential development through designation of open space, landscaping, walls, berms, solid fences, and/or appropriate transitional uses.
- Policy 4.40            Support the development of agriculture industry infrastructure (e.g., water delivery systems) and supportive businesses (e.g., cooling facilities) in appropriate locations.
- Policy 4.50            Develop a communications program to inform prospective new land/home owners about agricultural activities.
- Policy 4.60            Work with CRIT to maintain a strong agricultural presence in west La Paz County.



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- Policy 4.70 Encourage development of agricultural product processing and packing facilities.
- Policy 4.71 Encourage agricultural related industry along the Vicksburg Road corridor between Interstate 10 and Highway 60.

### ***Goal 5: Diversify the Local Economy***

- Policy 5.10 Protect employment areas, commercial development, and interchange node areas from intrusion of other uses and inappropriate adjacent land uses.
- Policy 5.11 Discourage residential rezoning that seeks to accommodate additional land divisions within employment and commercial areas.
- Policy 5.20 Work with incorporated and unincorporated communities to attract and site new employers in the manufacturing, warehousing, and inter-modal transport sectors.
- Policy 5.30 Work with CRIT and others in the agricultural sector to develop “value added” businesses such as food processing facilities.
- Policy 5.40 Encourage new commercial and retail businesses to locate in the incorporated or otherwise populated unincorporated areas (i.e., Bouse, Ehrenberg, Wenden, Brenda, Vicksburg, Vicksburg Junction, Hope, New Hope and Salome).
- Policy 5.50 Encourage the development of a La Paz County Tourism Development and Promotion Plan with all regional partners (e.g., CRIT, Town of Parker, Town of Quartzsite, BLM, federal government, and ASLD). Strategies to promote museums, historical assets, and archaeological attractions should be included.
- Policy 5.51 Promote existing and future trails, river access, wilderness access, public camping facilities and other recreation infrastructure as a method to promote tourism in La Paz County.
- Policy 5.52 Support private investment in tourism based economic development that meets the intention of the La Paz County Comprehensive Plan goals and policies.
- Policy 5.60 Implement strategies to improve the Swansea area and Alamo Lake as well as other state parks and BLM lands to promote tourism and recreation uses.



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Policy 5.70 Work with incorporated and unincorporated communities to implement strategies to reduce retail leakage to Mohave, Yuma, and Maricopa Counties.

Policy 5.80 Work with telecommunications firms to improve options and service throughout the County.

Policy 5.90 Encourage new highway oriented commercial and retail businesses to locate at existing interchanges along Interstate 10.

### ***Goal 6: Promote the use of renewable sources of energy***

Policy 6.10 The County supports efforts to pursue renewable energy production, such as algae biomass energy facilities, landfill methane gas collection, solar electricity, wind power, and other alternative and clean energy technologies.

Policy 6.20 The County supports wind power in appropriate locations when considered to be appropriate for the area and complimentary to existing land uses, after consideration of noise and setback issues.

Policy 6.30 The County supports renewable and clean energy development that provides for a strong tax base deemed to be complementary to the economic welfare of the County and local community.

Policy 6.40 Renewable and clean energy uses that are mindful of property disturbance for site preparation, mitigate such disturbances and use water efficiently shall be given preference by the County.

Policy 6.50 Starting after January 1, 2010, the County may designate a renewable energy incentive district in accordance with Arizona State Statutes, in any unincorporated area of the county deemed to meet the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. A district shall be located in an area that does not cause the construction and operation of renewable energy equipment to be incompatible with other uses of surrounding property.

Policy 6.60 The County shall consider factors relating to the construction and operation of renewable energy equipment including:

- The ability to adequately buffer the district from surrounding incompatible uses.
- The noise level emanating from the district alone and in relation to ambient noise levels at the perimeter of the property falling within the proposed district and relative to adjacent lands.



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- The extent to which the district would be located in proximity to existing transportation and electrical transmission corridors.
- Compatibility with commercial and military air space requirements.

Policy 6.70 Concentrated solar heliostat power towers, or similar technology shall be required to demonstrate compatibility with local air traffic and surrounding area uses prior to approval by the County.

Policy 6.80 The County supports renewable energy development that is located and designed to minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitats. To support this goal, the County encourages development proponents to coordinate with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and, when on or adjacent to federal lands, the appropriate federal land managers as early as possible.

### **3.6 Land Use Plan**

The careful placement of future land uses is critical for La Paz County to ensure that the County's environmental quality and rural character are protected. A vast majority of the La Paz County's land base is currently and is intended to remain undeveloped. Maintaining this open space and encouraging rational land use planning is the Land Use Plan's ultimate objective. The amount of Federal and State lands as well as a vast Native American reservation have contributed to the historic land use pattern and will ensure that it continues.

The future land use pattern focuses new development around currently incorporated or unincorporated communities, such as Quartzsite, Parker, Bouse, Salome, Wenden, Cibola, Ehrenberg, and the Parker Strip. Nearly 60,000 acres have been designated as Rural/Incorporated Community of which 62 percent is currently within the Town limits of Quartzsite, Parker, and Parker Annex.

There are several "Growth Areas" that are anticipated for future development. These areas include:

Quartzsite has the land base and a significant amount of privately-held land within its incorporated boundaries to support development. The Town has aggressively taken steps to develop its water and wastewater systems and other infrastructure to accommodate future development.

Parker Annex is located just over 10 miles south of the original townsite. This area is considered within the Town of Parker's municipal limits though separated by the CRIT Reservation. The Town of Parker has invested significant infrastructure development resources in anticipation of and to encourage a full range of land uses.



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The Salome-Wenden area, Cibola, Brenda, and the Parker Strip are also anticipated to grow as privately-held land is abundant in these areas.

Ehrenberg also has growth potential based on its strategic location on the California border and excellent transportation access. Lack of privately-held land in Ehrenberg could hinder growth but there are significant holdings of state lands in the vicinity that could accommodate new development should the market warrant.

Bouse is also an area where growth can be expected. The community consists of mostly privately-held land with several miles of frontage along SR 72. The area is anticipated to continue to attract residential and neighborhood-type commercial development

Centennial Interchange at I-10 and Avenue 75 E. will be designated for employment with anticipated mixed residential/commercial uses.

Hope is anticipated to be a growing community over the next decade with a focus on local services and residential community development.

The Sun West property is expected to develop into a town with eventual incorporation after significant population density is realized.

Cibola is expected to slowly develop into a more identifiable community with the addition of the Sprawls Island development and anticipated future development of private lands in this area of the County.

Vicksburg Junction's location at Vicksburg Road and Highway 60 means that this area will develop at the northern end of the agriculture/industrial corridor located along Vicksburg Road north of Interstate 10.

Vicksburg's location at Vicksburg Road and Highway 72 will provide for local commercial and nearby residential development patterns.

The Vicksburg agriculture/industrial corridor is envisioned as an agricultural and related manufacturing/industry corridor within the County. This corridor is intended to promote agriculture, as well as, related industry and manufacturing development. This corridor is intended to provide a much needed employment base for the central part of La Paz County. Vicksburg, Vicksburg Junction, Brenda and Utting are anticipated to provide the permanent residential housing, including workforce housing to accommodate the employment needs.

Utting is located near Avenue 44 E. and Highway 72 and is identified as a rural residential area to support future permanent housing needs in the central part of the County.





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Harcuvar is located just southwest of Salome and anticipated for community level development.

The following discussion describes the “Land Use Designations” shown on Figure 3.3, La Paz County Land Use Plan. Unlike most traditional plans, the La Paz County Land Use Plan does not have a designation for Commercial uses. While the County strongly encourages quality commercial and retail development, this type of development will be encouraged in the existing incorporated communities, Rural Community designations, and in conjunction with development in the freeway Interchange Nodes.

### **Rural Residential**

Development in this land use category is intended to be low density single family homes. The County will encourage housing development in the more rural areas to be on larger parcels with 2.5 acre to 40+ acre ranchettes preferred. The County will update the Zoning Regulations to accommodate a 2.5 acre zoning district that can be utilized in the rural residential areas of the County.

The locations determined to best accommodate this land use are generally based on where privately-held land and State Trust Land are located. Privately-held land will be developed according to County standards. The disposition of State Trust Land will be done according to state requirements. If the land is sold or leased, it will be developed based on County standards. While BLM land has been sold or traded within Arizona, La Paz County anticipates that the BLM will maintain the majority of the land in the County as open space. However, it may be advantageous for some BLM land to be converted to other uses as needs arise in the future.

A significant portion of the rural density residential designated land is in very remote locations with poor access and no infrastructure. It is anticipated that much of this land will be developed well into the future if at all. The ranchette approach will be preferred in these areas.

The County encourages all quality residential development and an increased mix and availability of housing opportunities where designated and appropriate, but new development will be preferred near existing infrastructure and where services are currently being provided.

The County may develop a density bonus system within the Zoning Regulations that allows for clustering of units in exchange for open space or conservation easements created for buffering, conservation of natural resources, wildlife and/or flood control purposes. A density bonus system could address the net vs. gross density increase proposed as a result of creating a conservation easement or open space area.



### **Medium Density Residential**

Development in this land use category will consist of single family residential development up to a density of one unit per acre. Many of these designated areas currently have medium density residential development, or are being proposed for development at densities up to one unit per acre.

The County may develop a density bonus system within the Zoning Regulations that allows for clustering of units in exchange for open space or conservation easements created for buffering, conservation of natural resources, wildlife and/or flood control purposes. A density bonus system could address the net vs. gross density increase proposed as a result of creating a conservation easement or open space area.

While there is very little of this land use category designated, residential densities above one dwelling unit per acre may be permitted should a project be determined by the County to be compatible with surrounding land uses. For example, infill housing development within existing rural communities may be permitted at higher densities.



### **Rural Community**

The Rural Community designation indicates both incorporated (Quartzsite and Parker) and unincorporated communities within the County. The two municipalities have general plans and other municipal planning and policy documents that guide and regulate development within the town limits.

Due to Arizona's rapid growth, many rural counties are seeing development occur just outside boundaries of municipalities. This is a concern of many municipalities because the development may not be compatible with the city's or town's general plan thus placing a burden on facilities and services. La Paz County will discourage incompatible urban fringe development in order to maintain strong and vital municipalities. This philosophy will also be an integral part of the specific area planning done for the unincorporated communities.

The unincorporated communities of Salome, Vicksburg Junction, Vicksburg, Utting, McVay, Hope, Wenden, Ehrenberg, Cibola, Brenda, New Hope, Centennial, Harcuvar and Bouse are under the County's jurisdiction. Each of these communities has a special character that residents want to maintain and enhance. The County is committed to working with each of these communities to develop a "Specific Area Plan" for each to include a mix of residential, commercial, and employment uses with parks and open space designated. The plans will focus on the development of a vision for each community, a land use map, and strategies to reach community goals.



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The importance of these specific plans is twofold. First, the residents have expressed a desire to actively participate in their future and not just let it happen. Second, there is the possibility that one or more of these communities will incorporate at some point in the future. It is undetermined when or if this may occur in a given community and it will be up to the residents to decide. However, should this decision be made, Specific Area Plans will be of significant value to any new municipality. Many newly incorporated

communities struggle for years because very little or no specific planning had been done prior to incorporation. The new municipality must then face issues that it is not equipped to handle. La Paz County is committed to ensuring that any new municipalities have the best chance for success. For this reason the County will provide the assistance in developing these Specific Area Plans. A residential base density up to five (5) dwelling units per acre may be permitted in an established rural community area.

### **Town Center:**

A Town Center subcategory of the Rural Community area is included in the land use plan at Salome and Ehrenberg and intended to provide for dynamic retail, mixed uses, shopping opportunities, tourism based commercial and existing residential neighborhoods. The Town Centers identified by this plan include Salome and Wenden, with future Town Centers anticipated in the Ehrenberg and Bouse communities. Town Centers shall be included with specific community area plans as development takes place. A maximum density of eight (8) dwelling units per acre shall be allowed for single family/duplex development, ten (10) dwelling units per acre for attached town homes and fifteen (15) dwelling units per acre for condominium development. As development takes place in Ehrenberg and Bouse, a town center boundary may be proposed during the process.

### **Parker Strip Mixed Use Area**

The Parker Strip Area in the extreme northwest portion of the La Paz County planning area is one of the more unique places in Arizona. It reminds one of a “beach town” albeit approximately 200 miles from the ocean. This strip of privately-held land is nestled between Federal and Arizona State Land and the Colorado River. Due to the relative scarcity of privately-held riverfront property, the Parker Strip has developed at densities very unlike the rest of the County’s unincorporated areas. On summer weekends, the number of visitors and recreational users increases dramatically.

There is an eclectic mix of full time residences, vacation homes, small commercial businesses, eating and drinking establishments, and boating and recreational related industrial operations. Some development is over 40 years old and showing its age while there are new homes interspersed on infill and redevelopment lots. There is already property being purchased and buildings being demolished and rebuilt.



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Some of the new construction is large, single family homes. Lot consolidation and development of higher priced housing has already occurred and is anticipated to continue.

This special area has been designated on the Land Use Plan due to existing land use patterns and future development that are much different than in the balance of the County. With that, rapid change is anticipated over the next decade. Property values will continue to increase due to the desire to be near the beauty and recreational opportunities of the Colorado River. This will prompt more infill development and redevelopment.

La Paz County must take the lead in effectively managing this change especially in regard to development compatibility and infrastructure development. There are significant environmental concerns in this area and new development and redevelopment must be carefully monitored to ensure quality and safety.

Residential development may take place at densities up to ten (10) dwelling units per acre for attached townhomes, fifteen (15) dwelling units per acre for attached condominium units and eight (8) dwelling units per acre for new single family/duplex development. Height limitations near the Colorado River shall be identified through zoning and Planned Developments.

### **Employment**

This land use designation is intended to accommodate a variety of employment uses in appropriate La Paz County locations. These areas may include heavy industrial plants, transportation related facilities, warehousing, and commercial development.

The only large parcels of employment land designated in the La Paz County planning area are the areas located on I-10 on the Maricopa and La Paz County boundaries, around the land fill and on Highway 60 between McVay and Vicksburg Rd all areas are shown on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 3.3). The I-10 location is a logical place for employment/industrial types of uses as Maricopa County's West Valley builds out. This employment area is served by a major transportation corridor connecting Phoenix to California's markets and ports. As much of the West Valley develops in residential uses not compatible with employment and industrial areas, these uses will be pushed west. This location provides the opportunity for expanded employment.

La Paz County encourages employment development throughout the County and will welcome proposals that generate employment opportunities and expand the tax base. However, based on the land use map, this designation is quite scarce. The County desires to have employment development occur near existing infrastructure and where the workforce is currently located. A majority of these prime locations are in the Rural Community designation or within the County's two municipalities. For instance, Parker South is a very desirable place for firms to locate because of its infrastructure and transportation access.



## ***La Paz County Comprehensive Plan***

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There is ample employment property designated in the Parker and Quartzsite general plans and it is assumed that additional employment areas will be identified in the specific plans developed for the unincorporated rural communities. Employment development proposals shall be carefully evaluated to ensure long term compatibility with existing and anticipated land uses.

Residential uses shall be promoted within the employment designation when it can be shown to not be conflicting with commercial or industrial uses and significantly enhances the availability of permanent high quality workforce housing. Any residential development should be permanent in nature and not be comprised of temporary housing. Temporary housing shall only be allowed for short term tourism based use. The development of a community center or pedestrian friendly downtown/town center area shall be encouraged. Work live units shall be encouraged, with dwelling units above retail or service based commercial uses.

Solar power generation facilities may be considered within areas designated as Employment on the Future Land Use Map, if they are determined to not be detrimental to the potential future development of other compatible uses. Commercial concentrating solar power facilities that utilize mirrors and/or large amounts of water shall not interfere with (water use) or create a hazard (aviation, reflection, traveling public) to surrounding areas and will require a higher level of review prior to consideration. Due to the limited amount of full time employment needed to operate small scale solar facilities, no more than 33 percent of land area within a previously designated Employment area shall be used for solar power production. New Employment designations over 80 acres in area may be proposed as a Major Amendment to the Future Land Use Map of the La Paz County Comprehensive Plan.

### **Interchange Node**

This land use designation is used to define the types of development desired along I-10. There are five nodes identified and development in these areas is intended to be transportation-related commercial and employment development. The nodes are located at the I-10 interchanges at Exit 69 on the eastern edge of the County, Palomas-Harquahala Road (proposed future interchange) Hovatter Road (Exit 53), Vicksburg Road (Exit 45), and Exit 5 at Wells Road east of Ehrenberg.

The concept for each of these nodes constitutes roughly 300 acres. Development proposals are encouraged and approval will be based on the project's feasibility and need, not specific size.

Land ownership issues will also dictate the scale of development in the Interchange Nodes since some of the nodes identified have little or no privately-held land at the present time.

Many of the interchange nodes in La Paz County are also considered employment or rural community areas as identified in this plan. Those areas with dual designations shall enjoy both aspects of interchange nodes and rural community or employment designations.



### Open Space

A vast majority of the County designated Open Space is under BLM jurisdiction. The Open Space category is intended to have land remain in its natural state and the County will work with the various surrounding jurisdictions to minimize disturbance and environmental degradation.

*Developments that include man made lakes which result in the retirement of agricultural water uses, equal to or greater than potential water loss from a proposed lake, shall be considered as a positive when considering an application.*

### Parks and Recreation

In addition to the thousands of acres of open space that can be used for recreational purposes, there is an extensive system of La Paz County parks and recreation facilities.



The County features two state parks, Buckskin Mountain in the northwest portion of the planning area adjacent to the Parker Strip and the Alamo Lake State Park on the Mohave County border on the extreme north side of the planning area. Both facilities are managed by the Arizona State Parks Department.

La Paz County's system of parks includes:

- La Paz County Park is located north of Parker on the west side of SR 95. The park has camping facilities, boat access to the Colorado River, one-mile of River Frontage. The park is adjacent to county-owned Emerald Canyon Golf Course which is open to the public.
- Bouse Community Park is located south of SR 72 on Plomosa Road in Bouse on the scenic route to Quartzsite. The park includes 25 dry camping sites and 15 with water available. There are also day use facilities. Support the addition of ten (10) electric camping sites to the Bouse Park, equestrian corrals and trail connectivity
- Ehrenberg Community Park is located in Ehrenberg on Parker/Poston Road. The park is a partnership between La Paz County and the Ehrenberg Improvement Association. The park offers day use facilities.
- The County will support additional public river access points at Ehrenberg and Cibola. A public boat ramp/access in the Ehrenberg area is needed for police protection, recreation, park enhancement and improved public access to the river.
- Cibola Historic Park is located on Baseline Road of Highway 78 south of Cibola and adjacent to the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge. The park offers day use facilities.



## *La Paz County Comprehensive Plan*

- Patria Flats Park is located adjacent to the Parker Strip on the Colorado River. The park offers day use facilities including boating amenities. Support the addition of a dog run to this park, including waste stations and other related support facilities.
  
- Centennial Community Park is located just off US 60 between Salome and Wenden. The park contains 26 dry camp sites and day use, hiking and recreational facilities. Centennial Park has an 18 hole desert golf course with the front 9 having grass tee's and green, a driving range and seasonal camp host.

Table 3.3, Land Use Designation Acreage indicates the land uses and the acreage of each recommended by the La Paz County Land Use Plan shown in Figure 3.3.

**Table 3.3, Acreage of Each Land Use Designation**

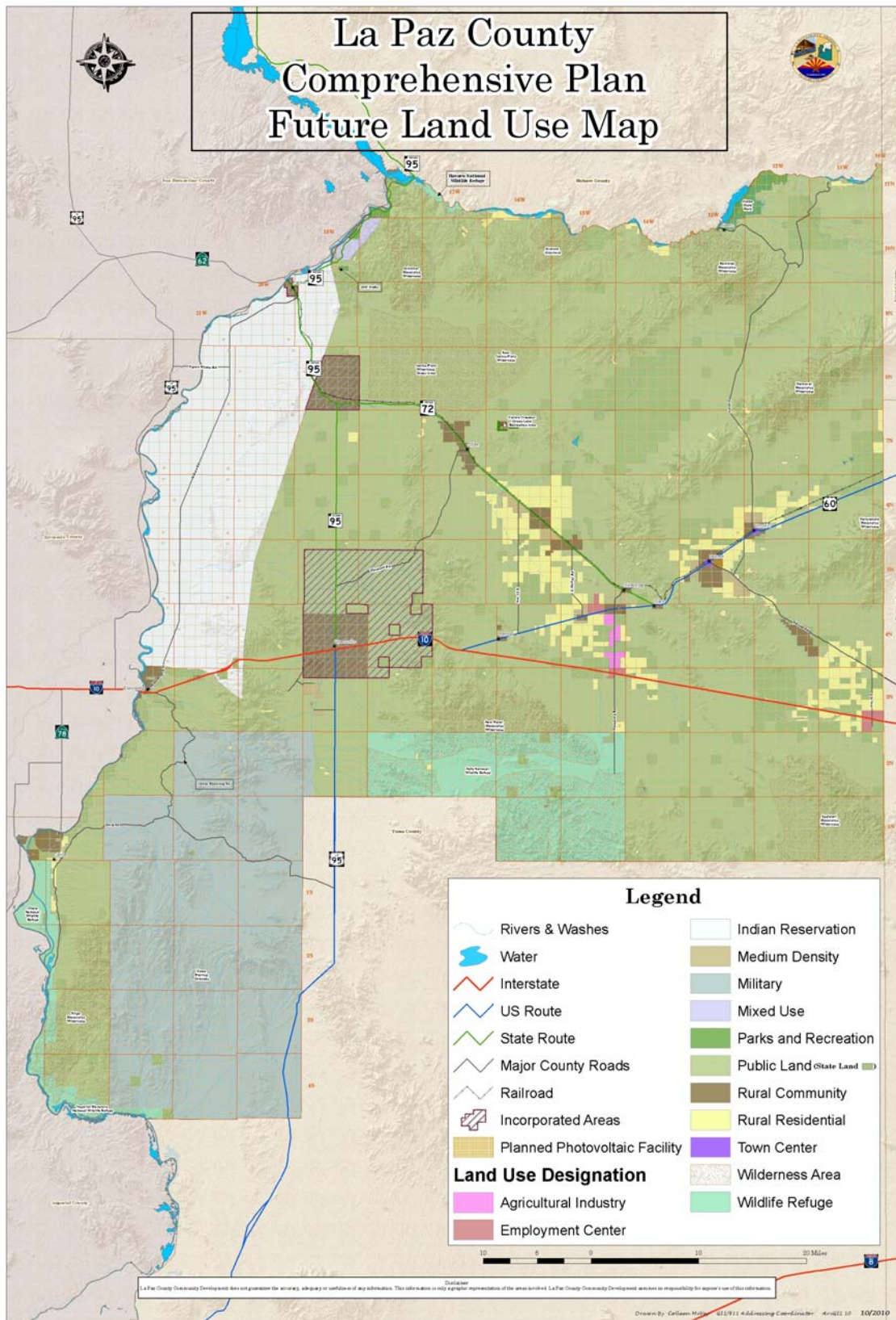
Land Use Designation	Acreage
Rural Residential	370,085
Medium Density Residential	1,673
Rural/Incorporated Community	59,545
Employment	2,097
Interchange Node	1,286
Open Space	1,641,274
Parks and Recreation	21,997
Wildlife Refuge	168,616
Military	391,319
Indian Reservation (CRIT)	248,002

*Source: PSA, Inc., Geographic Information Systems mapping*



# La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

Figure 3.3



*Adopted May 2005  
Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010*





## **4.0 MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT**

The purpose of the Multimodal Transportation Element is to provide an efficient transportation system that moves people and goods throughout the La Paz County and supports the current and projected land use. The Element outlines goals and policies guiding development of a comprehensive circulation system supporting findings of the Land Use Element. To accommodate future demand, La Paz County must maintain and develop a transportation system of roadways and other multimodal options.

The La Paz County Multimodal Transportation Element includes the following:

- A review of existing transportation facilities within La Paz County.
- A collection of goals and policies to guide development of the multimodal transportation system.
- A Circulation Plan of multimodal facilities to serve anticipated population and employment growth as outlined in the Land Use Element.

### **4.1 Introduction**

A number of components in the La Paz County circulation system perform the critical functions of moving people and goods from one place to another and serving the County's important tourism and agriculture industries. Existing major roadways include an Interstate Highway (I-10), US 60, portions of US 95, State Routes 72 and 95, other paved two-lane facilities, and unimproved roads. Many unpaved roads serve agricultural areas and tourist attractions such as ghost towns and portions of wilderness areas and wildlife refuges. The Arizona & California



Railroad crosses the County from east to west, serving the County's rail freight customers. General aviation services are provided at the Avi Suquilla Airport near Parker. The County is also crossed by three pipelines. The La Paz County circulation system is depicted in Figure 4.1.



## **4.2 La Paz County Roadways**

La Paz County ordinances provide for five different road design standards. Designs include local residential, minor and major collectors, minor arterial, and principal arterial. With the exception of I-10 and California Avenue in downtown Parker, all roadways in the County are two-lane.

The functional classification of a roadway depends upon its primary purpose to either provide mobility or provide access to adjacent properties. These two functions are essentially incompatible. Greatest mobility is achieved with large volumes of vehicles traveling at high speeds uninterrupted by traffic control or side friction generated by intersecting streets and driveways. However, maximum access is provided on low-speed, low-volume roads having a high number of intersections and driveways.



Major collectors include SR 72, US 60, and Alamo Dam Road, and SR 95 is an example of a principal arterial. Table 4.1 lists the County roadways included in the Federal Highway Administration's database, and Table 4.2 lists other County roadways of local and regional significance.

### **Roadways**

The La Paz County circulation system consists of a few major road corridors connecting population centers and regional destinations outside of the County, and a set of smaller paved and unpaved County roads distributing traffic to areas within the county. Major road corridors are primarily state routes including an interstate highway and Mohave Road from Parker to Ehrenberg located within CRIT lands. (CRIT)



I-10 traverses La Paz County in an east-west direction from Centennial to the Arizona-California border at Ehrenberg. I-10 is the principal transportation corridor from Phoenix, Arizona to Los Angeles, California, connecting through Quartzsite and Ehrenberg. In the winter, Quartzsite bustles with what is estimated to be over one hundred thousand additional temporary residents camped in recreational vehicles. Unincorporated towns located on I-10, include Centennial, New Hope and Ehrenberg.



## La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

Other major road corridors in La Paz County include US 60, US 95, SR 72, and SR 95. SR 95 and Business 10 in Quartzsite and SR 95 from California Avenue to Lakeside drive in Parker are

five-lane facilities with the remainder of these roadways two-lane paved facilities that serve local and regional traffic.

US 60 traverses La Paz County in an east-southwest direction. It enters the eastern County boundary approximately 2 miles north of the Harquahala Mountains Wilderness, and ends at the junction of I-10, four miles past Brenda. US 60 is the old Phoenix to Los Angeles route. Unincorporated towns located along US 60, include Wenden, Salome, Harcuvar, Hope, Vicksburg Junction, and Brenda.



US 95 heads south approximately 14 miles from the junction of I-10 in Quartzsite to the southern County boundary. A 12-mile segment of US 95 is in the southeast portion of Yuma Proving Grounds, and travels in a north-south direction. SR 95 begins north of I-10 at Quartzsite and connects with the Town of Parker where it parallels the scenic lower Colorado River to the County line. According to the Arizona Department of Transportation’s Parker Port-of-Entry, an average of 450 trucks a day pass through Parker.

SR 72 is 36.80 miles long and travels in a southeastern direction from SR 95 junction, near Parker South, to US 60 junction in Hope.

Unincorporated communities located along SR 72, include Bouse, McVay, Vicksburg, Utting and Hope. SR 72 primarily serves travel within La Paz County. SR 72 connects several smaller communities and has become a heavily used alternative route to Parker (bypassing Quartzsite) with connections to I-10. In fact, according to ADOT, an average of 1,150 commercial vehicles per day used this route in 2003.

Alamo Dam Road is an example of a major County route which connects to US 60 and serves the popular Alamo State Park. Other major County roads are shown in Table 4.1 which lists County roadways included in the Federal Highway Administration’s database, including their functional classification, number of lanes and surface type. Table 4.2 lists other County roadways of local significance.



**Table 4.1. La Paz County Roadways Included in the Federal Highway Administration Database**

Roadway	Functional Class	Number of Lanes	Surface Type
Interstate 10	Interstate	4	Paved
US 95 MP 90 to 104	Principal Arterial	2	Paved
SR 95	Principal Arterial	2	Paved
SR 95 MP 109 to 111	Principal Arterial	5	Paved
SR 72	Major Collector	2	Paved
US 60	Major Collector	2	Paved
2nd St	Major Collector	2	Paved
Alamo Dam Rd	Major Collector	2	Paved
Avenue 75E	Major Collector	2	Paved
Bouse Avenue	Major Collector	2	Paved
Bouse Quartzsite Rd*	Major Collector	2	Paved
Buckeye-Salome Rd	Major Collector	2	Paved
Centennial Park Rd	Minor Collector	2	Paved
Hovatter Rd	Minor Collector	2	Paved
Main St	Major Collector	2	Paved
Vicksburg Rd	Major Collector	2	Paved

\*Also known as Plomosa Road

Source: Federal Highway Administration

**Table 4.2. Other County Roadways of Local and Regional Significance**

Roadway	Number of Lanes	Surface Type
Alamo Road	2	Paved
Avenue 42E – Flying Crown Road	N/A	Paved
Avenue 71E	N/A	Unpaved
Avenue 75E	N/A	Unpaved
Bernard Mine Road	N/A	Unpaved
Bonanza Road	N/A	Unpaved
Boyer Gap Road	N/A	Unpaved
Graham Wells Road	N/A	Unpaved
Harquahala Road	2	Paved
Lincoln Ranch Road	N/A	Unpaved
McVay Road	N/A	Unpaved
Palmerito Ranch Road	N/A	Unpaved
Pipeline Road	N/A	Unpaved
*Shea Road	2	Paved
Sorefinger Road	N/A	Unpaved
Swansea Road	N/A	Unpaved
Tom Wells Road	N/A	Unpaved
Transmission Line Road	N/A	Unpaved
Riverside Drive	2	Paved
Monroe	2	Paved
Lidig	2	Paved
Bell	2	Paved
Yuma Mine Road	N/A	Unpaved

Source: Arizona Road & Recreation Atlas, 1996 \*From SR95 first 3.5 miles not a County Road



### Ports-of-Entry

Two of Arizona's 22 ports-of-entry are situated in La Paz County: one in Ehrenberg serving interstate traffic and one in Parker. These ports monitor and screen all commercial traffic entering the state for registration, tax, size, and weight restrictions, commercial driver's license requirements, and insurance requirements. Commercial vehicles are checked to ensure that they are properly maintained and operated safely. According to the Arizona Department of Transportation, an average of 450 commercial vehicles per day pass through the Parker Port-of-Entry and an average of 11,308 commercial vehicles pass through the Ehrenberg Port-of-entry each day on I-10.

### Rail Service

In 1908 the Santa Fe Railway completed an alternate main line in an east-west direction across what is now La Paz County under the auspices of its subsidiary, the Arizona & California Railroad. The railroad parallels US 60 from the eastern County line to Hope, where it turns northwest and follows SR 72 and SR 95 through Bouse to Parker.

The Arizona & California Railroad Company, Ltd. (A&CRR) has operated as an independent short line since 1991, and is headquartered in Parker.

The railroad recently became part of RailAmerica, a nationwide short line railroad conglomerate. The company has two parcels available for industrial development. A 15-acre parcel is adjacent to the railroad in Parker and has all utilities. The other parcel is 100 acres and is in Parker South.

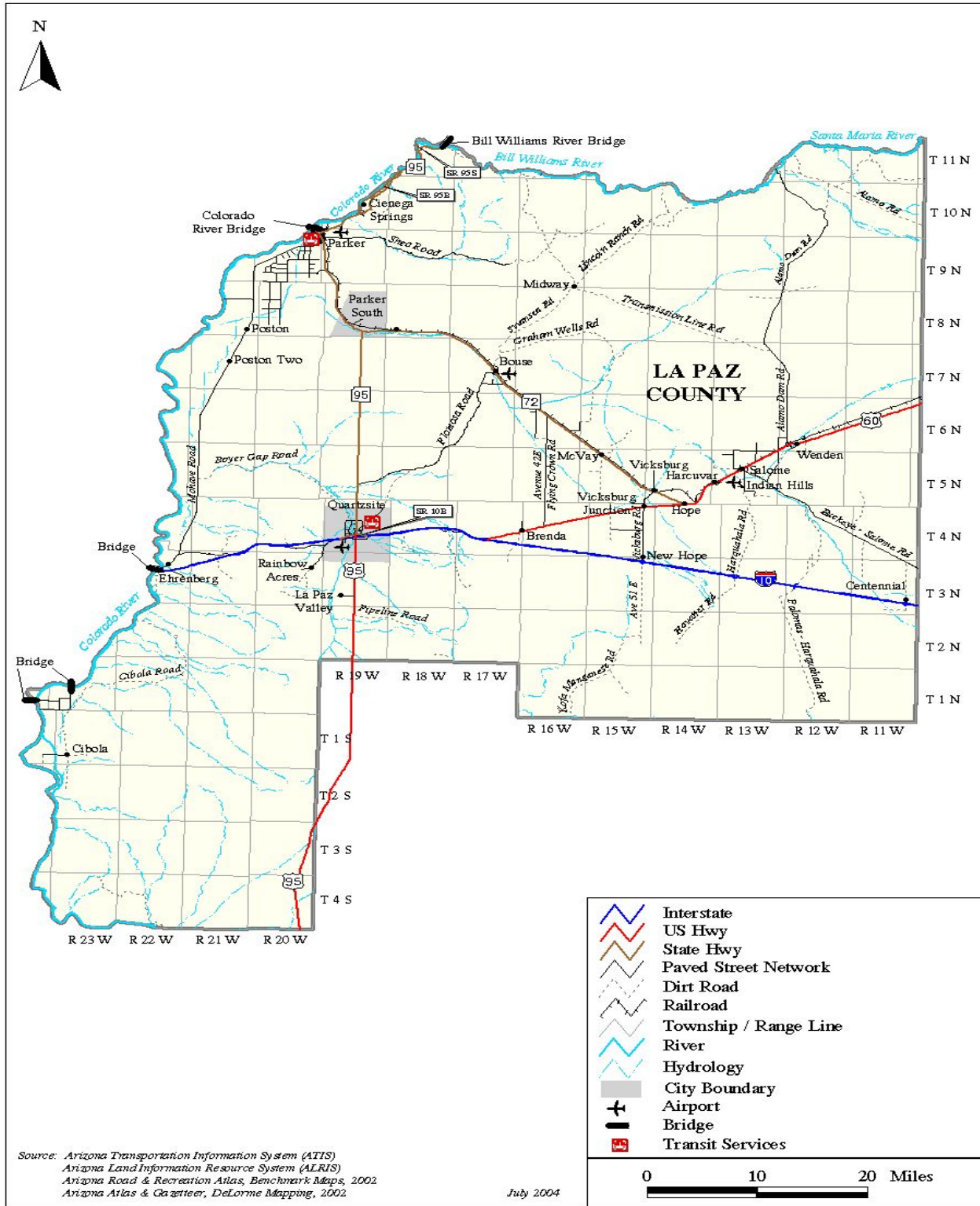


The A&CRR handles Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) traffic from Los Angeles that is destined for Phoenix. The railroad provides service once a day in both directions and according to the Arizona Department of Transportation's Fact Book; approximately 3 million tons of freight were carried by the railroad in 2003. The railroad also services two intermodal facilities. Matlock Projects is a chemical distribution facility that receives about five rail tank car loads a week, and is located near the railroad depot in Parker. La Paz Products is a fuel distribution center located approximately one mile northeast of the Junction of SR 95 and SR 72. No regularly scheduled rail passenger service is operated.



# La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

**Figure 4.1  
EXISTING TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION SYSTEM**





### Aviation

The Avi Suquilla Airport, an enterprise of the CRIT, is located on the eastern edge of Parker and offers limited commercial and public air transportation. Primarily private planes have historically used the 5,200-foot runway. CRIT has plans to upgrade the airport facility to handle larger aircraft. The Desert Gardens Airport, located on the western edge of Quartzsite, is another general aviation facility. Scheduled commercial air service is available at both Yuma and Lake Havasu City.



Appropriate regulations shall be promoted that both protect existing airstrip use and guide new development.

### Pipelines

Three pipelines owned by El Paso Natural Gas Company cross La Paz County. Two of the pipelines originate near the southeast corner of the County. One of these two pipelines parallels I-10 and the other pipeline runs in a north-south direction across the eastern portion of the County. A third pipeline also runs in an east-west direction, and crosses SR 95 at milepost 144 in Parker. There are three compressor stations located in La Paz County, located in the



northeast corner of the County, the eastern portion of the County, and eight miles southwest of Centennial, respectively.

### Transit and Intercity Bus Services

Greyhound Corporation provides bus service between Quartzsite and major cities in Arizona and other states. Quartzsite Transit Services provides priority service to town residents for medical, social, and recreational needs. Quartzsite Transit Services travels to Blythe, California and Parker, Arizona once a week and to Lake Havasu City once a month. The La Paz County Health Department provides free transit services to the entire county excluding areas covered by the Town of Quartzsite's transit program.

*Adopted May 2005*

*Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010*



### Bicycle Facilities

The Arizona Department of Transportation report entitled “1999 Status and Condition of the Arizona Highway System” includes bicycle suitability ratings of “more suitable” and “less suitable” assigned by the Governor’s Arizona Bicycle Task Force to all of the roads in the State Highway System where bicycling is permitted. Characteristics considered in developing these ratings were as follows:

- Average number of vehicles per lane per day
- Lane width including shoulder
- The percentage of truck traffic to total traffic volume

All three factors were weighted with lane width being assigned twice the value of the other two characteristics. Information regarding grade ascent is also provided to enable bicyclists to identify steep inclines along routes as an aid in planning tours. The Arizona Bicycle Suitability Map developed by ADOT contains suitability ratings and gradient information of roadways on the State Highway System.

US 60 and 95, SR 95 between Parker and SR 72, and SR 72 are classified as “more suitable bicycle routes” roadways. I-10 and State Highway 95 between the Bill Williams River Bridge and Parker are classified as “less suitable bicycle route” roadways. La Paz County shall seek available grant funding for future bicycle facilities and improvements to infrastructure that support bicycle use as an alternative mode of transportation, general recreation or tourism capacity.

### **4.3 Multimodal Transportation Goals and Policies**

A set of transportation/circulation goals and policies provide a guide for future development of the County’s multimodal circulation system. These goals and policies support the Land-Use Element.

#### **Goal 1: Develop a system of County roads and state highways to safely and conveniently serve residents, businesses, and visitors.**

- Policy 1.1 Work with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the two municipalities to develop an access management plan (access roads, etc.) for SR 95, SR 72, US 60, and other arterials and major collectors.
- Policy 1.2 Work with ADOT, WACOG (Western Arizona Council of Governments), YMPO (Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization), Mohave County, Yuma County, and municipalities to develop SR 95 as a four-lane divided highway from San Luis to Bullhead City.





## *La Paz County Comprehensive Plan*

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- Policy 1.3 Work with ADOT to expand capacity and address safety concerns on SR 72 such as additional lanes and passing lanes.
- Policy 1.4 As traffic development warrants, address capacity and safety concerns on paved County roads and work with land owners to pave existing unpaved County roads.
- Policy 1.5 Preserve future rights-of-way for anticipated capacity expansion and access management projects. Coordinate with ADOT to review development proposals that may impact right-of-way on state highways.
- Policy 1.6 Work with the CRIT to integrate and coordinate Tribal and County roadway systems.
- Policy 1.7 Work with ADOT and the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) to establish an information center on I-10 to welcome incoming motorists and inform them of attractions and facilities in Arizona and La Paz County.
- Policy 1.8 Encourage ADOT to provide acceleration/deceleration lanes at all intersections of major County roads and state highways.
- Policy 1.9 Work with ADOT to expand capacity and address safety concerns on SR 72 including additional lanes, passing lanes, negotiable shoulders, tree and brush clearing, and flood control.
- Policy 1.10 Work with Maricopa County to minimize the hazards associated with livestock on Salome Road.

### **Goal 2: Develop a multimodal transportation system**

- Policy 2.1 Work with the two municipalities and CRIT to develop a transit plan to bring people to and from essential services.
- Policy 2.2 Develop La Paz County standards for bike paths and trails.
- Policy 2.3 Develop an integrated bicycle trail system in the Parker Strip area that will allow visitors and residents an alternate form of transportation.
- Policy 2.4 As Parker South develops, encourage the development of bike paths that provide inter-area travel and connection to the regional system.
- Policy 2.5 Work with ADOT to develop bicycle paths.



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Policy 2.6 Seek grant money to support the development of multimodal improvements. Improvement to the multimodal transportation system will enhance the quality of life and improve the health of La Paz County residents.

### **Goal 3: Develop La Paz County rail, trucking, and aviation facilities**

Policy 3.1 Assist the Arizona & California Railroad in recruiting rail-served industries to Parker South and other La Paz County sites.

Policy 3.2 Consider existing and future needs of truck operators when developing expansion and access management plans for County roadways.

Policy 3.3 Work with the ADOT Aviation Department and CRIT to monitor activity at Avi Suquilla Airport and anticipate and prepare for future facility improvements. The provisions of this Comprehensive Plan may be utilized to express support for future CRIT infrastructure improvements.

Policy 3.4 Work with the ADOT Aviation Department and the Town of Quartzsite to monitor activity at Desert Gardens Airport and anticipate and prepare for future facility improvements. The provisions of this Comprehensive Plan



may be utilized to express support for future Quartzsite infrastructure improvements.

Policy 3.5 Develop a strategy and aviation plan to protect airspace in the County for future facility development.

Policy 3.6 Develop a plan for a truck-tractor interchange facility near Ehrenberg to accommodate truck-tractor swaps as California moves to ban diesel tractors from the state.

Policy 3.7 Work with ADOT to develop an emergency alternate route plan that alleviates impacts to non-redundant routes from accidents and emergencies.



#### **4.4 Multimodal Transportation Plan**

The La Paz County Multimodal Transportation Plan focuses on maintaining and improving circulation on the County's major corridors while developing facilities as needed to serve anticipated population growth. Working with ADOT on anticipating future needs and improving and maintaining the major routes in and through La Paz County is vital. Working with local jurisdictions and land owners is also key in improving the future transportation system. La Paz County is also committed to creating a multimodal transportation system, providing for travel by bicycle, transit, rail, trucks, vehicles and air. Figure 4.2 illustrates the long range needs for regional or state routes, local roads and finally further development of a multi-modal system. Figure 4.4 shows the La Paz County Multimodal Transportation Plan.



# La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

**Figure 4.2  
LA PAZ COUNTY MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**





Regional / State Routes

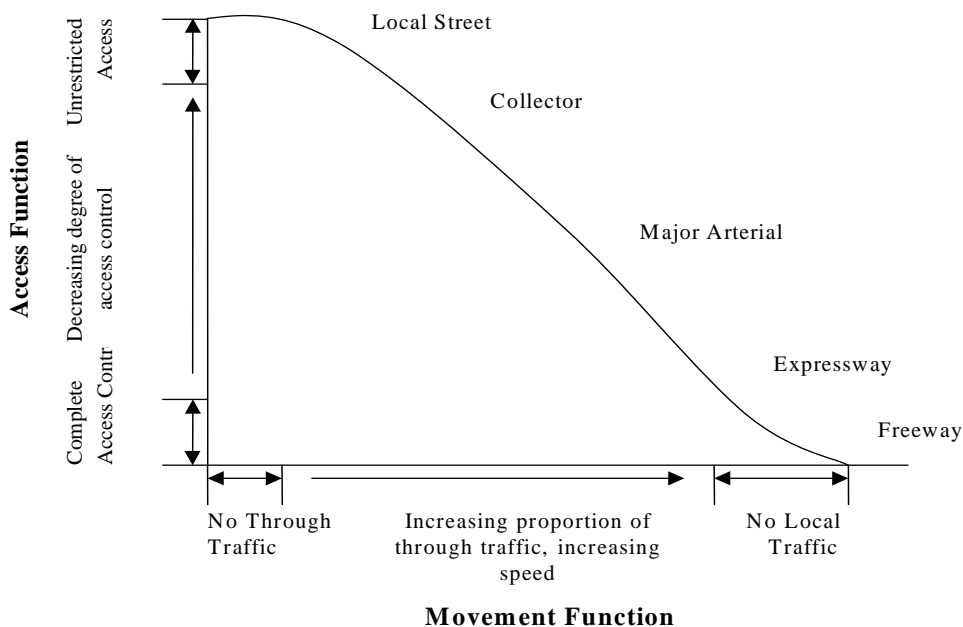
State and US routes in La Paz County are expected to carry the majority of traffic in the future, including; I-10, SR 95, SR 72, U.S. 95 and U.S. 60. A majority of communities in La Paz County, incorporated and unincorporated, are located along or near one of these routes. These roads also serve as important regional connections, serving traffic within La Paz County as well as pass through traffic to regional destinations. The future of these corridors must maintain a balance between access and traffic flow.



Access Management

Access management seeks to balance roadway operations with land development, Figure 4.5 shows the relationship between access and movement. Benefits of access management include preservation of safety and service. Access management can be an effective tool to maintain or improve traffic flow on a given corridor by limiting the number of driveways or access point on and off of a roadway. Managing access can be accomplished by consolidating driveways, installing left or right turn bays and installing medians. Access management is more appropriate for regional roadways, for instance I-10 is a fully access controlled facility with no access. The level of access control should be designed specifically for conditions on a particular corridor to serve land uses while providing safe and improved traffic flow.

Figure 4.3, Access and Movement Functions Related to the Type of Roadway





## ***La Paz County Comprehensive Plan***

The SR 95, SR 72, and US 60 corridors are recommended for access management plans. Future development is likely along and near these regionally significant corridors, and controlling access will help improve and maintain traffic flow and safety into the future.

### **Regional Capacity and Safety Improvements**

The existing road network, for much of the County, is adequate for future traffic needs, with targeted capacity and safety improvements. SR 95 is recommended to be improved to a four-lane divided highway, providing capacity improvements to this popular route from I-10, through Parker and further to Lake Havasu City. ADOT found in the Quartzsite Traffic Study, traffic congestion and delays during winter visitor periods and the annual Rock and Gem Show in Quartzsite for SR 95. Target improvements are recommended to improve these congested conditions.

SR 72 is another important regional route. The amount of cut-through traffic on SR 72 as an alternative to SR 95 has been increasing. SR 72 has some safety concerns that can be addressed through capacity improvements such as additional lanes or passing lanes.

Other capacity and safety improvement projects are anticipated in locations with more activity and development. Growth along US 60 may drive the need for adding capacity to provide access and circulation in more congested areas in the future. These types of improvements should be coordinated with access management plans to anticipate where and when such improvements should be implemented.

### **Local / County Roadways**

La Paz County operates and maintains a large number of roadways throughout the County. The County is responsible for dust control, grading, road repairs, upgrading roads, securing right-of-way, permitting access and controlling traffic on the county road system. La Paz County ordinances provide for five different road design standards. Designs include local residential, minor and major collectors, minor arterial, and principal arterial. With the exception of I-10 and California Avenue in downtown Parker, all roadways in the County are two-lane facilities. The functional classification of a roadway depends upon its primary purpose to either provide mobility or to provide access to adjacent properties. Whenever possible the county should preserve future right-of-ways in areas where future projects are likely.





## *La Paz County Comprehensive Plan*

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Working with land owners, the County can identify unpaved roads that need to be paved. Paving dirt roads may be needed to improve capacity, if warranted by an increased amount of traffic. Safety issues are another reason to pave dirt roads. It is recommended the county develop a dirt road paving program that considers traffic volumes, safety issues and adjacent landowner's desires to identify candidate dirt roads.

Key County roads in need of future improvements include 42E, Vicksburg Road, Buckeye-Salome Road, and Alamo Dam Road. 42E functions as a cut-through between SR 72 and US 60, increased volumes may require capacity or safety improvements. Vicksburg Road serves as a busy truck route for trucks traveling from I-10 to SR 72 and north through Parker. Buckeye-Salome Road has the potential to see an increase in demand as an east/west alternative to I-10, accessing growth areas along US 60. Alamo Dam Road is important as it provides access to the popular Alamo State Park.

La Paz County must coordinate with Federal, State and local jurisdictions to develop a good roadway system in the future. Coordination with CRIT is important to integrate the County road system with the Tribe's roads. La Paz County must also coordinate with ADOT on improvements to major corridors as well as with Parker and Quartzsite on enhancing travel at the local level.

### **Multimodal Needs**

Incorporating multiple modes of transportation creates an enhanced circulation system better serving a diverse set of users. These modes can include transit or bus service, bicycling, walking, rail, and air travel.

#### ***Transit***

Transit is an important alternative form of transportation providing access to critical services for many people. Transit is also an important tool to help reduce traffic on roadways. It is recommended that the County work with local communities to develop a transit plan and system.

Building upon existing transit services provided in La Paz County, the transit plan and system will provide services to meet the future medical, social, and recreational needs of residents and visitors.

#### ***Bicycling and Walking***

Improving the transportation system to accommodate bicycling and walking is a vital quality of life issue. Providing safe and connected bicycle and walking facilities allows people the opportunity to not drive if they so choose. Bicycling and walking facilities support two different and distinct functions: one for recreational activities and the other to support social and/or work related trips. Bicycle facilities are best provided as an integral part of the road system in the form of bicycle lanes or wide paved shoulders.



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Bicycle paths can also be developed to access recreational areas. Walking is a local activity and the inclusion of sidewalks, paths, or trails should be considered when development or improvements occur.

Priority should be given to developing the regional bicycle network in a systematic fashion that ties together Quartzsite, Bouse, Parker South, Parker, and the Parker Strip.

Development of non-vehicular facilities should be a coordinated and systematic effort to ensure relevant connectivity and to ensure that facilities connect key destinations to encourage use. La Paz County shall seek whenever possible, grants to improve bicycle and pedestrian trail systems, including infrastructure needs and connectivity with neighborhoods and communities.

### *Rail and Aviation*

The Arizona & California Railroad provides important freight service and will be a key partner to help develop additional rail-served industries. The County should also work closely with the railroad to address safety at crossings. Aviation can be an important economic tool to help encourage investment as well as tourism. The County should work with local jurisdictions to help develop regional airport services as appropriate and protect against the loss of air space for existing and new airports.



In addition, heliports should be encouraged in all rural communities to provide for air ambulance services.





## **5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT**

The Environmental Element is not a requirement of the state’s Growing Smarter Legislation. However, it was determined that environmental planning is a very important component in shaping La Paz County’s future. With its vast “coastline” on the Colorado River, numerous Wilderness Areas and Wildlife Refuges, and unspoiled open space, maintenance of these assets is critical to the County. Maintaining the County’s water resources is also a priority.

The Environmental Element includes the following:

- Review of existing environmental issues and concerns
- A collection of goals and policies to manage La Paz County’s environmental resources
- An Environmental Plan to assist policy-makers in coordinating environmental preservation activities

### **5.1 Introduction**

The Environmental Element is not intended to be an environmental assessment in any way but is to be used as a general guideline for preserving La Paz County’s unique character and its physical and natural resource assets.

Many of the element’s goals and policies will require that additional, more detailed planning be completed. La Paz County must aggressively approach these challenges as soon as possible prior to new growth and development occurring since it is more efficient to have planning and regulations in place prior to development than trying to retrofit policies to accommodate existing development.



### **5.2 Existing Conditions and Issues**

There are several key environmental issues facing the La Paz County: preservation of water resources, maintaining air quality, protection of the Colorado River, and preservation of wildlife refuges and wilderness areas.



### **Sustainable Building**

Sustainable Building, also called “green building” or “intelligent building,” involves implementing various practices that minimize the depletion of natural resources, water and energy consumption, and construction waste. La Paz County encourages the voluntary use of the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED ® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design System).

Sustainable building practices are healthier for the occupants and the environment. They conserve energy and water, limiting environmental impacts. Buildings constructed using these practices have superior indoor environmental quality. They incorporate environmentally sensitive site planning and resource-efficient materials. Many alternative building materials are readily available on the market.

An important function of sustainable building is to enhance energy efficiencies through architectural design. Techniques such as installing more efficient insulation, heating, and cooling systems, placing windows where they can best take advantage of solar energy, and weatherizing can dramatically reduce the amount of energy we consume. Many of these approaches cost less than power from either traditional or clean renewable sources.

### **Water Resources**

As in any arid climate, the protection and expansion of water resources is a critical element. The majority of La Paz County’s water comes from underground sources except for a significant allocation of Colorado River water to the CRIT Reservation. There are several other Colorado River water allocations in the County. (Jim Downing)

Unlike the neighboring counties to the east (Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima), La Paz County does not have a major water project providing water resources. The Central Arizona Project canal runs through the county but very little benefit in regard to water resources is realized from the CAP.



To this point, there has been more than enough water to support any residential or business development. Significant agricultural operations have also been supported by the water resources in the McMullen Valley, Harquahala Valley, Ranegras Okain and Cibola Valley. Cibola Valley is farmed using an allocation of Colorado River water. All other areas are farmed with groundwater. (Jim Downing) Production has dropped over the past two decades. The water table has been losing 6 to 12 inches per year due to groundwater pumping.



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Improved farming and irrigation techniques like drip irrigation are preserving resources and a viable agriculture industry in the McMullen Valley, Harquahala Valley and Ranegras Plain is predicted for decades to come. As the region's current agricultural areas near Yuma, Phoenix, and in southern California become more urbanized, agricultural operations, and more particularly dairies, could be looking to locate in La Paz County. This trend must be monitored to ensure the future of the County's water resources.

A threat to the long term water resources of the County is the purchase of water rights by other governmental agencies and jurisdictions. For example, in 1986 the City Phoenix purchased the water rights to 13,000 acres in the McMullen Valley. Much of this land continues to be leased for farming but most local control has been lost.

### Air Quality

Overall, air quality in La Paz County meets all federal and state standards. Being an area dominated by desert, the area has at times significant particulate matter in the air due to weather conditions and dry conditions.

Agricultural activities in the five major agricultural areas of McMullen Valley, Harquahala Valley, Ranegras Plain, Cibola and on the CRIT reservation add to the particulate counts in the air during periods of increased activities. This is most pronounced during soil preparation processes in the winter in conjunction with temperature inversions common during Arizona's winter season.



Aerial spraying of crops also poses issues especially for development that encroaches on existing agricultural areas. Air quality standards must be monitored and adhered to when reviewing development proposals adjacent to or near any existing agricultural uses. New Industrial uses allowable by special use or other land use review shall address air quality concerns in the form of monitoring, reviews and mitigation, where appropriate.

*Adopted May 2005*

*Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010*



### Colorado River

The Colorado River stretches approximately 1,400 miles through the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Over 100 miles of that trek is on the western border of La Paz County starting at the Parker Dam south of the border with Mohave County and leaving the County near the Imperial Mountain National Wildlife Refuge.



Drought conditions have lowered the reserves of the entire Colorado River's storage facilities to just over 50 percent of capacity but flow has remained fairly steady at between 10,000 and 14,000 cubic feet per second at the Parker Dam during the summer months.

While the Colorado River serves as a significant water resource for agriculture and uses on the CRIT Reservation. Other La Paz County allottees are, Brooke Water, Town of Parker, Ehrenberg Improvement Association and Cibola Irrigation District. The river does provide tremendous economic benefit to the area in the form of tourism and recreation.



Water quality of the river is of paramount importance to the region's economy. Degradation of water quality, real or perceived, can have negative economic impacts on La Paz County and the entire region. Much of the threat to water quality lies in the development on the shores and in the watershed areas along the river in La Paz County. There is significant residential and commercial development in the Parker Strip area and other intensive uses such

as the Blue Water Resort and Casino on the CRIT Reservation.

Much of the older development along the river has aging infrastructure and uses septic systems for waste disposal. As new development and redevelopment of older developments occur, precautions must be taken to ensure that environmental issues impacting the river are mitigated.

### Federally Designated Wildlife Refuges and Wilderness Areas

There are an abundance of protected areas in La Paz County. In 1990 numerous additional refuges and wilderness areas were designated in the County and preserved from development.



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It will be critical for La Paz County to work closely with federal agencies in the future to ensure these areas are protected. These areas also offer incredible eco-tourism opportunities as many of them contain rare animal and plant life and geological formations that are exclusive to this part of the world. However, there is a delicate balance between allowing access while monitoring the level of impact to the resource. Determining the limits of acceptable change should be regularly evaluated if access is encouraged. The County should work to maintain reasonable access to these areas. La Paz County will support the enhancement of pedestrian trail systems allowing public access to appropriate public lands. Enhanced public access is recognized as a critical economic development action for the County.

### **Imperial National Wildlife Refuge**

Thousands of acres of the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge's desert upland habitats are designated Wilderness. The Refuge is the home of initiatives including: restoration of native riparian habitats (neotropical migratory birds and other riparian-obligate species), wetland restoration and moist soil management that benefits migratory bird species, native fish management, and development of baseline biological databases.



The endangered Yuma clapper rail, southwestern willow flycatcher, and bald eagle are of the species for which the area provides wintering and migrational habitats. Additionally, the area provides a critical habitat for the endangered razorback sucker.

The Imperial National Wildlife Refuge is located in a region with scarce precipitation and hot summer temperatures in the Lower Colorado Subdivision of the Sonoran Desert and is bisected by a 30-mile stretch of the Colorado River. 9,216 acres of this refuge are located within La Paz County.

Due to the climate of the area, it provides many recreational activities including wildlife viewing, boating, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, and fishing.

### **Trigo Mountains Wilderness**

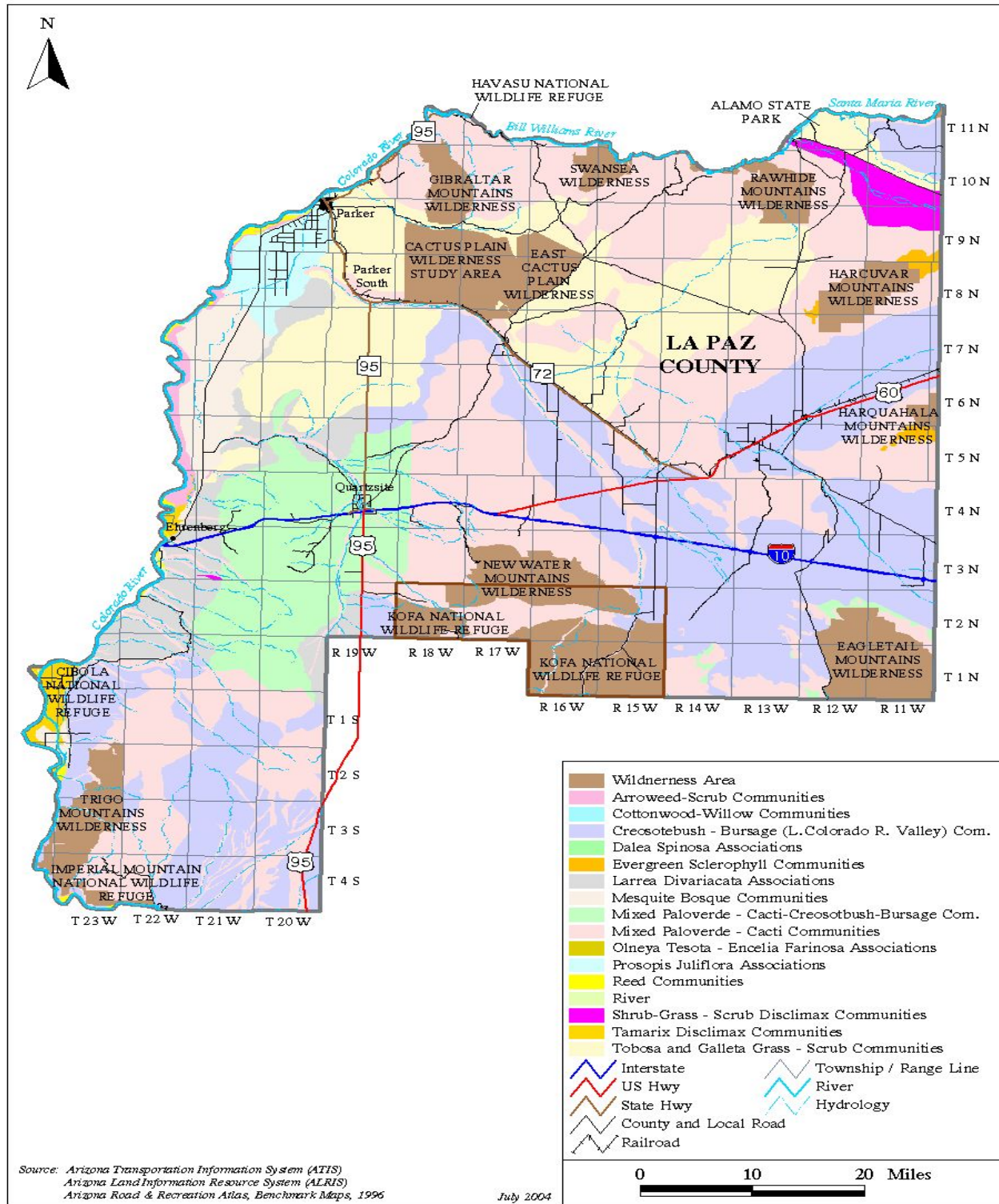
The Trigo Mountains Wilderness is a 30,300-acre wilderness located in the southwestern portion of the planning area. In addition to the area overflowing with wildlife, botanical, and cultural values, recreationalists can enjoy hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, sightseeing, and backpacking through the area. Besides the 14 miles of the Trigo Mountains ridgeline located in the Wilderness, it also hosts the Red Cloud Wash, Clip Wash, and Hart Mine Wash. The topography is very diverse and possesses steep-sided canyons, heavily dissected washes, and saw tooth ridges.



# La Paz County Comprehensive Plan

Figure 5.1

## ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT MAP



Adopted May 2005

Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010



### **Kofa National Wildlife Refuge**

The Kofa National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 25 x 40 miles of protected Sonoran Desert with no paved roads or facilities. It is located in the southern portion of the planning area to the east of US 95. A portion of this refuge is contained in La Paz County with the balance located in Yuma County.

Approximately 97,826 acres of this refuge are contained in La Paz County.

The refuge is termed a “hostile desert environment” (with summer temperatures over 120 degrees). It is, however, an excellent place for observing wildlife, camping, photography, or rock climbing in the more hospitable months. The area is best known for its grove of native fan palms, as well as the largest population of Mexicana desert sheep in America.



Dozens of old mines exist within this part of the County. One profitable endeavor was the King of Arizona Mine, from which the area was named in the early 1800’s. Some mines are still operating and some parts of the refuge are privately owned.

### **Cibola National Wildlife Refuge**

An oasis in the desert, the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge is located in the far western portion of the planning area in the floodplain of the lower Colorado River.

This Refuge encompasses the Colorado River channel and a channelized portion constructed in the late 1960’s. Even though summer temperatures reach 120 degrees, the resulting backwaters host many wildlife species that reside in the Sonoran Desert such as: bald eagle, southwestern willow flycatcher, Yuma clapper rail, desert tortoise, razorback sucker, bonytail chub, and desert pupfish.



### **Eagletail Mountains Wilderness Area**

Eagletail Mountains Wilderness Area is an area of approximately 89,000 acres located in the southeast portion of the planning area accessible off of I-10 via Palomos-Harquahala Road. Eagletail Peak at an elevation of 3,300 feet lies near the southern end of its ridgeline.



Sightseers can view different rock strata such as natural arches, high spires and monoliths, jagged saw tooth ridges, and six- to eight-mile long washes. A huge granite monolith, Courthouse Rock, stands over 1,000 above the desert floor, attracting technical rock climbers. Backpackers, campers, and horseback riders might have the opportunity to see the great horned owl and typical coyote.

A desert plain of ocotillo, cholla, ironwood, saguaro cactus, creosote, Mormon tea, mesquite and barrel cactus inhabit the area between the two main ridges of Eagletail Mountain.

### **East Cactus Plain Wilderness Area**

This 14,630-acre area encompasses the eastern third of Cactus Plain, in the north central portion of the planning area. It lays to the north of SR 72 and is accessible off of Swansea Road.

Unique dense duneshrub vegetation (woolly heads, and flat milkvetch, Death Valley Mormon tea, linearleaf sand spurge) grows in this area – unique for its density and rarity in Arizona.

The elf owl, flat-tailed horned lizard, and the Mojave Desert fringe-toed lizard all live in the East Cactus Plain Wilderness Area.

### **Swansea Wilderness Area**

This 15,755-acre wilderness area encompasses six miles of the Bill Williams River, remote to humans. This area in the far northern section of the planning area cuts a gorge through the center of the Swansea Wilderness.

The river has created a riparian habitat along its route and in the northern portion of the area can be found eroded volcanic dikes and plugs with precipitous cliffs, an extension of Black Mesa. A portion of the Buckskin Mountains forms the western area where topography is subtle and rounded, with a complex drainage system leading to the Bill Williams River.



Hiking, rock climbing, and horseback riding bring a diminutive amount of visitors to this remote area.





### **Cactus Plain Wilderness Study Area**

The Cactus Plain Wilderness Study Area is located in the northeastern portion of the planning area to the north of SR 72 and off of Swansea Road. It embraces an immense area of stabilized and semi-stabilized sand dunes that vary in type and color.

Backpacking, day hiking, sightseeing, horseback riding, and botanical studies bring visitors to the vicinity. Dune topography, colors, and vegetation are also studied here.

All of the Wilderness Study Area is federally administered.

### **Gibraltar Mountain Wilderness Area**

The Gibraltar Mountain Wilderness Area is an area of 18,805 acres in the far northern section of the planning area. Gibraltar Mountain itself stands only at 1,568 feet (above sea level) and is a mass of volcanic rock cut by many deep, sandy washes and rocky canyons. The many interesting alcoves and caves bring many explorers to the area.

Visitors also visit the area on foot and horseback to photograph the panoramas of creosote, cholla, barrel cactus, and palo verde; others visit for the serenity and beauty of the land itself.



### **Rawhide Mountains Wilderness Area**

This 41,600-acre region is located in the northeastern section of the planning area. It includes portions of both the Rawhides (north) and the Buckskins (south). The northern and southern portions of the Wilderness are separated by the Bill Williams River, which runs for more than five miles through the colorful 600-foot deep Bill Williams Gorge.

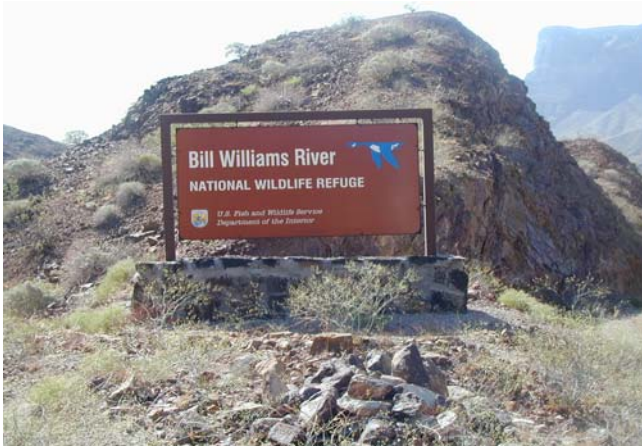
The riparian habitat supports a cottonwood-willow plant community, as well as beavers and several species of raptors, amphibians, and reptiles. At least one pair of bald eagles nest in the Rawhide Mountains Wilderness Area.

There are several rocky side canyons that feed into the river, complete with low falls; Mississippi Wash is the most notable. Due to the year-round water availability, it is an excellent choice for extended backpacking trips.



### Bill Williams River Area

This area was named after an Arizona mountain man, Bill Williams. It is unique to the



Lower Colorado River as a major tributary used as a travel corridor by Native American, European explorers, and early settlers. The river's flow is now controlled at Alamo Dam. The river itself flows from the Alamo Reservoir through the Buckskin Mountains and joins the Colorado River at the south end of Lake Havasu.

Local wildlife includes deer, javelina, foxes, bighorn sheep, coyotes, and ringtail cats. You can also watch turtles, muskrats, raccoons, and beavers along the

riverbanks. Aquatic life includes macro-invertebrates, fish, and amphibians.

### Harquahala Mountains Wilderness Area

The far west portion of the wilderness area is located in La Paz County with the balance being in Maricopa County. Harquahala means "running water high up" in the language of one early native tribe.

Harquahala Peak is the highest point in the County and in the entire southwest part of Arizona. The mountain range is one of western Arizona's largest and was named after the numerous perennial seeps and springs that support a rare habitat among Sonoran Desert mountains.

There is a screened interior canyon system with exceptional natural diversity including rare cacti, chaparral and desert grasslands. Sunset Canyon falls 1,600 feet from the steep east rim of the mountains and Brown's Canyon stretches for nine miles across the northeastern portion. It houses the endangered desert tortoise and is seldom visited. This area also sustains the largest mule deer herd in western Arizona, a sizable raptor population, and one of the few increasing desert bighorn sheep herds.

### Harcuvar Mountains Wilderness Area

Over 10 miles of the Harcuvar Mountains ridgeline is contained in this wilderness area rising from an elevation of 2,400 to over 5,000. The area is located in the northeast portion of the planning area and is not easily accessible by vehicle without four-wheel drive.



There is a very diverse variety of plant and animal life including a 3,500 acre area of chaparral habitat that contains species cut off through natural causes from their parent populations including the rosy boa, Gilbert's skinks, and desert night lizards.

Desert bighorn sheep can be found here with mountain lions, desert tortoises, golden eagles, and several species of hawks.

### **New Water Mountains Wilderness Area**

This area which shares its southern border with the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in the south central portion of the planning area is accessible via Gold Nugget Road off of I-10.

It contains Black Mesa, a large volcanic butte that stands 1,200 feet above the Range Grass Plain and is over 3,600 feet above sea level. It is a land of colorful craggy spires, sharp ridges, sheer rock outcrops, natural arches, slickrock canyons and deep sandy washes.

Vegetation is sparse including saguaro, creosote, ocotillo, and cholla dotting the hills and palo verde and ironwood trees lining the washes.

New Water and Dripping Springs are important lambing areas for desert bighorn sheep.





### **5.3 Environmental Goals and Policies**

A set of goals and policies provides a guide for the protection of La Paz County's environmentally sensitive areas. These goals and policies support the other La Paz County Comprehensive Plan Elements.

#### ***Goal 1: Protect La Paz County's water supply and quality***

- Policy 1.10            Work closely with all agricultural users to monitor water table and water quality conditions.
  
- Policy 1.11            The County will recognize a demonstrated and positive trade off between previous agriculture uses and associated water use with proposed residential development within appropriately designated growth areas of the County. (paraphrased by staff from Jim Downing Comment)
  
- Policy 1.20            Work with the municipal water utilities in Parker and Quartzsite to monitor water supply and quality.
  
- Policy 1.30            Work with the Arizona Corporation Commission, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) to ensure private water providers are operating efficiently and contributing to efforts to maintain a safe, clean, and abundant water supply in La Paz County.
  
- Policy 1.40            Develop a policy to address how the County will be involved in the potential future transfer of water rights to outside jurisdictions.
  
- Policy 1.50            Develop a Water Resource Master Plan for the County to address quantity, quality, wastewater/reclamation, and water recycling issues.
  
- Policy 1.51            Support grant acquisitions by the County, Special Districts or State Agencies that seek to study, improve or monitor water quality, effluent discharge, agricultural impacts, water quantity or the effect of individual sewage disposal systems on local water resources.

#### ***Goal 2: Protect La Paz County's Wilderness Areas and Wildlife Refuges.***

- Policy 2.10            Maintain an open dialogue with federal agencies, such as the BLM responsible for overseeing these areas to ensure proper buffering from development.



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- Policy 2.20 Work with Federal agencies to evaluate the impacts on the County (e.g., traffic, air quality) of proposed amenities and new services available at Wilderness Areas and Wildlife Refuges.
- Policy 2.30 Work with the ASLD and BLM to preserve access to the wilderness areas and refuges.
- Policy 2.40 Develop improved boundary identification procedures to prevent against accidental encroachments.

### ***Goal 3: Manage open desert areas to minimize environmental impacts.***

- Policy 3.10 Work with BLM and ASLD to develop and enforce policies to keep off-highway vehicles on approved paths.
- Policy 3.20 Develop and enforce policies to keep RVs, campers, and trailers from encroaching further into open desert areas and out of sensitive areas, wildlife habitats, and washes.
- Policy 3.30 Development of roadways should include designs that respect wildlife corridors and utilize the latest proven methods for safe wildlife crossings.

### ***Goal 4: Maintain air quality.***

- Policy 4.10 Develop program to identify highly traveled unpaved roads and mitigate particulate emissions through paving or sealing.
- Policy 4.20 Work with ADOT to utilize tailings from road reconstruction for use on heavily traveled farm roads.
- Policy 4.30 Work with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to learn about and implement “best practices” techniques for particulate reduction.
- Policy 4.40 Develop guidelines for dust control measures for construction and excavation activities in proximity to developed areas that will be impacted.

### ***Goal 5: Protect the Colorado River’s Quantity and Quality of Water.***

- Policy 5.10 Work with Federal and state agencies to develop a program to mitigate emissions from septic and sewer systems into the river.



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- Policy 5.20 Work with CRIT to develop a consistent policy for the mitigation of wastewater and agricultural run-off along the La Paz County portion of the riverside.
- Policy 5.30 Work with Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties and other State of California agencies to develop consistent water quality protection programs on both sides of the Colorado River.
- Policy 5.40 Work with local and regional organizations to develop a program to keep boat launch areas clean and maintained.
- Policy 5.50 Continue to work closely with WACOG, Mohave, Yuma, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties, and state and Federal agencies to ensure that the entire Colorado River remains clean for future generation's use and enjoyment.
- Policy 5.60 Work with federal fish and wildlife agencies to protect current wildlife areas on the Bill Williams and Colorado Rivers, including the Imperial Wildlife Refuge and the Bill Williams Wildlife Refuge.

### **5.4 Environmental Plan**

Unlike the Land Use and Multimodal Transportation Plans which can be aggressively implemented through the pursuit of goals and policies, additional planning efforts, and enforcement of codes and ordinances, La Paz County has less ability to impact the regional environment. Not only is there a myriad of jurisdictional issues, but the County has neither the structure nor resources to address many of the regional environmental issues.

A vast majority of the area is out of the County's jurisdiction and under the control of various state and Federal land owners. There is also an abundance of Federal and state agencies with missions, policies, and procedures meant to improve the overall environment. The County must work closely with the ADEQ, ADWR, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and BLM, among others. There is an interdependent relationship that exists between all agencies to ensure the long-term quality of the region's environment.

However, the environment knows no County lines, municipal borders, or manmade jurisdictions and boundaries. La Paz County can greatly influence the regional environment by:

- Regulating what is built, where, and how
- Promoting new and existing development to provide adequate and environmentally sensitive infrastructure
- Considering the impacts on water resources when contemplating new development



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- Monitoring agricultural activities and the compatibility to land uses
- Protecting the Colorado River water quality and quantity
- Considering impacts on wildlife and native vegetation by engaging in discussions with agencies such as the Arizona Game and Fish Department when evaluating new development proposals

La Paz County can also be a leader and “role model” for protecting the natural environment by how it operates. County facilities should maintain environmental standards, new facilities should be designed to be energy efficient, water conservation efforts should be a focus of facilities and landscaping, and County vehicles should be low emissions with alternate fuels used where possible.

### **Water Quality Management Planning (208 Planning)**

The area wide water quality management plans do the following:

- Identify existing and proposed wastewater treatment facilities to meet the anticipated municipal and industrial waste treatment needs of an area over a 20-year period
- Provide general planning guidance for non-point source pollution, sludge, storm water and other activities
- Ensure that consistency is maintained with the state's water quality standards
- Provide control over the discharge or placement of dredged or fill material
- Provide the foundation for activity to be conducted pursuant to best management practices

Future development should be encouraged to utilize existing sewer and water district services prior to proposing new individual plants for the purposes of waste water treatment service, in accordance with State Law and ADEQ procedures as found in the delegation agreement as revised with the County. The County shall encourage regional solutions to sewer treatment and effluent reuse in the communities of Ehrenberg and Salome, as well as other Rural Community areas and upriver through the Buckskin Sanitation District. Where existing districts have an opportunity to expand and service the community, new facilities shall be encouraged to move in that direction. Areas identified for development at densities requiring a community sewer system shall be directed to investigate a regional water and sewer solution based on the community and development type. This plan shall be conducted by the developer and considered by both the district and the County during the plat process with agreements being encouraged during the final plat process in the form of development agreements, memorandum of understanding and service agreements, including financing and other aspects related to regional systems.

Individual Land Use Map amendments made in 2005 and 2006 shall be considered part of the anticipated future developments for 208 planning purposes and are anticipated to be developed, beginning within five years. Developments proposed within the Rural Community, Up River Areas and Town Center designations will be considered as development areas for 208 planning purposes.

*Adopted May 2005*

*Amended December 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010*



## **6.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **6.1 Procedures**

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide guidance for how the County will develop. While it has been developed to serve over the next 20 years or longer, from time to time the Plan will need to be amended, changed, and updated.

However, the Plan should not be changed or amended without good reason and never on a whim. But as time goes by circumstances may merit changes or amendments. These are:

The completion of new plans or studies by the County or other organizations (e.g. BLM, ASLD, ADOT) may need to be reflected in the Comprehensive Plan thus initiating a change.

A developer or land owner wishes to employ a land use that is not recommended by the Comprehensive Plan for a given parcel. The merits of this change must be comprehensively analyzed and any amendments must be approved through a formal review process including the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

As time passes, the Plan will need to be updated (at least every five years) to reflect new growth, changes in the economy, and changes in public attitude. This update process should include a significant public involvement effort to determine if the vision is still valid and to reflect the current desires of new residents.

### **6.2 Action Plan**

The following strategies are recommended for action to support the implementation of the La Paz County Comprehensive Plan. It is understood that many of these strategies will take time and financial resources to complete and must therefore be phased in and accomplished over time.

However, time is of the essence. Having these tools in place before development occurs is highly desirable and will in the long run save time and resources while improving the county's overall position.

With public input, it will be up to County staff, leadership, and elected/appointed officials to prioritize these strategies and budget resources to accomplish them.

- Update La Paz County's Zoning Ordinance to reflect the guidance provided in the Comprehensive Plan
- Develop a public safety master plan that includes a fire flow analysis
- Develop a La Paz County economic development strategic plan





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- Develop a county-wide capital improvements plan
- Develop a corporate strategic plan that includes short-, medium-, and long-range goals for services and staffing
- Develop a five-year financial plan
- Develop specific area plans or Town Center plans in Salome, Wenden, Bouse, Ehrenberg, New Hope, Vicksburg, Vicksburg Junction, Brenda, McVay, Utting and Cibola
- Develop a county parks and recreation plan
- Create a redevelopment plan for the Parker Strip
- Develop a water conservation plan prior to the 2011 major amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.
- Develop a solid waste recycling plan
- Develop a public facilities and services plan that outlines future needs for County buildings, library facilities, health department facilities, courts, jails, and sheriff's department operations
- The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed annually and updated periodically to adapt to changes in circumstances and to maintain compliance with state laws.
- Work with the BLM and ASLD on developing long-range plans for their holdings in La Paz County.
- Investigate impact fees and revised development fees to ensure a reasonable level of service to the public.
- Develop and update a 208 plan dealing with sewer services and delegation of authority to the Department of Environmental Quality.
- Seek funding from federal and state sources, including grants for improved flood control upgrades in cooperation with adjacent jurisdictions, flood control districts and the US Army Corps of Engineers.
- Investigate the implementation and enhancement of regional flood control districts.