



Project Name: Cañada Del Oro Flood Mitigation

Project Number: PDMC-PJ-09-AZ-2003-02

Location: Pima County

Lat/Long: 32° 28' 49.7244" / 110° 53' 57.9078"

State/Completion Dates: August 17, 2004 - April 21, 2008

PROJECT SUMMARY

On June 17, 2003, the Aspen Fire began in Pima County. The fire grew rapidly and burned over the next 25 days. The fire blazed across the Santa Catalina Mountains north of Tucson, Arizona leaving in its wake a wide path of devastation.

When the smoke finally cleared 84,750 acres were burned, 340 homes and businesses were destroyed and approximately \$17 million was spent fighting the blaze. In its aftermath, the displaced families began to put their lives back together, the U.S. Forest Service started the clean-up process and Pima County and the State of Arizona started to assess potential future impacts resulting from the fire.

One of the more obvious concerns was the threat of downstream flooding from one of several large watercourses whose headwaters originate in the Santa Catalina Mountains. It did not take long before these concerns were realized. On August 1, 2003 and then again on August 14, 2003, flood flows within the Cañada del Oro Wash near Catalina were measured at approximately 4,000 cfs. These flood flows occurred after minor rainfall events within the Aspen Fire burn area located on the north side of the Santa Catalina Mountains. On August 25, 2003, a larger rainfall event, averaging between one and two inches of rainfall in less than one hour, resulted in a flood flow of approximately 7,000 cfs, which required evacuation of 40 residents from the floodplain.

These flows in the upper Cañada del Oro Wash were the highest recorded in that segment of the wash in the 15 years. Previously, during the nationally declared flood emergency of 1993, the flood flow at Golder Ranch Road was recorded at 1,600 cfs.

The dangers posed by flooding to Catalina residents have been well known and widely publicized since the mid-1960s. Now, with approximately 59% of the 67 square mile mountainous watershed of the Cañada Del Oro Wash burned, these residents' lives and property were at greater risk than ever before.

With this in mind, Pima County applied for a Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant through the Arizona Division of Emergency Management (ADEM). On August 17, 2004, the grant was awarded for \$3 million with a 25% local match. The grant money was used to purchase flood hazard properties, relocate families, demolish onsite structures, and to acquire 33 acres of land which was incorporated into the newly created Catalina Regional Park. Pima County will maintain the area as open space in perpetuity.

For Pima County the PDM Grant Program was a win-win program. It removed residents and their property from a repetitive flood hazard area, and it paved the way to create a unique regional park that caters to recreation and the re-establishment of a valuable two-mile self-sustaining riparian corridor.

PHOTO



The total cost for acquisition and demolition of the ten properties and relocation of their residents was about \$1.7 million, of which Pima County contributed \$368,180.