

II. Redington Pass Setting and Background

This section of the report presents a brief overview and orientation to Redington Pass, its geographic, geology and natural history as well as its human history and current governing jurisdictions. It also provides a summary of current land and recreational uses in the Pass and sets the context of future national, state and forest-wide trends.

Location and Natural Setting

Redington Pass connects the Tucson and San Pedro valleys and bisects the Santa Catalina and Rincon mountain ranges. Redington Road, County Road 371, winds over 24 miles from the western national forest boundary across the Pass and over to the town of Redington and the intersection with the Cascabel Road. Steep, winding switchbacks cut through the first six miles to the west then give way to a broad plateau of grasslands reaching 4,000' in elevation.¹



Figure II.1: Redington Pass within Coronado National Forest in context of Tucson and region

¹ Several of the illustrations and background research and text for this report were produced by Rachel Glass and included in her masters thesis “A Collaborative Place-Based Design Process for Landscapes: Redington Pass, Arizona”)

Redington Pass hosts lush riparian areas, natural waterfalls and striking rock formations providing distinctive recreational attractions. Tanque Verde Falls is a popular destination on the western side of the Pass closest to Tucson with two trailheads off Redington Road. Chiva Falls, accessible only by high-clearance vehicles, is located at much higher elevation off Redington Road to the southeast. Chimney Rock is another favorite destination reached via Bellota Ranch Road. These sites and others, including old stock tanks and corrals as well as the Arizona Trail, are reached through a network of unpaved Forest Service roads and trails.

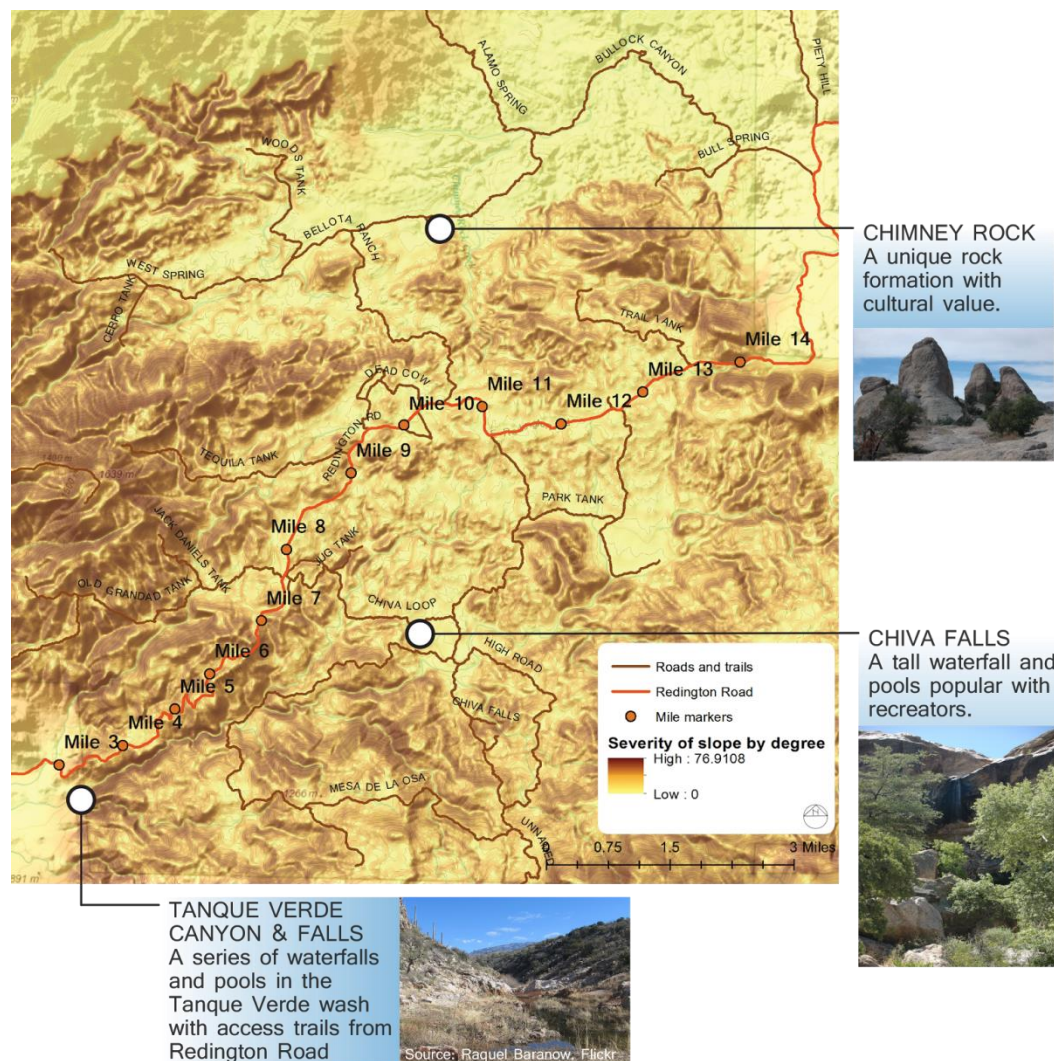


Figure II.2: Popular scenic destinations located on the Pass

The underlying geology of Redington Pass largely consists of a layer called the Santa Catalina-Rincon metamorphic core complex stretching between the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains (Mauz et al, 2000). The Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts overlap in this portion of

Arizona, creating a transition zone for vegetation. “Arizona Upland” is a term used to describe the majority of vegetation found at around 3,000’ which include mesquite and palo verde trees, large shrubs such as creosote, and cacti and succulents like saguaro and ocotillo (Saguaro Juniper Corporation 2015). Oak, juniper and semidesert grassland are also present on Redington Pass (Mauz et al, 2000). The surrounding mountains include more coniferous species at higher elevations (Mauz et al, 2000).

The graphic below shows an exaggerated slope and elevation profile, ecologic section with associated geology, and plant species for three sample biomes present on the Pass.

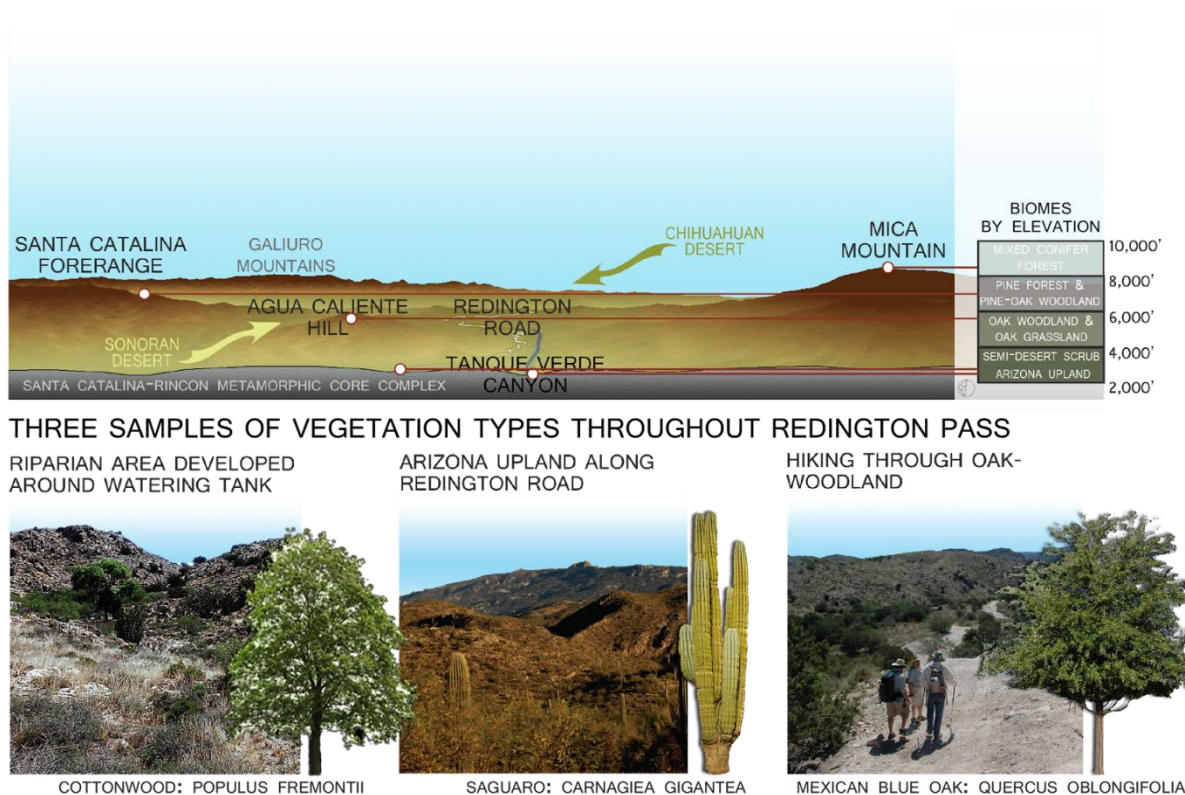


Figure II.3: Elevation of ecological communities on the Pass and examples of notable tree species

History

Redington Pass has historically been a difficult area to develop. The Pass has been used for ranching for over a century and the road network was developed primarily to service watering tanks. The varied terrain makes travel and road construction and maintenance

challenging. Redington Road began as a rough trail over a natural saddle between the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains. Hundreds of years ago, the Pass was probably used by the Sabaipari, a tribe of about 2,000 people who farmed the valley raising cotton, maize, wheat, beans, and melons until driven out by Apaches. In later years, it became a road traveled by aspiring miners and farmers, outlaws, and Apaches. At one point, it was a military road and stagecoach route as more farmers and ranchers settled in the valley. The Pass was once called Cebadilla, but eventually took on the name of the town of Redington which was established in 1879. The Pass was often impassable and fell into disuse until 1932 when funds were raised to finance the reconditioning of the road. Nonetheless, because of its challenging terrain and unpaved condition, Redington Road and its access to the Pass has remained undeveloped and consequently attractive to many outdoor enthusiasts who dominate the visitors to the Pass today. For more on the history of Redington Pass, see http://friendsofredingtonpass.org/about_rp.html.

Public Jurisdictions

The CNF, AZ Game and Fish Department, AZ State Land Department and Pima County hold primary public jurisdiction in Redington Pass as either public land owners or regulators. The US Forest Service is the federal land manager for the Coronado National Forest (CNF) that encompasses the western half of the Redington Pass between Tucson's Tanque Verde Valley and Redington, Arizona in the San Pedro watershed. The CNF's management of Redington Pass is guided by the CNF Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) that provides for multiple uses in the Pass, among them livestock grazing, hunting, motorized access including OHVs, recreational shooting, camping, and hiking.

Redington Pass is in CNF's Santa Catalina Ranger District (SCRD), one of five districts in the CNF. SCR D oversees the entire 265, 142 acre area of the Santa Catalina Ecosystem Management Area (EMA) which includes both the Santa Catalina and the Rincon mountain ranges within the CNF. This district is the most heavily visited district in the CNF given its inclusion of Mt Lemmon and Sabino Canyon. The SCR D also includes one of the eight designated wilderness areas in the CNF, the Rincon Mountain Wilderness which encompasses 36,875 acres. SCR D manages ecological conditions, transportation, and dispersed recreational activities. CNF's trained law enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing USFS laws and regulations.

Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) manages game and non-game species throughout the state and enforces state laws including on federal lands. AZGFD also enforces OHV regulations in the Pass. [needs additional detail on enforcement here]

Redington Road itself is County Road 371 and is maintained by Pima County, which holds an easement on either side of the roadbed regulating signage in the easement. Pima County Sheriff's Rincon Station provides enforcement of civil and criminal laws on the Pass. Deputy sheriffs patrol the Pass periodically, and especially on weekends, in accordance with the station's prioritization of coverage on Tucson's eastside.

Pima County also owns the A7 Ranch to the east of CNF's boundary at Redington Road. It purchased the private ranch holdings (6,258 acres) in 2004 along with the 40,000 acre state grazing permit and 640 additional acres under conservation easement. This purchase was in furtherance of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan's goals to conserve unfragmented landscapes to protect wildlife habitat and sustain cattle ranching. The county's Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department manages the A-7 Ranch.

Arizona State Land Department owns and manages several sections of land east of the CNF boundary as well which is interspersed with private lands that are primarily held for cattle grazing and in agriculture.

Saguaro National Park- East is located to the south of the Pass on the other side of the Tanque Verde Creek and is managed by the National Park Service. Cooperating agreements with CNF enable sharing of personnel on joint projects, training and periodic enforcement.

Recreational Uses and Trends

There has been limited systematic data collection on recreational uses and users on Redington Pass. For frequency of visitation, Pima County Department of Transportation's periodic traffic counts on Redington Road are useful. The average number of vehicles counted in April 2009 was 600-800 per weekend day (a significant increase from 2007 when weekend daily averages were 300-650), while weekdays averaged between 225 and 250.

AZGFD conducts periodic checkpoints on Redington Pass. At the beginning of the hunting season in November 2011, the department recorded 785 vehicles entering the Pass during the two-day weekend. When asked at the checkpoint what they were doing on the Pass,

405 people said they were engaged in recreational target shooting, 235 were out for OHV riding, 180 were hunters, and over 450 were there for other recreational activities. In 2014, during the fall checkpoint on October 22 (one day), AZGFD reported that of 170 recreationists stopped, 87 were target shooters, 50 OHV operators and 46 hunters.

In preparation for this plan, the Friends of Redington Pass conducted research on recreational users who visit the Pass. This research included an online survey that was completed by 307 people in the fall of 2014. The survey was broadly advertised at community and interest group meetings and through public media. While it cannot be claimed that the survey represents all user groups, respondents may well represent the range (though not the proportion) of active users of the Pass. From the survey respondents, a profile of the average visitor to Redington Pass emerges as one who:

- a. likes to visit the Pass monthly on weekends and lives within 20 miles of the area,
- b. drives into destination area within the Pass or parks where convenient, and
- c. when visiting, spends a full day on the Pass (avg 25 miles/7 hours).

Three main types of recreation were identified through the complete data collection effort of FRP (described in more detail in Section IV): motorized travel, non-motorized travel, and recreational place-based use. The distribution of these uses is illustrated in the follow pie chart:

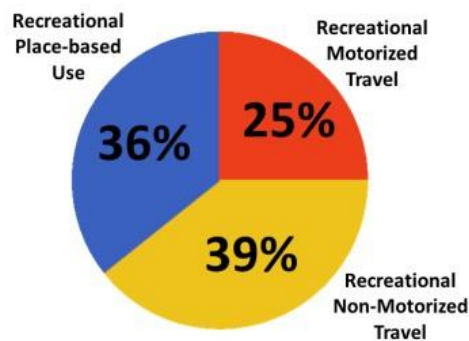


Figure II.4. Distribution of Recreational Use Type (Source: FRP survey 2014)

These three categories are comprised of several activities described in the bar chart below. It is clear from these data, just how diverse recreational activities are on Redington Pass - the quintessential “land of many uses.” Of particular note, is the finding that most visitors to the Pass engage in more than one activity and type of recreation when they visit. The top three favorite

activities, according to the survey respondents (and in contrast to the AZGFD numbers), were mountain biking, jeep riding, and hiking.

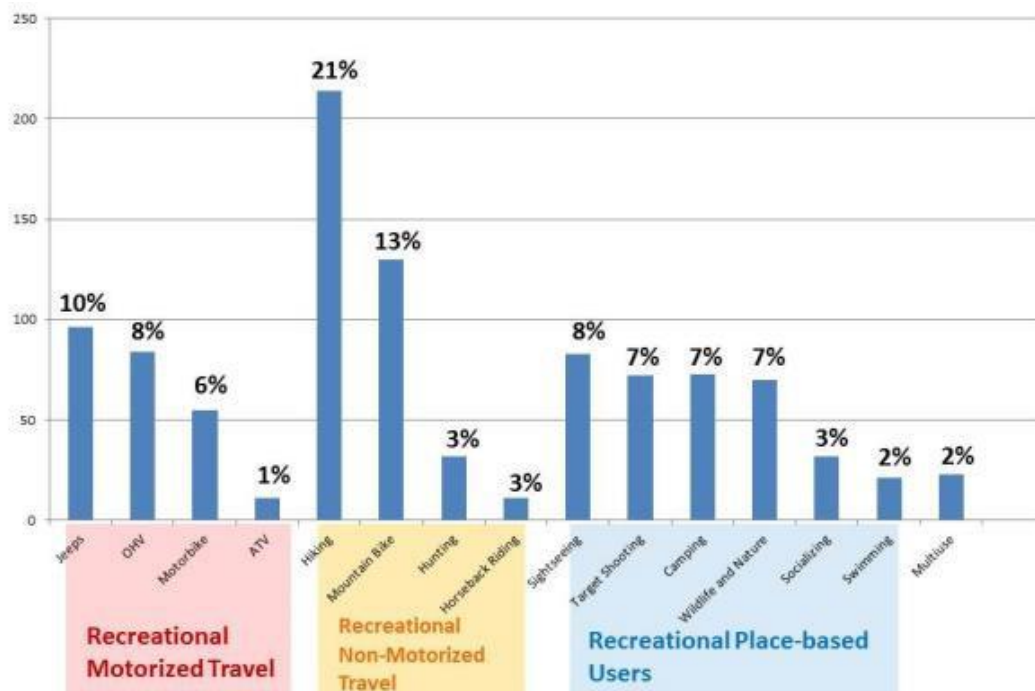


Figure 5.

Future Trends

The demographic trends for the Tucson area are for continued growth in the decades ahead. Pima Association of Governments prepared growth estimates for Tucson and Pima County that projected a 10 percent population increase in Tucson and a 13 percent increase in Pima County between 2010 and 2010. While the recent recession may have slowed that projection somewhat, there is decidedly more growth ahead and with that, more demand for outdoor recreation. Residential developments on the eastside of Tucson continue being built. Transportation improvements along the Houghton corridor make Redington Pass more accessible to more people now and in the future.

Growth in CNF visitation has been reported. In 2007, CNF estimated that there were approximately 3 million visitors to the forest system, 50 percent of whom were visiting developed areas (such as campgrounds and day use areas).