



The Creation and Evolution of the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park

Introduction

Saguaro National Monument was created by Presidential proclamation on May 1, 1933. The Monument, as originally established, encompassed much of the Rincon Mountains along the east end of the Tucson Basin. On November 15, 1961, the Tucson Mountain District (TMD) (15,360 acres) was added to Saguaro National Monument (made a National Park in 1994). Prior to its transfer to Saguaro National Monument, this area was part of Pima County's Tucson Mountain Park (see Figures 1 and 2).

Early History

In the 1920s the Tucson Game Protective Association headed by C.B. Brown became fearful that the encroachment of homesteads in the Tucson Mountains would leave no place of natural beauty for the area residents to enjoy. The Association, backed by many prominent people, started a movement to have the area withdrawn from homesteading and set aside as a park and game refuge. They were successful when on April 29, 1929 the department of the Interior issued Recreation Withdrawal Order 21 on 29,988 acres, preventing mineral and homestead entry. Pima County obtained a lease on 15,787.90 acres of that land on December 15, 1930; a supplemental lease provided the remainder on May 4, 1931¹. A formal opening was held for the Tucson Mountain Recreation Area on April 10, 1932².

The Civilian Conservation Corps

Pima County, which operated Tucson Mountain Park, applied for two Emergency Conservation Work program (as the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC] was first called) camps in August of 1933. The request was approved and on December 22, 1933 CCC crews occupied two camps at TMP. These camps were called Camp Pima (SP-6-A) and Camp Papago (SP-7-A). Owing to lack of water, Camp Papago was closed in May of 1934. Camp Pima lasted until June 21, 1941. The CCC was tasked with making improvements to Tucson Mountain Park.

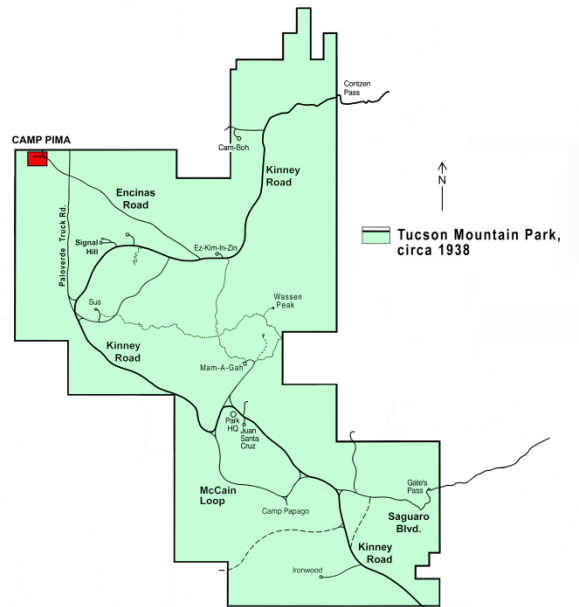


Figure 1. Map showing Tucson Mountain Park as it was in 1938. Note that some of the road names have been changed since 1938.

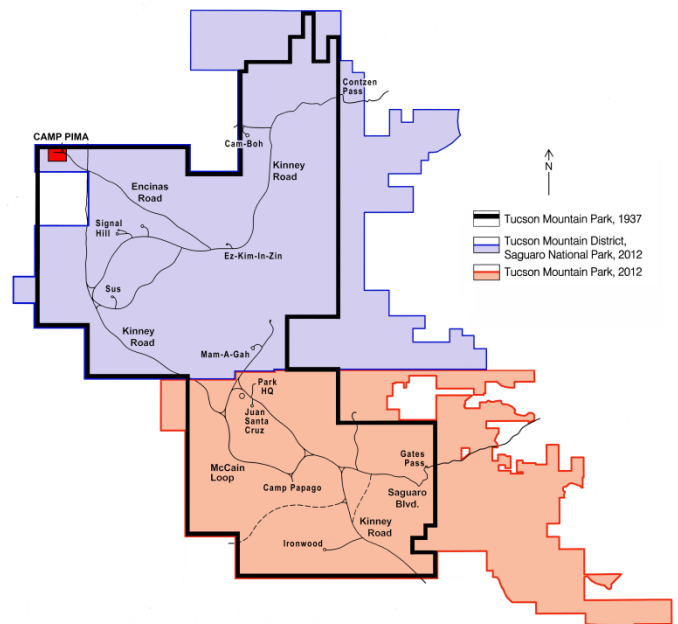


Figure 2. Map showing the 2012 boundaries of Tucson Mountain Park (pink) and the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park (blue) overlain with the 1938 map of TMP (heavy black line), and 1938 road system.

The CCC built structures at eight picnic areas in Tucson Mountain Park, five of the picnic areas later became part of Saguaro National Monument, Tucson Mountain District: Ez-Kim-In-Zin, Signal Hill, Sus, Cam-Boh, and Mam-A-Gah. Two picnic areas, Juan Santa Cruz and Ironwood, are still part of Tucson Mountain Park. The men from Camp Pima transformed Tucson Mountain Park, constructing or improving not only the 8 picnic areas, but also 29 erosion control and wildlife water supply dams, two wildlife water supply facilities each with a windmill and reservoir, a number of roads, hiking and horseback trails, including the Hugh Norris and Brown Mountain trails, as well as landscaping. Much of what the public sees today in TMP and TMD is the result of work performed by the CCC.

From County Park to National Monument

Tucson Mountain Park was a mix of county owned and county leased federal lands. Pima County's lease of these federal lands ran out in 1957 (Arizona Daily Star 1959) and based on an August 6, 1955 request from the Banner Mining Company a decision was made by the federal government not to extend the lease.

In response to the 1955 request from the Banner Mining Company (Arizona Daily Star 1959) to the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced on September 9, 1959 (Arizona Daily Star 1959) the withdrawal, for mineral exploration, 7600 acres of federally owned land that comprised part of Tucson Mountain Park. At once an intense debate began regarding whether or not the withdrawal should be allowed to happen and what the impact of renewed mining would have in this part of the Tucson Mountains.

Bowing to public pressure, the decision to rescind the order came on December 17, 1959 (Arizona Daily Star 1961) but the debate of what to do with the federal lands continued. It was eventually decided that the federal lands that made up the northern portion of the park would be transferred to Saguaro National Monument, and by Presidential proclamation, dated November 15, 1961, the Tucson Mountain District was added to Saguaro National Monument. This area of the National Monument would come to be called the Tucson Mountain District, while the original monument on the east side of Tucson would be referred to as The Rincon Mountain District. The public commonly refers to the districts as Saguaro East and Saguaro West. The new district would encompass 15,360 acres, reducing the size of Tucson Mountain Park by over 50 percent (see Figure 2).

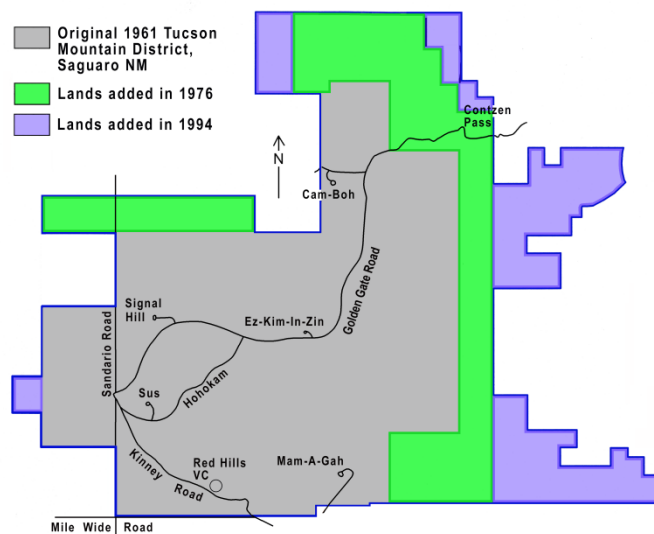


Figure 3. Schematic showing the 2015 boundaries of the Tucson Mountain District with lands added by year of acquisition.

From National Monument to National Park

In 1976 and again in 1994 the Tucson Mountain District was expanded. The 1976 expansion (Public Law 94-578) added 5378 acres of land to the district. This enlarged the district primarily on the north and east of the original 1961 boundary (see Figure 3). The boundary was expanded again in 1994, (Public Law 103-364), when 3726 acres were added. These new lands were primarily located on the east side of the district (see Figure 3).

The year 1994 also saw Saguaro National Monument become, by act of Congress (Public Law 103-364), Saguaro National Park. In 2015, the Tucson Mountain District totaled 24,818 acres of land, much of it designated as Wilderness.

¹ Clemensen, A. Berle. *Cattle, Copper, and Cactus: The History of Saguaro National Monument*. Historic Resource Study, Saguaro National Monument. 1987:140)

² *IBID.*, 141

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