

New Extension Website a Resource for Rural Landowners



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as well as how and where their counties are planning for future growth.

- Articles and publications from around the country and Arizona that discuss exurban growth and rural land use change.
- Resources for communities and their leaders, including the most current economic and demographic data and tips for sustainable planning.
- A summary of the projects that Extension's new Community Resource Development program is conducting or planning.

As a reader of *Backyards & Beyond*, you'll undoubtedly find one portion of the Website particularly valuable. An entire section has been devoted to "small acreage landowner resources." Whether you are new to rural Arizona or have been on your piece of land for decades, we've tried to provide you with useful information on this particular page.

First, archived issues of *Backyards & Beyond* are found here for your reference. Second, Arizona Cooperative Extension is in the process of creating a new series of factsheets entitled "Tips for Arizona's Rural Landowners." This factsheet series will cover a wide range of topics, such as climate, water resources, soils, domestic livestock and crops, native wildlife and vegetation, invasive species, wildfire, and land use planning, and is designed to encourage sustainable stewardship. When published, all of the factsheets will be available in an electronic format on this page for you to view, download and print. Currently, individual factsheets are in various stages of review and publication; visit the site regularly to see the newest titles in the series as they are added. Finally, we'll provide links to other resources—at the University of Arizona and beyond—that would be of interest to you and other small-acreage landowners.

Rest assured that this new Website will not be static. We plan to provide new content often in the form of news items, a list of upcoming events, updates on Cooperative Extension projects and programs and a variety of additional resources and links. We encourage you to check <http://ag.arizona.edu/rurallandscapes> frequently to learn more about the changes potentially affecting your community and your state.

REFERENCES

Travis, W. R. 2007. *New Geographies of the American West*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2000 and 1950. *Decennial Census of Population and Housing*.

Arizona Department of Commerce, Research Administration. 2007. *July 1, 2007 Population Estimates for Arizona's Counties, Incorporated Places and Balance of County*. www.azcommerce.com/econinfo/demographics/PopulationEstimates.html.

We all know that Arizona has experienced rapid growth over the last half-century. In fact, there are almost eight times as many people in our state today as there were in 1950. The 1950 Census counted 749,587 Arizonans, while the July 1, 2007 population estimate for the state was 6,500,194. Growth has not been confined to the urban areas of Phoenix and Tucson, either. Rural portions of our state have also seen large numbers of new residents and rapid changes in land use patterns. Yavapai County had about 25,000 residents in 1950, while Mohave County had less than 9,000. Today, both have populations over 200,000 and have seen increases of about 50,000 people just in this century. Much of this is due to what has been termed "exurban" growth. William R. Travis, in his 2007 book entitled *New Geographies of the American West*, provides a commonly-accepted definition of exurbia: "Part rural and part suburban, the exurbs are well removed from cities, with dispersed, low-density, residential land uses and pockets of commercial development."

Continued exurban growth has resulted in new challenges for county and municipal governments, as well as for all of us who live in rural areas, including declining water tables and other water quality and supply issues; habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation; strained county budgets; an increase in invasive species; and loss of agricultural lands and other open spaces. In order to help rural landowners understand and address the changes they see every day, Arizona Cooperative Extension has created a new Website called *Arizona's Changing Rural Landscapes* that you can access by visiting <http://ag.arizona.edu/rurallandscapes>.

Over the past nine months, Extension staff and Website developers from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Office of Arid Lands Studies have been hard at work putting this site together. You'll find a wealth of information there, including:

- An interactive map that can be used to visualize population growth and landscape changes, both in your local area and statewide. Current map themes include population change, recently-approved water wells, land ownership and changes in land cover.
- Links to every county's planning department, and in particular to maps and descriptions of county comprehensive land use plans. Where available, zoning ordinances and permitting requirements are included, also. These resources can help landowners learn about the types of uses allowed on their property and in surrounding areas,