

Protecting El Pitayal

This presentation is meant to stimulate action by informing others of the nature of our goals and the urgency of the need for persons with the expertise in real estate law and land acquisition to engage our problem.





The official botanical designation of the Pitayal is Coastal Thornscurb. It is the year-round home for dozens of species of birds, but it also serves as critical winter quarters for many species that spend the rest of the year north of the border.



THE LOCATION



Distribution of the organ pipe cactus. (Map by Paul Mirocha)

THE PROBLEM



One can imagine how little time it takes one of these to destroy a huge acreage of cactus. No chain saws necessary.

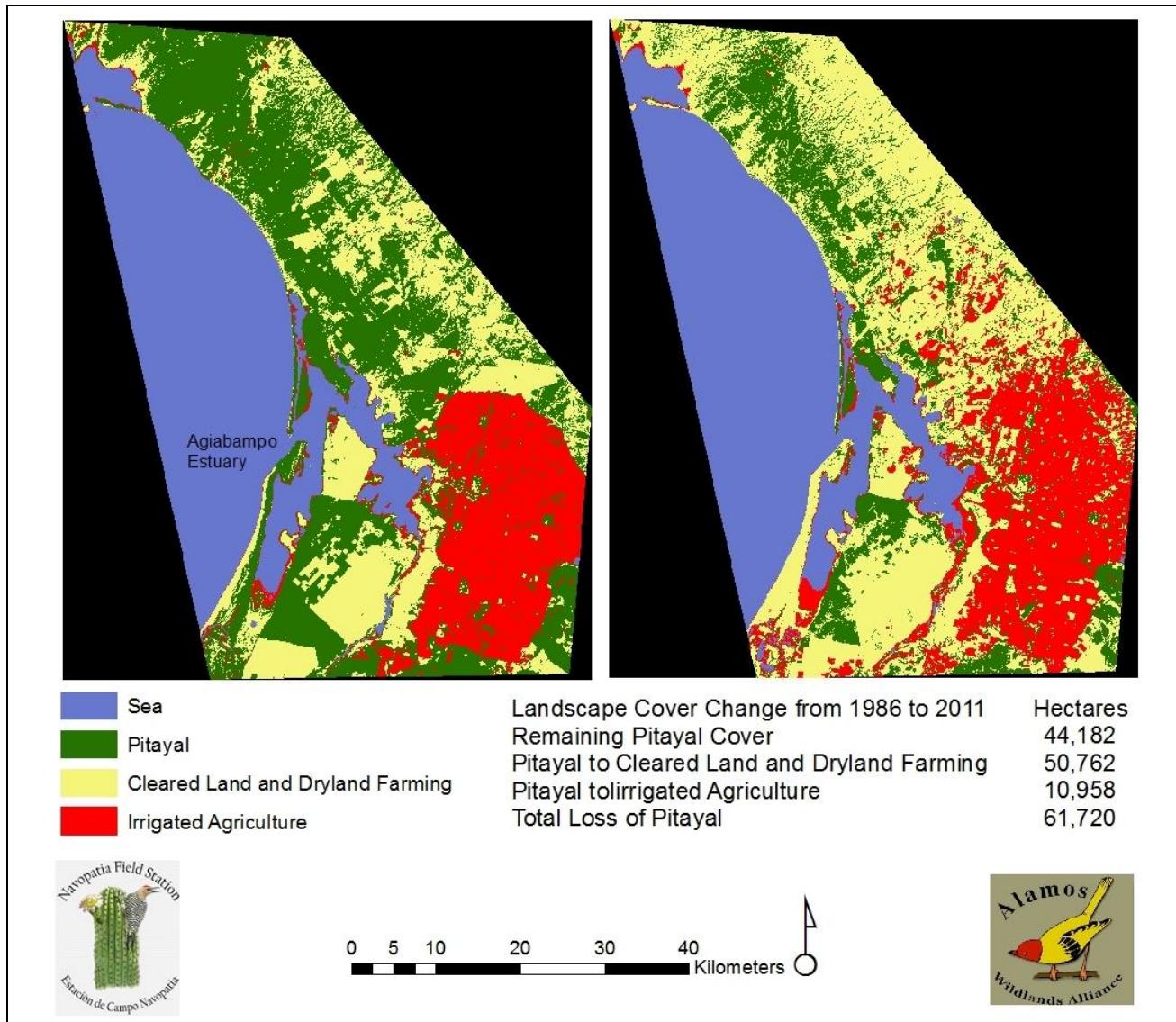


Agriculture advances west, extirpating the cactus forest as it goes.

(Sea of Cortes in the background)



58% of the Pitayal was lost between 1986 and 2011, and the pace of conversion has accelerated in the last 3 years.



NAVOPATIA FIELD STATION



The field station fronts on a small inlet, part of the estuary.



Isla Masocarit, a 10-minute kayak ride from the Station, has never been grazed, and serves as a control for some of our mainland research. It is protected.



THE PROJECT AREA



(Navopatia Field Station is in the lower right, at the end of the road)

THE CAMPAIGN

For the last 12 years, the Alamos Wildlands Alliance, a non-profit conservation group, has been operating a biological field station in the southwest corner of Sonora, a long day's drive from Tucson. From mid-November through March, we teach and study the flora and fauna of this diverse landscape on the shores of the Agiabampo Estuary.

Starting with the gift of the original site, we have expanded the infrastructure of the Navopatia Field Station and created a comfortable destination where we host students, local schoolchildren, and researchers. Our **central aim is the establishment of a preserve of 1200 hectares** (4.6 square miles) in a forest of Organ Pipe Cactus that is in many ways the crown in the distribution of *Stenocereus thurberi*. Only in this area, known as El Pitayal, does it reach densities as high as those found here. More than 250 bird species are known from here, and the diversity of other vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants is also high.

But pursuing our goal of establishing a preserve has proven very difficult. The ejido owns the parcels that would make up the preserve, and the land is under siege from the east by agriculture and the west by aquaculture – shrimp farms. We have worked with ejido members, local government, university personnel, and Mexican NGO's to lay the groundwork for a preserve, but at this point we are in need of expert guidance and assistance to craft an offer and negotiate a deal.

In 2013, over 200 hectares of our proposed preserve area were levelled and planted to watermelons. Here you can see the raw interface between the new agriculture and the cactus forest.



Finally, let us be clear about the fact that we who seek to preserve and protect a piece of the remnant Pitaya forest respect and even celebrate the right of landowners to do with their land what they deem appropriate. We do hope that we may soon be able to work with those who are interested in selling. We long to be in a position to make an offer!

This presentation is meant to stimulate action by informing others of the nature of our goals and the urgency of the need for persons with the expertise to engage our problem. We are convinced that the way to move this project forward is with the services of one or more **attorneys** experienced in transforming ejido lands into conservation lands. If you know persons who have these skills, please contact us.

For more information on our project and our field station, please visit: www.alamoswildlands.org , or contact us directly.

Steven G. Herman, Ph.D.
Founding Board Member
Alamos Wildlands Alliance
stevenherman4@gmail.com
360-894-0751, cell:451-0089

Adam Hannuksela, M.Sc.
Research Director
Alamos Wildlands Alliance
ahannuk@gmail.com
208-867-8788 (en español)

WILL IT BE

This?.....or.....This?

