



**Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

## **Locals hope to save trails in Green Valley**

By Mike Touzeau

Thirty-seven Green Valley Recreation Hiking Club members and a handful of cyclists took to local trails Saturday to raise awareness for all Green Valley residents that there really is a place right out their back doors where they can stroll or cycle or walk the dog.

The club has already designated one of their regular Thursday hikes to this area, roughly from Duval Mine Road to Continental and from the mines to the end of Camino Casa Verde, calling it the Desert Loop Hike, but they came out on this special Saturday as part of the National Trails Day celebrations across the country.

"We want to make people in Green Valley aware that these trails are here," said MaryLee Adamson, who led the five-mile hike.

"Green Valley has no parks or trails of its own," said husband Bill Adamson, chairman and the driving force among the 12 members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, all continuing their fight to promote the Master Plan For Multi-Use Lanes and Trails that's part of the Green Valley Community Coordinating Counsel's Vision 2020 Project.

"It's this or asphalt for many people," added former hiking club president Phil Gray.

"This is in our own backyard," said Judith LeClair, also a committee member, and a leading advocate for trails preservation, "and it allows those who can't make the trek to a trailhead to have access."

"We've already lost a lot of trails such as the bladed area that we passed on the left driving up here," Mrs. Adamson said to her group as they started on the trail, "so we want you to be aware of the treasure we have in these trails that are still left."

Meritage Corporation, currently the primary developer and builder in Green Valley, owns the land to the end of Camino Casa Verde, off La Canada to the west of Friends in Deed. Of course, they plan to build homes there.

The land in question just behind that, which continues to the west all the way to the mines, belongs to the state of Arizona, and there are already established trails, coupled with old ranch, power line and water company roads, as well as cow paths for walking and biking.

Adamson says he and the other committee members are hopeful they can be preserved for that purpose.

## Miles of trails

He estimates there are 10 to 20 miles of trails, easily found and traversed, but most of all, accessible to residents in a mostly retirement community that has nothing like it available.

It's an estimated 2,000 acres that one day soon will likely be sold to the highest bidder, Adamson fears. That usually means developers.

His group has already approached Meritage, requesting that they try to work out a plan to position new homes, so as to preserve the access trails already in place along the boundary with the state land. He said that Meritage representatives seemed to be willing to look into it.

Green Valley News staff writer Philip Franchine reported on the Master Plan back in February when about 120 citizens attended a public review.

Since then, Pima Parks and Recreation, Sahuarita officials, a couple of major bicycling organizations and the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) have joined GVCCC in support of the plan, Adamson pointed out.

"But still, most important is the continued support of the citizens and businesses of the Green Valley-Sahuarita community to insist on proper future plans and action to maintain the quality of life we want," Adamson said in his report in April.

Alluding to the 1997 \$2.95 million bond fund approved for the construction of a parkway through the area that was held back because that project was never started, Adamson hopes there will be a way to not only get the state to designate the area for recreational use, but also to somehow get the money to bid on the land someday, if necessary.

In addition to its convenient location for all who want to enjoy the relaxation and exercise it affords, hikers and bikers point to the presence of the crested saguaro and the endangered pineapple cactus there, as well as opportunities to see a variety of wildlife.

## Retaining a buffer

And, they say, it's important to try to retain what they see as a great buffer between the mines and the town.

Adamson compares it to Fantasy Island, a system of trails to the east of Tucson.

"They have the same problem trying to save the land from the developers there," he said.

There's a task force in place, led by Steve Anderson of Pima Parks and Recreation, trying to keep the state from putting that land up for public auction.

Wrote Adamson in his report, "We have lost many of our desert trails to new housing developments, and are losing more every day. We want to discuss our concerns with Pima County and developers to find a way to save many of our remaining trails."