



Sonoran Audubon Society

P.O. Box 8068
Glendale, AZ 85312-8068

May 8, 2003

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Napolitano:

The Arizona Republic recently (20 Apr 2003, D2) ran an article on possible expansion of the Phoenix International Raceway. One gathers from the comments by PIR president, Bryan Sperber, that this expansion would be major in scope - so great that the existing roadways in the area would accordingly need major "improvements". The article states that Sperber, "- has enlisted (you) to find state funding to make road improvements around the track -".

We called your office several times to get clarification on the meaning of the word "enlisted", but no one at all got back to us. Consequently we ran the enclosed article in our May chapter newsletter, to inform our membership of the issue, and alert them to the potential negative ramifications: wildlife/habitat degradation, interference with other recreation pursuits, and disruption to residents of the area. We believe that an expanded PIR would blight the entire area with noise and traffic, extending several miles along the river and extending all the way north to I-10.

We would remind you that millions of dollars and many years of planning by multiple county, state and federal agencies, non-profits, The Gila Indian Community, and the local residents of that area, have already been invested in converting the Salt/Gila/Agua Fria Rivers into THE best wildlife sanctuary/habitat in Maricopa County, if not the whole of Arizona. The place is already great, and the plans to expand the project are visionary to say the least. That effort would be seriously compromised by expansion of PIR.

There is also the matter of state funding for the road improvements. We recall that taxpayers paid for the bridge at 115th Avenue - whose only beneficiary was PIR. Our recollection is that it was a Republican perk - not popular with the public. Furthermore, we have been lead to believe that our state is presently in some financial crises.

In summary, we of Sonoran Audubon Society oppose expansion of the Phoenix International Raceway. We believe PIR is incompatible with long standing hopes and plans for that region of the West Valley.

Sincerely,

Charles Kangas
President, Sonoran Audubon Society

Enc.

Phoenix International Raceway

By Dwayne Fink

According to an article in the Arizona Republic (20 Apr 2003, D2), Phoenix International Raceway wants to greatly expand the number of events held there each year, and wants the public to pay for improvements to the roads serving the facility.

Presently, four major racing events are held at PIR each year. Bryan Sperber, the president of PIR, did not specify the number of events he is contemplating, but remarked favorably that a similar raceway in New York had had 10 races in 14 weeks. That is either a race or getting ready for one every week for nearly four months. Probably four months is the window of opportunity, weather wise, for New York. In Arizona we have year-round racing weather. You get the picture.

Chances are, birds and birders, or others who use the area for recreation or any purpose other than racing will just have to go elsewhere. The noise and crush of racing will blight maybe five to 10 miles of the river, and make life miserable for people living in the entire area. This is sobering considering how much money has gone into restoring the river habitat, and protecting Holly Acres from flooding.

The article states that "Sperber has enlisted Governor Janet Napolitano to find state funding to make road improvements around the track ---". Some of us still remember the details regarding the funding of the bridge across the Gila River at 115th Avenue. And I thought that Arizona was so short of money this year that we had to give up the Heritage Fund.