

# Casa Grande Ruins National Monument Expansion Proposal

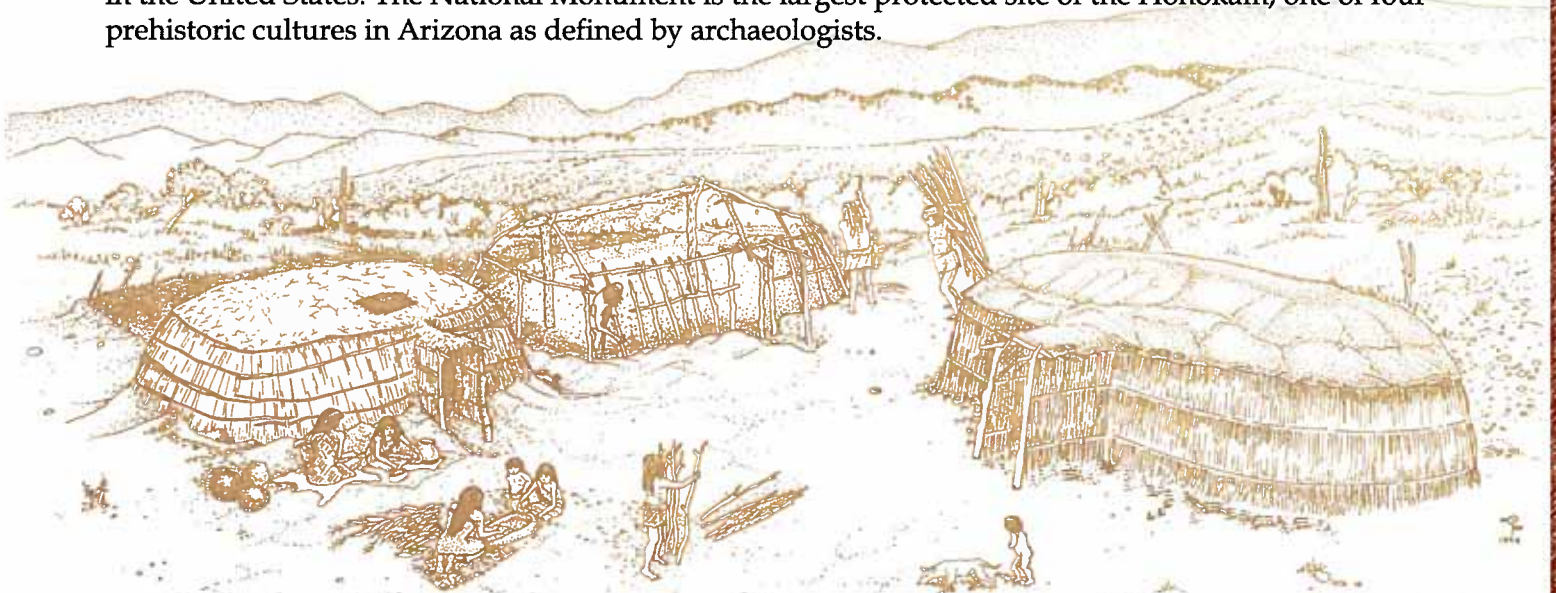


## Casa Grande Ruins



located along the Gila River in Coolidge, Arizona is one of Arizona's most famous cultural landmarks. It figures prominently in Akimel O'odham, Tohono O'odham and Hopi oral traditions. Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit missionary and early explorer described the Casa Grande site in his 1694 travel diary. He and other missionaries held mass there in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1892, three quarters of a square mile of the Casa Grande site was set aside as the Nation's first archaeological reserve. Twenty five years later President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the Casa Grande site a National Monument and placed it under the

management of the National Park Service. The Casa Grande Ruins National Monument preserves an ancient Hohokam farming community and "Great House," one of the largest prehistoric structures built in the United States. The National Monument is the largest protected site of the Hohokam, one of four prehistoric cultures in Arizona as defined by archaeologists.



The existing three quarters of a square mile area of the National Monument includes a portion of the massive Hohokam village associated with the "Great House," one of five large settlements strung like beads at regular intervals along the edge of a 22-mile long prehistoric canal that ran south of the Gila River. All together these villages formed a *Hohokam irrigation community* of perhaps ten thousand people joined together in making a living in a desert environment.

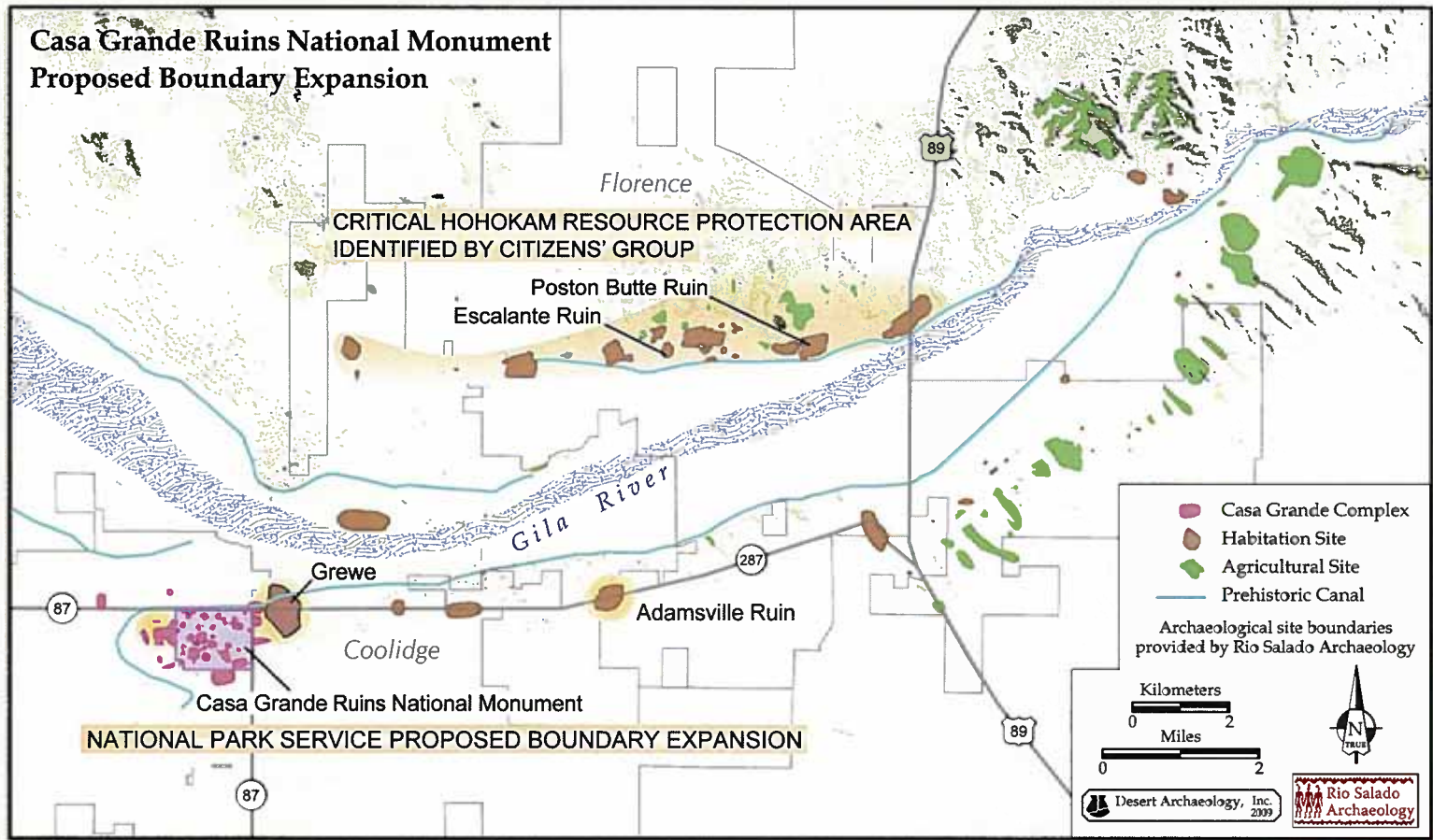
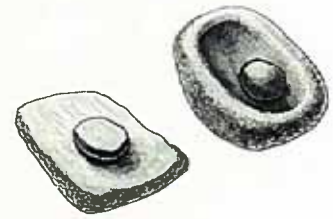
The proposed National Park Service boundary expansion of the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument will bring more of the original village and part of the prehistoric canal within the Monument boundaries. It also proposes to add a large portion of Adamsville, a second large village area upstream of Casa Grande. Some day a pedestrian trail from Casa Grande Ruin to Adamsville may allow visitors to experience Hohokam life by walking between two of its main civic and residential centers.

The proposed boundary expansion is a significant contribution to the preservation of our shared cultural heritage... **but we can do more!**

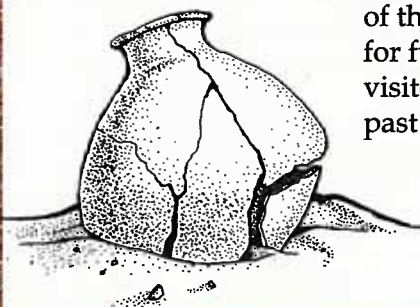


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A broad array of preservation advocates who are in strong support of the NPS proposed boundary expansion have come together to advocate for a more expansive preservation vision that includes the entire Hohokam irrigation community associated with the canal system north of the Gila River in Florence, Arizona. A short distance away from the Monument, this is an unparalleled preservation opportunity.



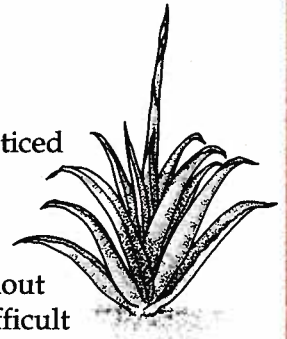
During the last 100 years much of Hohokam material culture has been lost as the Phoenix-Tucson metropolitan area became home to over 4 million people. Population projections indicate the area will double in population over the next thirty years thereby ensuring that much of what remains will be lost without further preservation action. Local communities such as Phoenix, Tucson and Mesa have preserved a part of their shared past by establishing public archaeological parks but collectively these parks represent a small fragment of the prehistoric cultural landscape that was once present in Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties. Apart from tribal lands, the Hohokam features that remain in the Coolidge-Florence area may be our last opportunity to preserve a more complete picture of the Hohokam culture. The proposed expansion of the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument is a unique opportunity to provide for future learning and understanding of our shared past that will provide residents, visitors and researchers a collective appreciation of the scale and breadth of this past civilization.



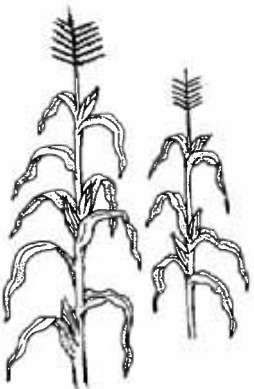
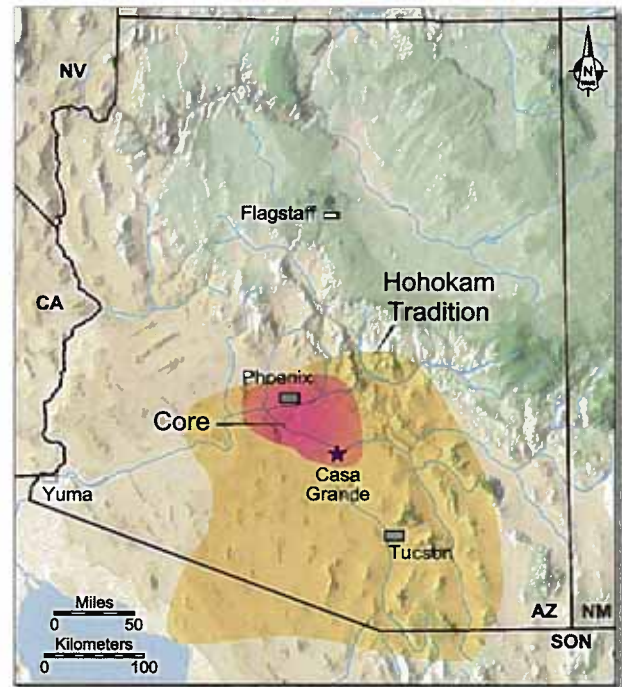
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## The Hohokam in the Middle Gila River Valley

The Hohokam cultural landscape stretched across much of central and southern Arizona. Occupying hundreds of square miles, the core area was located in the Phoenix basin along the middle Gila and lower Salt river valleys. Here, the Hohokam lived in villages and practiced irrigation agriculture for over a thousand years. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they built large canal systems that rivaled those of ancient Egypt, China and Middle East. At the same time they constructed walled villages around public plazas and prominent architectural features such as platform mounds. For reasons not fully understood, throughout the fourteenth century the Hohokam culture declined. Material traces of the culture are difficult to find after A.D. 1450, nearly a century before the arrival of Spanish explorers. Today, several Native American tribes, especially the Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham, claim ancestral links to the Hohokam. Their cultural traditions, together with on-going archaeology and continued public interest in Casa Grande Ruins, keep the legacy of the Hohokam alive to this day.



The social and political organization of the Hohokam living along the Lower Salt River and Middle Gila River valley during the time of the "Great House" is considered one of the most complex in American Southwest prehistory. The water that flowed year round in the Gila and Salt Rivers was the lifeblood of Hohokam culture. Irrigation canals diverted water from the main channel to maize and cotton fields, creating a bounty that sustained a large, permanent population residing within multiple villages. Two main canals served the Hohokam living in the Florence-Coolidge area; the 22 mile-long Casa Grande Canal on the south side of the river and the shorter 7-mile long Escalante canal on the north side of the Gila valley.



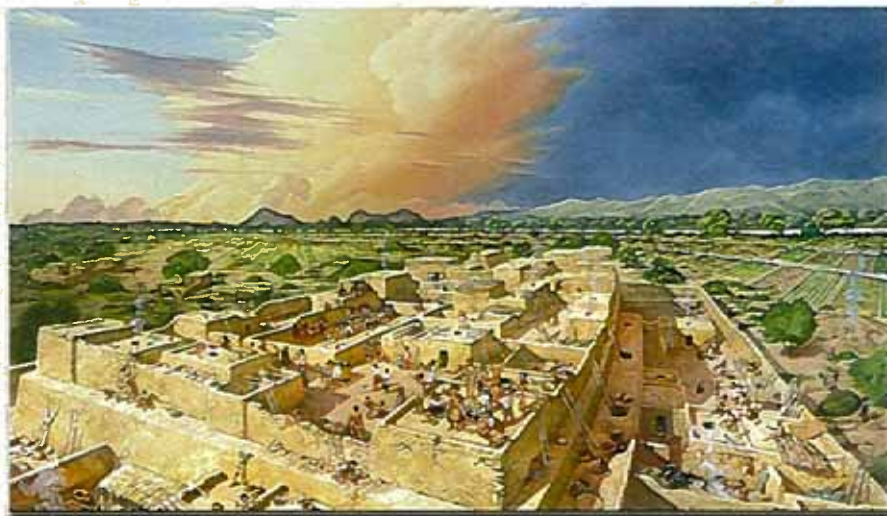
In prehistoric times the Escalante irrigation community was one of the dominant cotton producing areas of the Hohokam, much as the modern communities of Coolidge and Florence are today. Surprisingly, a remarkably large part of the Escalante irrigation community on the north side of the river has remained intact, including canal segments, pithouse villages, adobe compounds, dry land farming areas, irrigated farming areas, platform mounds, ballcourts, petroglyphs and a remarkable set of rock shrines which are Traditional Cultural Properties of the Akimel O'odham people of the Gila River Indian Community. Even earlier evidence of agricultural settlements along the Gila River can be found that date before A.D. 700, providing numerous snapshots in time that span a millennium.



## *Casa Grande Ruins National Monument Expansion Proposal*

Casa Grande Ruins' authorizing legislation establishes the Monument "in order that better provision may be made for the protection, preservation, and care of the ruins of the ancient buildings and other objects of prehistoric interest thereon." The statement of significance for the Monument underscores its unique role in the national park system: it is the only unit that preserves and interprets Hohokam culture for public education and enjoyment. The Monument's statement of purpose establishes the importance of preserving the ruins and related archaeology associated with the material culture of the Hohokam, but also cites the role of the monument in educating the public about the Hohokam culture.

The current National Park Service proposal includes several tracts associated with the Monument and the south side canal. A second citizen's proposal recommends a more expansive preservation vision that would include significant portions of the irrigation community along the entire Escalante canal system on the north side of the Gila River. Fulfilling the monument's purpose requires attention not only to protecting the ruins of the "Great House" and surrounding archeological sites, but to protecting their larger, regional context as well. A true appreciation of Hohokam culture will only be gained when significant components of entire landscapes are preserved and interpreted. We have a unique window of opportunity to ensure that Casa Grande Ruins National Monument does not become a postage stamp parcel lost in a modern urban sea.



*The time to act is now. Please join us in supporting legislation to expand the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument.*