

Endangered Cactus Role-Playing Debate
May, 2003

The Proposed Action

KB Homes, a major housing development corporation in southern Arizona, wishes to build a new housing project at the intersection of Alvernon and Los Reales Rd. in South Tucson. A survey of endangered Pima Pineapple Cactus found 10 individuals scattered throughout the 160-acre property. KB Homes has asked Pima County for a zoning variance to develop this property with homes. The Endangered Species Act requires that a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) outlining the plan for protecting the cacti on this property be created. KB Homes, seeking to minimize bad publicity, has called a public meeting where citizens may voice their concerns and offer suggestions for protecting the cactus.

(This is information about your character's role in the debate. This information should direct what your character says, how your character reacts and the way other groups perceive your character during the debate. Imagine yourself this person and what this person believes in. Please embellish these characters in a way consistent with the characters' core values—it will make the debate much more interesting.)

KB Homes and the Arizona Developers Association

Money is your primary motivation. Building and selling homes is your business and your attitude reflects this. You realize that homes in neighborhoods that incorporate elements of the natural landscape sell for more money but also cost more to develop. You believe that safe, affordable housing for Tucson families is more important than the survival of a handful of cacti. You also strongly believe that because KB Homes has purchased the land and they should be allowed to do whatever they want with it.

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South Tucson Chamber of Commerce

Your goal is to increase economic activity in the community. You would really like to see KB Homes develop the land. You believe that allowing KB Homes to build affordable houses in the area will stimulate the economy by providing jobs, encouraging more people to move into the community, and bringing more businesses like stores and restaurants into the area. Plus, an increase in the communities' population will result in more tax dollars for local schools and government programs. You also realize that one of the reasons that people move to Tucson is because they like the natural environment and we can't ignore endangered species.

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency

It is your job to protect federal wildlife resources and enforce endangered species protection laws. You are responsible for making sure that the HCP won't lead to the extinction of an endangered species. You have studied the ecology of the Pima pineapple cactus and believe that protecting the species' habitat is the most important step to ensuring its survival. Although plants can sometimes be moved to other places where there are no plans for development, they don't always survive in other areas where the habitat conditions aren't as good. You must balance pressure from environmentalists and developers to make sure that the Habitat Conservation Plan meets the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

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Tucson Native Plant Society

You represent the interests of local environmentalists. There are only a few places where this rare cactus lives, so you want to make sure the cacti aren't harmed by development. You believe that protecting native endangered plants like the Pima pineapple cactus is more important than a bunch of new houses. You think KB Homes is a big company and there's plenty of other land in Tucson that they could develop instead. Ideally, you would like the habitat to be set aside and protected from development, but your group has also helped to move cacti to new locations when development does occur.