

DARK SKIES

Coconino County is home to some of the highest quality and most accessible night skies in the world. Our star-filled night vistas are recognized worldwide, as iconic of Arizona as the Grand Canyon and the saguaro cactus.

County residents value star-filled night skies for their inspirational beauty. To ensure that our skies remain dark, the County and the City of Flagstaff have developed lighting ordinances that are among the most progressive in the U.S. One of the principal goals of these ordinances is to cap the overall amount of light and limit light trespass while allowing enough light for safety. Poorly designed lighting wastes energy and causes glare that decreases visibility and hinders public safety. Coconino County and Flagstaff have achieved worldwide recognition for their innovative leadership in the protection of dark skies. In 2001, Flagstaff became the first “International Dark Sky City.” Since that time, the County has taken a leadership role in developing lighting codes that have been a model worldwide.

This premier natural resource has fostered substantial investment in professional astronomical observatories in the county, including the Anderson Mesa Station of Lowell Observatory, the Navy Precision Optical Interferometer at Anderson Mesa, the U.S Naval Observatory Flagstaff Station, and the Discovery Channel Telescope. This is especially significant because the number of quality astronomical sites in the U.S. is decreasing rapidly because of light *pollution*. Coconino County is also home to artist James Turrell’s “natural observatory” at Roden Crater, a celebrated, landscape-scale, perceptual-light project that relies heavily on naturally dark night skies.

GOAL

The County shall continue to be a world leader in the preservation of dark skies.

POLICIES

33. The County recognizes the economic and social benefits of dark skies by implementing innovative lighting practices and technologies on County projects and facilities and in the regulation of others through the application of its ordinances and promotion of best practices.
34. The County promotes the retrofitting of nonconforming lighting and the removal of inappropriate lighting and will explore incentives to do so.
35. Property owners are encouraged to install only the level of outdoor lighting necessary for safety, security, and utility purposes.
36. Full shielding of all outdoor lighting, installation of low-pressure sodium or “narrow-spectrum” (AlInGaP) amber LED fixtures, and the use of other best available technologies shall be encouraged and enforced through the *Lighting Ordinance*.
37. The County will explore the expansion of the dark sky protection zones to include natural areas, heritage areas, and other wilderness sites.



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38. Areas near existing professional observatories or other dark-sky preservation areas shall be developed with special consideration for the impacts that development may have on dark skies.
39. The County will encourage a collaborative working relationship with neighboring Counties, state and federal agencies, sovereign tribal nations, and incorporated communities to protect dark skies in Coconino County and the surrounding region.
40. The County will work with partners, agencies, and other jurisdictions to minimize streetlights and their impacts on dark skies.

NATURAL QUIET

Another desirable community characteristic is natural quiet. Protecting natural soundscapes is becoming a serious issue in many national parks, natural areas, and tourist areas. Air traffic over the Grand Canyon, for example, has dramatically altered the natural soundscape of the park, affecting visitors, local residents, and wildlife. The NPS has worked to mitigate excessive noise in Grand Canyon National Park through policies that seek to protect, restore, and maintain a natural soundscape.

This issue is also important on a countywide level. On a daily basis, most residents are subjected to a wide variety of noise from roads, *off-highway vehicles (OHV)*, aircraft, railroads, commercial and industrial land uses, and neighborhoods. Residents have expressed interest in developing a noise ordinance that implements time guidelines and reasonableness standards. Noise should be considered when reviewing plans for new commercial and industrial developments, especially those located close to residential, open space, or recreation areas. Transportation noise can be mitigated using landscaped buffers or increased setbacks in residential areas adjoining major arterials, highways, and railways.

GOAL

Preserve natural quiet and work to mitigate and reduce the effects of noise pollution.

POLICIES

41. The impacts of noise generated by major commercial or industrial uses should be considered when reviewing development projects, especially when adjacent to residential and recreation areas.
42. Major developments and subdivisions shall consider the impacts of adjacent noise generators such as highways, railways, and airports, and mitigate for those impacts where feasible.
43. In order to provide areas of natural quiet for all residents and visitors, the County supports efforts of local communities and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to establish flight restrictions and no-flight zones over national monuments and wilderness areas.
44. The County shall explore the benefits of developing an ordinance related to noise and its impacts.