

# ARIZONA WILD



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## Mission Statement

The Arizona Wilderness Coalition's mission is to permanently protect and restore Wilderness and other wild lands and waters in Arizona for the enjoyment of all citizens and to ensure that Arizona's native plants and animals have a lasting home in wild nature. We do this by coordinating and conducting inventories, educating citizens about these lands, enlisting community support, and advocating for their lasting protection.

### Cover Photos:

*Scenic: Morning over the Big Horn Mountains. © Ian Dowdy*  
*Inset top to bottom:*

1. *Sonoran Institute partner Dave Richins (l) and Andy Laurenzi with the Center for Desert Archaeology (r) celebrate a successful reception for the Sonoran Desert Heritage campaign. © Ian Wilson*
2. *Friends of Saddle Mountain members showed their support at the rollout. © Ian Wilson*
3. *Rev. Marc McDonald (l), with Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church of Glendale, delivered the invocation at the event. On his right is Arizona's Official State Historian, Marshall Trimble, who gave the keynote speech. © Ian Wilson*

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# From the Director's Tent

Let's be honest. As of late, our great state of Arizona has been the source of less-than-flattering commentary and unspeakable tragedy. Permeating divisiveness has left many of us wondering where we are headed. Some have gone so far as to collect signatures to put "Baja, Arizona" on the ballot, which would cede lands south of the Gila River to a new state! This year's wildfires have also re-ignited old, tired arguments between those who have different ideas about how we manage our natural resources.

Once upon a time, it was different. In fact, Arizona has a strong tradition of bi-partisanship and civil political discourse. In previous issues of Arizona Wild, we have highlighted the amazing teamwork between Senator Barry Goldwater and Rep. Morris K. Udall as they charted course for protecting Arizona's wilderness. Other examples abound—the Groundwater Management Act (1980) and Growing Smarter (1998) to name several. At the core, Arizonans want their elected officials to work together solving problems and providing leadership on important issues. This fact has not changed.

A glimmer of hope for bi-partisanship appeared recently. On a May morning in the Maricopa County's West Valley, more than 50 elected officials, community leaders, and members of the press gathered to participate in the unveiling of a bold initiative focused on conserving the last, best wildlands of the Sonoran Desert. What's that? A visionary, proactive conservation initiative in THIS political environment? That's right. The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal is not your average environmental initiative. In fact, AWC and our partners didn't do much talking at the initiative's rollout. Instead, folks associated with Luke Air

Force Base, major corporate development firms (yes, developers), and the faith-based community went in front of the cameras to talk about the importance and value of protecting the desert. Arizona's Official State Historian, Marshall Trimble, anchored the event with a tale that spoke to the historical importance of the proposal. The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal enjoys, bar none, the most diverse and powerful base of support of any Arizona public lands initiative in the last 20 years (see page 3).

Through this effort, what we've realized is that aside from media-hyped conflicts in our Arizona communities, all sorts of people with diverse backgrounds and beliefs want desperately to protect Arizona's greatest natural asset: wild public lands. We can and will build a new vision for conservation. We refuse to accept defeat and we shed the old paradigms that ruled our way of thinking for too long.

On the following pages, I hope you enjoy learning more about Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal, among the other great initiative we're undertaking at AWC. Your involvement and support is the quintessential ingredient to success, and we thank you for being a part of the AWC team. Together, we can chart a new course for Arizona's conservation landscape, building success through fresh relationships and innovative collaborations. This is not only the best way forward, it is the only way.

Best regards,



Scott McCoy with Fighter Country Partnership (l) speaks with Kate Maracas (c), VP for Operations at Abengoa Solar and her colleague Sobia Naqui (r) at the Sonoran Desert Heritage rollout event on May 25. Photo: Ian Wilson



# Conservation in Action: The Unveiling of the Sonoran Desert Heritage Conservation Initiative

by Ian Dowdy, AICP

The room was quiet, save for the slight rustle of restless feet and the calm voice of Reverend Marc McDonald, with Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church in Glendale, as he prayed for help and guidance toward a successful completion of the Sonoran Desert Heritage conservation plan. His words faded away, and the room had filled with a diverse group of supporters for the broad proposal—developers, city officials, and businessmen to conservationists, game managers, and sportsmen. The meeting was a study in contrasts—a compilation of a diversity of interests, political affiliations, and values—all joined in a chorus of harmony to the common lyrics: “this is our land, now is the time to conserve it for now and forever.”

On May 25th, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition and its partners publicly released a bold vision for landscape conservation across the Sonoran Desert of western Maricopa County. Working tirelessly on stakeholder outreach and proposal drafts over the last several years, the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal now faces the public at-large, ready for additional input and final edits before being placed in decision-makers hands for congressional approval. The proposal entails a mix of conservation designations across more than 800,000 acres of public lands all west of the White Tank Mountains, including two new National Conservation Areas (NCAs), multiple wilderness units, and special management areas designed to protect wildlife linkages and recreational areas (see map inset).

## Practical Solutions

“The enormity of this task has been at the forefront of our minds over the last several years,” says Eric Gorsegner, Assistant Director of the Sun Corridor Legacy Program with the Sonoran Institute, which has been involved in the Sonoran Desert Heritage campaign since its inception more than 4 years ago. “From the very beginning, we looked only at practical solutions to conservation in western Maricopa County.”

The entirety of the proposal can be summarized in two words: pragmatic conservation. “The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal is bold yet achievable,” says Matt Skroch, executive director of the Arizona Wilderness Coalition. “We approached this proposal with a keen eye for involving a broad cross-section of interests who have a stake in public lands conserva-



AWC's Ian Dowdy presents the SDH proposal to the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce. © Julia Brooks

tion.” This philosophy has resulted in the early success of the proposal—measured by dozens of elected leaders, military interests, community developers, and other stakeholders who have voiced their support for the protection of the Sonoran Desert.

The Sonoran Desert Heritage lands contain some of the most breathtaking views, intact habitat, and wild country in the southwestern United States. Past conservation efforts, including the 1990 Arizona Desert Wilderness Act, have contributed to the protection of this vulnerable habitat, which suffers primarily from fragmentation due to the rapid growth of the Phoenix metro area due primarily to the installation of linear infrastructure like power lines and roadways and the increase of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use near populated areas. Over the last fifty years, vulnerable species have been in decline like the Sonoran Desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep, although adapted to survive in some of the most unforgiving habitat on the planet, have been unable to adjust to the rapid changes of recent years. As communities work to accommodate a doubling population of the Phoenix area in the coming half-century, conservationists must also consider ways to ensure a successful cohabitation of humans with our beautiful Sonoran Desert. Twenty years after the last congressional conservation action, it is high time that natural and recreation resources are also incorporated into long-range planning, which is what the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal aims to address.

From the start, the Sonoran Desert Heritage campaign was positioned to gain bipartisan support, which required careful evaluation of stakeholders and a sincere, transparent outreach process. AWC and partners took special care to approach users of these lands, including Luke Air Force Base, sportsmen, and the development community, among others. Our goal has been, and continues to be, the resolution of as many concerns as possible, serving to both develop a better proposal and build a broad base of support. The Sonoran Heritage



Sunbelt Holdings CEO John Graham (l) greets Fighter Country Partnership Executive Director Ron Sites (r) at the rollout reception. Both were speakers at the event. © Ian Wilson

coalition realized that a diverse group of supporters could only come through a diversified proposal. We realized that wilderness, although the gold standard for conservation, is only one component among other land classifications that together can protect an entire landscape, rather than a singular area. As such, our coalition began to consider how to diversify the proposal while remaining true to our conservation goals. The result of these discussions created the structure for the campaign: protection of the most critical and delicate habitat areas as wilderness while retaining the use of the land for most users in previously disturbed or lower ecologically significant areas through National Conservation Area and Special Management Area designations.

The structure of this concept resembles a nest filled with fragile eggs—the nest protects the eggs from outside forces much like a National Conservation Area protects the wilderness areas harbored within it. NCAs also provide other benefits including easier identification for the area, a consistent management plan from the land managing agency, and significant conservation values, while providing a great atmosphere for recreationists. With this combination of wilderness and NCA units, it increases the type and number of people who will benefit from and support the conservation plan.

## The Nuts and Bolts

After developing the project strategy, it was no small feat to identify the individual units and boundaries of the proposal. The coalition spent more than 8 years collectively inventorying the land, both in-person and with volunteers including AWC's former staff member Jason Williams, Ethan Gicker, Norm Watson,

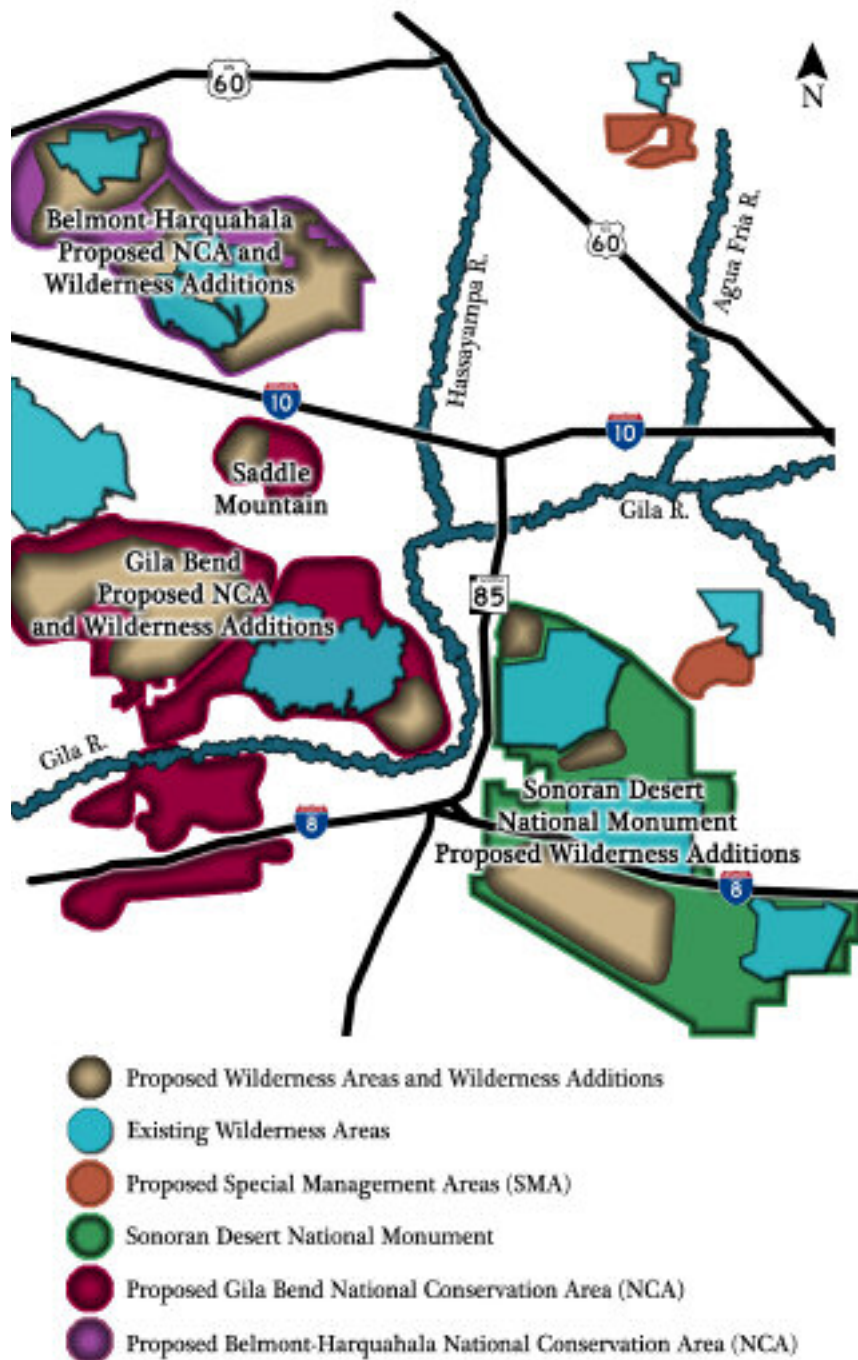


Former Arizona Game and Fish Commissioner Jennifer Martin (r) and Pastor Doug Bland (l), with the Community Christian Church in Tempe, chat at the event. © Ian Wilson



Sonoran Institute's Eric Gorsegner (r) discusses a map of the proposal with Arizona Republic reporter David Madrid. © Ian Wilson





For color maps, please visit [www.sonoranheritage.org](http://www.sonoranheritage.org).

and others, whose detailed analysis provided the backbone for several of the units—especially in the Sonoran Desert National Monument and Gila Bend Mountains. Based largely on this inventory, a rough plan began to take shape as units were drawn around existing roads, structures, mining operations, and other significant features that should be avoided, both for the integrity of the conservation unit and to limit conflicts with users of the land. Out of this process the wilderness units were crafted, creating the core of the proposal while ensuring that the public would have relatively easy access with cherry-stemmed roads and trails surrounding and often extending into the wilderness areas.

Once boundaries for the wilderness units were crafted, the coalition worked on the second objective: to nest proposed wilderness areas into larger National Conservation Areas. To accomplish this, a boundary was drawn to avoid private and state land holdings where necessary, while including as much of the valuable resource lands as feasible. Many of the areas that are proposed within the NCAs have extremely fragile resources, but do not qualify for protection as wilderness due to prior impacts and roads. Some of these areas include the valuable archeological resources along the Gila River near Gila Bend, which are among the most significant and prolific found anywhere in the Southwest. These, as well as natural resources and recreation values, are well suited to protection under

an NCA, as it will provide guidance to the BLM to ensure adequate management of these lands and the recreational interests that accompany them.

The Belmont-Harquahala NCA covers the incredible landscape north of Interstate 10 from the Belmont Mountains, across the existing Big Horn and Hummingbird Springs wilderness areas, and over the legendary Harquahala Peak. It includes the landscape around Black Butte near Aguila all the way down to the Burnt Mountain wildlife linkage, which provides a valuable corridor for animals like bighorn sheep and mule deer moving south into Saddle Mountain and the Gila Bend area. The Gila Bend Mountains NCA is even more expansive, extending from the valuable cultural resources of Red Rock Canyon along the Gila River west to the edge of the Eagletail Wilderness Area. From the north, the NCA covers Saddle Mountain all the way south to Sentinel Plain south of Interstate 8. Only with an NCA could such a broad area enjoy protection while still retaining usage rights for the majority of users.

As the conservation effort was formulated, unique challenges were brought to the attention of the coalition—issues that could be resolved in future legislation but were outside of the direct influence area of the NCAs and Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM). To assist in resolving these issues, two Special Management Areas

(SMAs) were identified: one in the Hieroglyphic Mountains in Peoria and another across Rainbow Valley in the Goodyear planning area. The Rainbow Valley SMA is intended to provide key wildlife linkages between the Estrella Mountains and the SDNM in anticipation of major infrastructure development in coming decades, as well as to accommodate major master planned developments through the southern Goodyear area. While the SMA will not stop roadways and other linear infrastructure development, it will require developers to accommodate wildlife movement by installing passages over or under the roadways.



Arizona State Senator John Nelson (l) speaks with Arizona Republic reporter David Madrid at the SDH reception. © Ian Wilson



Arizona Wildlife Federation rep Ben Altoneder (l) speaks with Anthony Smith, staff liaison with Rep. Paul Gosar's office. © Ian Wilson

The Hieroglyphic Mountains SMA is somewhat different in its objective to protect key environmental values in this unique, beautiful area just west of Lake Pleasant and south of the Hells Canyon wilderness area. Some of this unit is currently used by OHV enthusiasts in an area called the Boulders; this proposal will provide vehicle blueprint for more effective cooperative management between the BLM, Maricopa County, and other local and regional agencies that will ensure a more enjoyable recreational experience for the OHV user and the conservation community.

#### Broad Support and Next Steps

The May 25th press conference represented the breadth of outreach and support that has been integrated in the proposal. Military interests, religious leaders, ranchers, developers, municipal and state officials, politicians, conservationists and others in attendance, demonstrated that the Sonoran Desert Heritage effort was gaining momentum toward an introduction to Congress.

“We are the first generation given the responsibility for preservation of our desert lands,” noted Marshall Trimble, Arizona’s Official State Historian, at the press event. “We have inherited a challenge that must be dealt with and we must step in and face that challenge. Once the land is lost it is gone forever.”

John Graham of Sunbelt Holdings, part owner of Douglas Ranch, one of the largest developments in Arizona and sits adjacent to the proposal, summarized the collaborative transparent process in his statement at the press conference: “I also am very, very proud of the effort that is going on for this wilderness area—in that it is exactly the process that I think everybody needs to embark and be part of which is basically a civil and friendly dialogue . . . I think this effort is testimony to the way the process can work should work and is working.” Other speakers included Jill Kusy-Hegardt from DMB Associates Inc. and Scott McCoy representing Fighter Country Partnership.

The proposal continues on its long public outreach effort and will be featured at a number of public meetings and forums throughout the remainder of the year. The broader public will be engaged from this point forward in a variety of forums including open houses, public meetings, and community engagements to ensure that any remaining issues are addressed as much as possible before formal legislation is introduced in Congress. For more information and to get involved, please visit [www.sonoranheritage.org](http://www.sonoranheritage.org).

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Ian Dowdy is conservation outreach associate for the Arizona Wilderness Coalition, working out of our Phoenix office. He lives in Buckeye.



# The Great Bend of the Gila: Robbins Butte to Sears Point

by Andy Laurenzi

One of the 20 largest rivers in the continental United States, the 650-mile-long Gila is the defining river of the Southwest. The lower portion of the river, from its confluence with the Salt River in the Phoenix area to where it joins the lower Colorado River, was a meeting place of cultures, ancient hunter/gatherers from the west and east, the enigmatic Patayan culture and the later Hohokam culture, and settled farmers from the Salt and middle Gila valleys. This section of the Gila River was the primary linkage between the California deserts, the lower Colorado River valley and the Gulf of California with the central and northern portions of Arizona—the Hohokam cultural heartland. In more recent times, this area defines the cultural landscape of the Yuman people of the lower Colorado River region and Piman-speaking groups of central and southern Arizona. Eight Arizona tribal entities include all or a portion of this area within their tribal claims area. Ancient paths, messages in stone, earth figures, large bottomland village sites, and hilltop fortifications remain today as a legacy to these prehistoric people and their modern ancestors.

The Great Bend of the Gila River is a cultural landscape that has endured for thousands of years. Much has changed but much remains of this rich cultural heritage. The Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal seeks to manage much of this area as an integrated landscape that brings together people and place across time.

## The Hohokam

Environmental constraints on this frontier are extreme: it is the hottest and driest portion of Arizona, with average annual rainfall of 5.8 inches and summer temperatures exceeding 120 degrees. The Gila River was critical to survival. The Hohokam constructed vast irrigation networks to support their thriving villages with their spacious plazas, large mounds and monuments, and ritual items that signaled participation in the Hohokam tradition. The absence of these characteristics west of Painted Rock Park defined the western frontier of the Hohokam. Geography favored the Great Bend of Gila River for travel and trade. As the closest riverine villages between the Gulf of California and south-central Arizona, the Great Bend of the Gila Hohokam villages played important roles in regional economic systems and as cultural cross-roads. Shell ornaments from marine animals found along the Pacific suggest that this area also served as a gateway to the California deserts and Pacific coast.

The association of multiple cultures in this frontier zone created a unique archaeological record. While modern agriculture has removed the surface features of many of these large villages in the region (most notably on the east side of the river), invaluable cultural resources remain. Large hilltop and hillside fortifications at Robbins and Power Buttes and in the rugged canyons of the Gila Mountains, and several large ballcourt and platform mound villages that may have been continuously occupied for over 1,000 years, remain intact in many areas. Another key site includes the platform-temple mound at Gatlin Site National Historic Landmark, managed today by the Town of Gila Bend as a cultural heritage park.

## Stone Messages

The petroglyph sites along the river corridor of the Gila River are numerous and spectacular, including several of the largest petroglyph concentrations in the arid West. With designs that range from the early Western Archaic Tradition (thousands of years old) thru historic graffiti, they stand as a testament to the travelers and residents of this parched land. These images in rock illustrate the high traffic of this cultural crossroads, with designs reflecting both Hohokam and Patayan influences. In the short stretch from Painted Rocks Dam to Sears Point, a very distinctive sub-style of Patayan rock art occurs that has not been found anywhere else.

On the flatter terraces and mesas bordering the river and above the petroglyph areas, earth figures and a great variety of rock alignments on the surface of the land can be found. These fragile patterns come in the form of cross alignments, circles, rock piles, ceremonial pathways, geometric and anthropomorphic figures drawn in the desert pavement. Some of them seem to have alignments with winter and sum-

mer solstice markers that establish alignments with mountain peaks in the distance, such as Four Peaks, Oatman Mountain, and Woolsey Peak.

## Paths through Time

As a critical meeting place of prehistoric cultures and uniquely situated as a crossroads to the California deserts, the Gulf of California, and the Hohokam heartland of central and southern Arizona, trails were an integral component of the Great Bend of the Gila River area. The product of regular foot travel, the worn paths through the desert pavement are unique in lasting several thousands of years and can still be seen in certain places. Together with petroglyphs and related rock features, they formed a traditional communication and mobility infrastructure that today we can only superficially appreciate. O'odham people refer to these trails as part of a ritual landscape that generates a shared knowledge of O'odham geography, significant places, and the connections among sacred sites and the spiritual events that happen there.

When European visitors to the Southwest first set out to explore the new frontier, they employed Native American guides who traveled the well worn paths of their ancestors. Subsequent travelers up through the recent past continued to rely on these ancient trails, which in places became the nuts and bolts of our modern transportation network. Within the Great Bend of the Gila River, Spanish explorers Kino and Anza were followed by military men—Kearney, Cooke, and Parke—whose trail and road building handiwork became the Southern Emigrant Route, a major trail for 49ers and early settlers to the area. This same route would soon become the favored route of early mail lines like the Butterfield Overland Stage Route. Years later, the Southern Pacific Railroad became the third transcontinental rail line in the United States and once again, the Gila River Valley was chosen route of travel. Automobiles soon followed in these same corridors with Highway 80 and Interstate 8. Today, the Juan de Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail passes through portion of this area and may contain segments that most closely resemble the landscape

encountered by Juan Bautista de Anza.

To preserve, commemorate, and interpret for public education and enjoyment this rich cultural legacy, a broad coalition of citizens have come together to promote the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal, which includes much of the Great Bend of the Gila area. Unfortunately, with each passing year, more of the landscape and the archaeological record left upon it is degraded by a multitude of uses. Easy vehicular access to prehistoric sites is well known to facilitate looting and vandalism, and unrestricted motorized use causes inadvertent damage from tire tracks. Some the cultural resources exist as fragile patterns on the land; several passes from a vehicle destroy this irreplaceable resource forever. Wilderness and other special management area designations will help ensure that vehicular use is managed to protect sensitive cultural resources. It is of equal importance that management take an integrated landscape-level approach guided principally by the preservation and enjoyment of this entire cultural legacy—not merely a fragment of it. The time to act is now before more of our precious heritage is lost to future generations.

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Andy Laurenzi is the Southwest field representative for the Center for Desert Archaeology, a regional partner on the Sonoran Desert Heritage Conservation Initiative – [www.cdarc.org](http://www.cdarc.org).



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## WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

# Bison-Hybrids Threaten Grand Canyon National Park

by Kim Crumbo

**T**he Grand Canyon region differs from the Great Plains in more ways than topography. Since at least Pleistocene times, 10,000 or so years ago, the arid Grand Canyon North Rim forests and grasslands evolved without bison or any other herbivore larger than deer and pronghorn. Consequently, the region's rich diversity of native wildlife depends on forest, meadows, and other grasslands not impaired by grazing. The arrival in the Southwest of tens of thousands of domestic cattle, beginning in the 1880s, ushered in a century of environmental degradation adversely affecting hundreds of native species as ecological conditions deteriorated. Grand Canyon National Park escaped most of the adverse effects of otherwise ubiquitous grazing.

During the early 20th century, enthusiastic—if ecologically uninformed—entrepreneurs embarked on hybrid breeding experiments with cattle to produce a “super cow.” The so-called “catalo” experiment failed to produce the desired super strain of livestock, and their offspring now threaten the genetic purity of wild bison. Today, conservationists struggle to protect the few remaining genetically pure wild bison.

One of those early 20th century crossbreeding experiments occurred on grasslands adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park's North Rim country, now called the House Rock Valley Wildlife Area, which is managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Over the past few decades drought, fires, and most likely overgrazing resulted in movement of the once constrained herd from the 60,000-acre House Rock Valley to the more verdant and productive higher elevations of the Kaibab Plateau, including Grand Canyon National Park. (Larson et al. 2009:2). During the last 10 years, the herd has nearly tripled in size from an average of 100 animals maintained in the wildlife area to more than 300 within the park.

“Bison-cattle hybrids are a backcountry problem at Grand Canyon National Park,” says Kevin Dahl, Arizona program manager with the National Parks Conservation Association. “They undoubtedly compete with native species and destroy habitat, creating impacts that no one has adequately studied. The Park Service needs a plan to remove them, and work with adjacent land managers to make sure they don't return.”

Bison-hybrids are in fact the rough equivalent of two cows with one mouth—“super cows”—regarding their ability to inflict ecological damage. Alien to the Grand Canyon ecosystem, they consume grasses and herbs essential for the park's many native species ranging from invertebrates to deer. These hybrids trample and foul wetlands and springs harboring an array of rare, often unique life forms, including tiger salamanders, tiger beetles, and numerous wetland plants.

Bison-hybrids also constitute a serious ecologic concern for the Kaibab National Forest adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park, for reasons similar to the impacts occurring inside the park. The Forest Service's current effort to protect wetlands and manage cattle, generally through fencing, is proving futile in constraining the more powerful hybrids, without substantial costs to reinforce these features.

Although the state agency “manages” the hybrid buffalo herd and retains a modest hunting license fee,

addressing the substantial economic and ecological costs is left to the federal agencies. While the National Park Service has repeatedly expressed concern regarding bison-hybrid's negative impact, and acknowledge their legal requirement to remove this non-native species from the park, the agency remains painfully resistant to doing so. Conservationists are struggling to protect and restore bison within its historic range of the greater Yellowstone and Great Plains. The

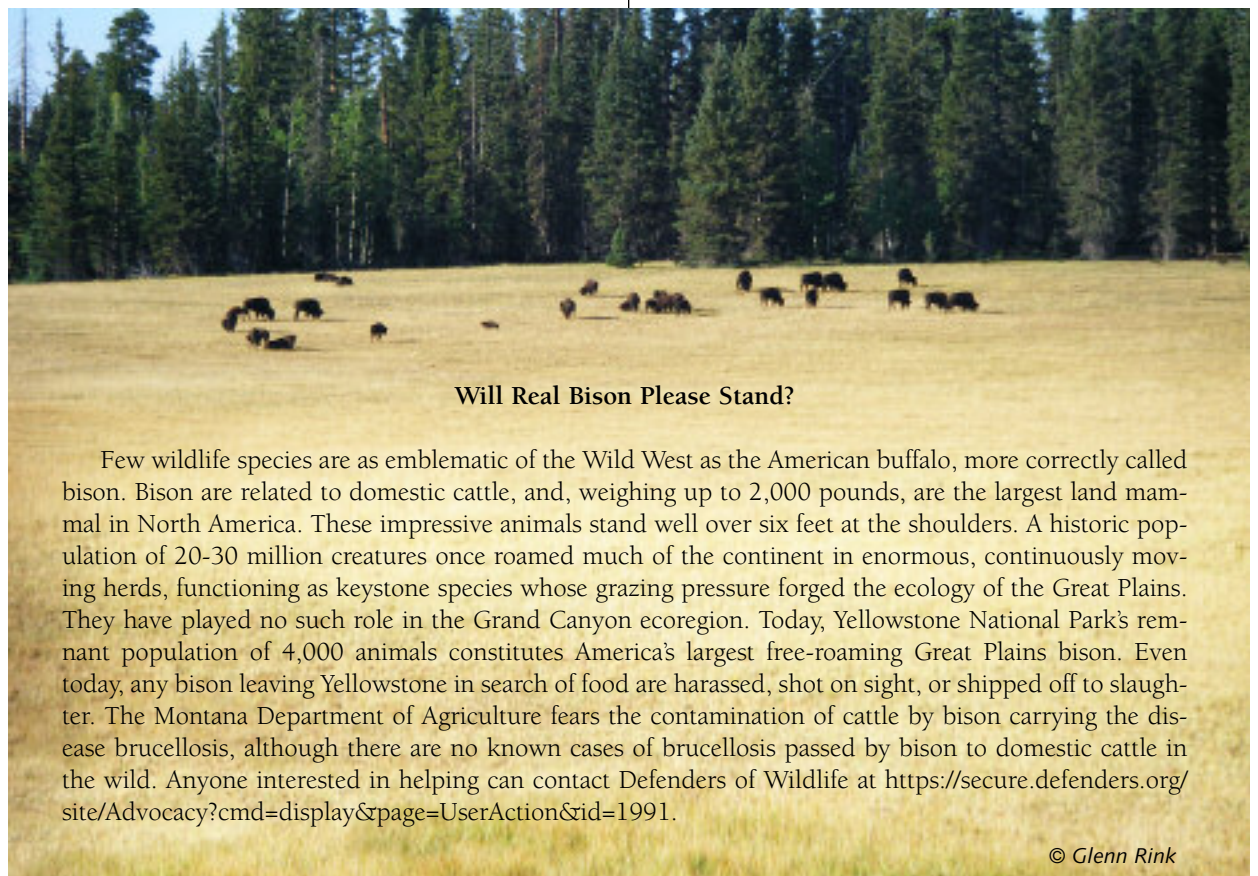
general public, rightly concerned about this iconic species, will have a hard time understanding why “buffalo” don't belong at Grand Canyon. It is up to the agency, with significant help from the conservation community, to explain the problem and to develop an effective, humane approach to protecting the Park's native creatures and plant communities. In the meantime, conservationists are growing impatient with an agency whose *raison d'être* is to protect the natural and cultural values entrusted to their staff and organization. The Arizona Wilderness Coalition and its affiliates, including Grand Canyon Wildlands Council, are actively encouraging the Park Service to do just that.



Bison hybrids at the North Rim. © Jessica Pope

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*Kim Crumbo is conservation director with the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council and serves on the Board of Directors for the Arizona Wilderness Coalition.*



### Will Real Bison Please Stand?

Few wildlife species are as emblematic of the Wild West as the American buffalo, more correctly called bison. Bison are related to domestic cattle, and, weighing up to 2,000 pounds, are the largest land mammal in North America. These impressive animals stand well over six feet at the shoulders. A historic population of 20-30 million creatures once roamed much of the continent in enormous, continuously moving herds, functioning as keystone species whose grazing pressure forged the ecology of the Great Plains. They have played no such role in the Grand Canyon ecoregion. Today, Yellowstone National Park's remnant population of 4,000 animals constitutes America's largest free-roaming Great Plains bison. Even today, any bison leaving Yellowstone in search of food are harassed, shot on sight, or shipped off to slaughter. The Montana Department of Agriculture fears the contamination of cattle by bison carrying the disease brucellosis, although there are no known cases of brucellosis passed by bison to domestic cattle in the wild. Anyone interested in helping can contact Defenders of Wildlife at <https://secure.defenders.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&rid=1991>.

© Glenn Rink



# Outdoor Recreation Makes a Big Impact on Arizona's Economy

by Ian Dowdy, AICP

Most conservationists can make a good argument for wilderness and protected areas. Habitat protection, endangered species, biodiversity, land-use planning, and recreation opportunities—the list is long and compelling to most people. But with Arizona's unemployment rate at 9.1%, it should be no surprise that the economy is also a primary public concern. But this provides us with the opportunity to highlight a lesser known fact about conservation: it's good for the economy, too.

Although not a new concept, the economic value of protected areas and quiet recreation has been recently emphasized as the economy remains at a desert tortoise's pace of growth. The recession has brought out new and creative ways to laud projects and initiatives as "job-creating" but few can hold a candle to the economic engine that public land—in its natural condition—provides.

To some, protected areas might seem antithetic to economic development—keeping industry, mining, and machinery off of land doesn't seem to be a great way to create economic value. What many don't understand is that the value of these lands for ecosystem services, tourism and quiet recreation is unparalleled, outpacing any financial opportunity that more extractive uses could ever bring.

A 2011 study by Arizona State University identified how valuable outdoor recreation is to Arizona's economy. Among other things, the study lauds the 86,000+ Arizona jobs, \$371 million in sales tax revenue, and more than \$5 billion in retail sales across the state that are supported by active outdoor recreation. The study highlights the significant sources of revenue to the state from sustainable outdoor recreation on protected public lands, including high quality gear and equipment manufacturing and retail; outfitter services; accommodations, food services, and other amenities; and conferences and trade shows.

Additionally, a 2010 Outdoor Industry Association report found that 25% of Arizonans participate in various camping activities, 27% perform trail activities like hiking and backpacking, and 24% enjoy wildlife

viewing activities—all of which relate well to wilderness and other land conservation efforts. Hence the economic stimulus of our wild lands: conservation efforts protect the economic value of these amenities while ensuring a sustainable economic future, better community and physical health, and a more attractive environment for people to enjoy.

"We've always known that conservation was good for our state, but being able to show the hard numbers to wilderness skeptics gives us more credibility with planners, legislators, and civic leaders in Arizona's local communities," says Kate Mackay, Deputy Director of the Arizona Wilderness Coalition (AWC).

AWC invested field resources in a door to door canvass in the West Valley this spring, talking with small business owners across Glendale, Peoria, and Surprise. Our task: to speak with business owners about the value of the environment, and to gain critical insight into different perspectives on the value of nature for small business. We spoke with hundreds of small businesses, continually impressed with the strong message these folks conveyed: protecting the environment is good for Arizona, and good for business. As part of our outreach efforts, four dozen small businesses signed a letter supporting the Sonoran Desert Heritage campaign, which aims to bring permanent conservation areas to public lands in the West Valley. ([www.sonoranheritage.org](http://www.sonoranheritage.org))

Although their names will likely never be found on the Fortune 500, small businesses of Arizona are the driving engine of the economy, employing people and providing necessary goods and services to Main Streets all across the state. Recognizing the economic value of conservation, these supporters of the Sonoran Desert campaign leaped at the opportunity to influence additional conservation efforts, mirroring the support that the effort has received all over the West Valley.

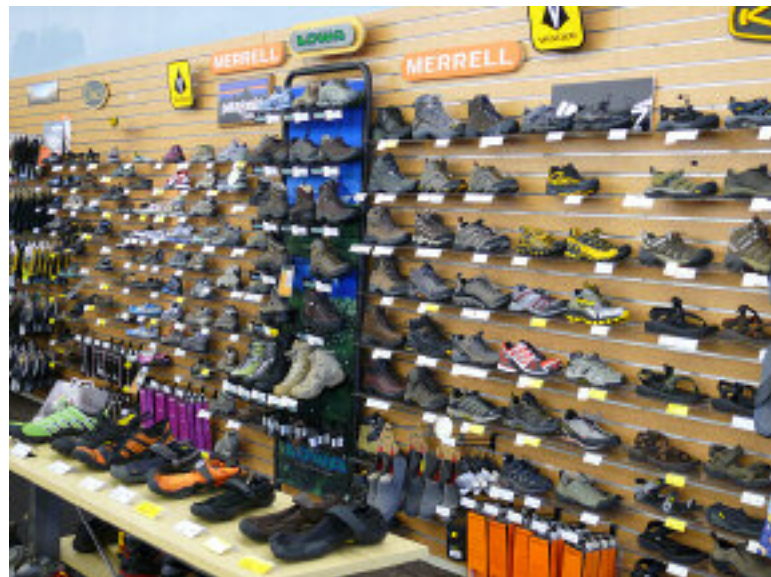
Now as we begin to hold public meetings and open houses to garner additional support for West Valley conservation efforts, we have a new tool to use to develop a broader network of allies. Armed with studies and common sense, the hope

is that the demographics of the conservation community can be broadened with champions of all stripes and backgrounds. Perhaps at future AWC events, bolo-ties and four-in-hand knots will co-habitate as traditional cactus-huggers and capitalists meet on common ground and for a common cause. Conservation is good for everyone on some level, protecting open space, habitat, recreation values, clean air and water, and of course—business.

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*Ian Dowdy is AWC's Conservation Outreach Associate based in Phoenix. He is a certified land planner and lives in Buckeye.*

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor



A shoe display (top) and shoppers peruse outdoor gear at Summit Hut in Tucson. Photo courtesy, Summit Hut.



Grand Canyon hikers. Photo courtesy, Summit Hut and Dana Davis.



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**"This is an exciting time for the 4th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival!"**

says Carla Olson, event coordinator planning the festival with the Arizona Wilderness Coalition. "We're in a great position to raise awareness about conservation issues throughout the West. With the recent Wallow Fire and others, our feature—the Aldo Leopold film, *Green Fire*—is especially poignant for those who explore and appreciate Arizona's wild areas." This year, we're delighted to have community organizations providing information and opportunities to get involved with conservation issues locally, as well as special visitors from the Phoenix Zoo, electronics recycling, new member incentives, raffles, and more!

Bring your unwanted electronics to the festival and recycle them with **youchange**, a Scottsdale-based electronics recycling company with clients worldwide. Donate your **youchange** earnings to AWC for an extra good turn!

The festival itself, the largest environmentally-focused film festival in the nation, will help the Arizona Wilderness Coalition build membership, raise much-needed funds, and increase public awareness of our mission to protect and restore wilderness and other wild lands and waters in Arizona for the enjoyment of all citizens and to ensure that Arizona's native plants and animals have a lasting home in wild nature. This is the 4th year that AWC has brought the festival to the Valley.

Our feature this year is the 2011 film, **Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time**, highlighting how Arizona shaped Leopold's vision as an iconic land and wildlife advocate. Our special guest has a starring role in the film: Don Hoffman, AWC's former executive director and current chairman of our Board of Directors, will speak briefly on his role in the film's production and living and working for more than 30 years in the footsteps of Leopold, in Arizona's White Mountains region.

Before intermission, we showcase several shorter films that cover a variety of environmental issues, and you'll get a chance to learn more about the **Sonoran Desert Heritage initiative**, our exciting new local campaign to protect West Valley public lands – [www.sonoranheritage.org](http://www.sonoranheritage.org).

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## DID YOU KNOW!

# Attacks Against Wilderness Heating Up in Congress

by AWC Staff

The following is a summary of three particularly bad attempts at rolling back protections for Arizona's special public lands. While AWC maintains a positive vision for land and water conservation across our State, 2011 has brought significant challenges to existing policies and laws intended to protect our wilderness and natural resources. We have not ignored these threats, and are currently working to ensure that our existing protected areas remain in good stead. We ask our members to contact their congressional representatives to speak against these proposed laws. You can call your representative by dialing 1-800-828-0498, or visiting <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/>

### Disappearing Act: The BLM's Wild Lands Policy

Last December, with much fanfare among western conservationists, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar directed the BLM to protect its lands with "wilderness characteristics." The move was a long-awaited answer to a 2004 settlement the Bush Administration conjured up with Utah that barred the BLM from recommending wilderness and doing much of anything that would put areas off-limits to drilling and off-road vehicles.

In Arizona, Salazar's new policy immediately affected more than 2 million acres of unprotected, wild Sonoran Desert. The BLM began to move to protect those areas through their planning processes. AWC re-submitted citizen wilderness inventories that identified dozens of areas threatened by off-road vehicles and mining. Everything was great, or so we thought.

While more than 80 local elected officials (17 from Arizona) wrote to Secretary Salazar with praise for his move, extractive industry backers worked to kill the new policy. During the April negotiations on the national budget, the Wild Lands Policy found itself victim to political deal-making. Attached to the bud-

get deal – which most lawmakers agreed to vote for – was a "rider" written by an Idaho congressman that denied any and all funds for implementation of the Wild Lands Policy. Within a matter of months, the Wild Lands Policy was hamstrung.

Consequently, Secretary Salazar recently issued a statement acknowledging that the policy is dead, at least for now.

Today, the Wild Lands Policy may be gone for good. If the Obama Administration and lawmakers don't fight to remove the funding freeze in next year's budget, the policy will probably wither and die. Millions of acres of citizen documented wilderness-quality lands hang in the balance.

The Wild Lands Policy was actually never intended to designate more areas as wilderness; rather it provided a management approach intended to maintain opportunities for solitude, backcountry recreation, and naturalness. Mountain bike use would have continued. The BLM could even open the areas up for development if they had cause. These facts didn't get in the way of painting the policy as an elitist conspiracy to lock lands up.

### "Border" bill would exempt Department of Homeland Security from public land and public health laws

In an unprecedented move, Utah Congressman Rob Bishop, chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, is championing a bill that will exempt the Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) from 36 laws intended to conserve our nation's natural resources and public health, including the Wilderness Act. H.R. 1505, dubbed the National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act, would give DHS unfettered control over all lands within 100 miles of the United States land and sea borders. If enacted into law, the exemptions would be permanent and absolute, allowing DHS to engage in any conceivable action without public, judicial, or administrative oversight. During testimony in front of lawmakers in July, former Solicitor of the Department of Interior remarked "this is the most breathtakingly extreme legislative proposal of its kind I have ever seen."

Already, DHS has employed limited waiver authority over laws in its quest to construct 700 miles of fencing along the U.S. Mexico Border. While previous waivers have removed the rule of law for fence construction on federal lands, H.R. 1505 covers all lands and any activities associated with the goal of "securing the border." Access could be cut off, species could go extinct, and land or water could be polluted – all with no recourse, oversight, or power to remedy.

AWC cannot overestimate the wrongheadedness of this proposed law, and joins the diverse voices speaking in opposition to such an unprecedented concentration of power in an unelected, administrative unit of government. Wilderness areas would be one of many casualties of the law, including crown jewels such as Saguaro National Park, Chiricahua National Monument, and the Coronado National Memorial.

H.R. 1505 has little to do with protecting our nation's national security, and a lot to do with dismantling public laws carefully constructed over the last 100 years.

While AWC supports collaboration and action between land managers and DHS to protect our country, this bill goes way too far.

In a recent Arizona Republic story, AWC's Matt Skroch addressed the issue: "It's about balance. Border security and natural resources are both very important. They can work

with one another, not against one another. This waiver authority would set the clock back a decade."

### Arizona's Roadless Areas and Wilderness Study Areas Threatened

In late July, Congress also considered an anti-environment bill (H.R. 1581) that seeks to abandon the widely popular Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which currently protects almost 1.3 million acres of

AWC is quoted in this front page June 13, 2011 edition of the Arizona Republic.



Motorized tracks scar desert soils near the historic Butterfield Trail in the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Photo: Jason Williams



# Short Takes

## Welcome Meghan and Carla!

AWC recently welcomed two stellar new staff members to our energetic ranks! Meghan Mix began working with AWC in the spring of 2011. She manages the everyday functions of the organization, including bookkeeping, membership, fundraising, and local outreach/event coordination.



Meghan Mix

Meghan is a native of the Pacific Northwest. She received her B.A. in Geology and Anthropology from Whitman College in 2004 and has worked for and with several environmental nonprofits in Washington and Oregon. In 2008, she moved to rural Southern Arizona, where she fell in love with the wild lands of the desert. After a brief foray back north to the Olympic Peninsula, she returned to Arizona in 2011 and is very excited to be in Tucson! Meghan's interests include conservation, farming/local food advocacy, sustainable design, photography, hiking, and cross-cultural studies.

Carla Olson has been tangentially involved with AWC since 2004, becoming the go-to coordinator for special events in the fall of 2010 – including the 4th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival (see page ). To the events coordinator position, Carla brings extensive experience in community and event programming, specializing in volunteerism, outdoor recreation, and the arts. A self-proclaimed “Jane of all Trades”, she is up for any challenge—indoors or out. While having a deep-rooted passion for all things related to water (be sure to ask about her days of whale research), the mountains have called her name and she prefers to spend her time listening to the wisdom they hold. Carla received her Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Michigan State University, with a focus in the natural sciences and behavioral studies. She brings a unique spin to every adventure with her mix of subtle wit and fascination of behavioral ecology. Life favorites include her two dogs; partner Elias; Scrabble, and microbrews.



Carla Olson

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## M&I Bank “Casual for a Cause” Donates to AWC!

The Arizona Wilderness Coalition was the grateful recipient of the April 2011 Casual for a Cause donation, sponsored statewide by M&I Bank. Casual for a Cause is sponsored by the bank's Employee Club and helps generate awareness and funds for various nonprofit groups throughout our communities. Employees donate a minimum of \$5 and get to wear jeans to work on a specifically chosen day. The organizations supported are chosen by the Employee Club; selection is based on an application that has been submitted from



an M&I Bank employee who is involved in the local group they are nominating. Employees who donated were provided with an Arizona Wilderness Coalition sticker to proudly wear on that organization's Casual for a Cause Day. This is the second year in a row that AWC has benefitted from M&I Bank employee involvement and support. April's collection gifted AWC with more than \$500!

Thank you M&I Bank!



Towel Creek in the Hackberry Inventoried Roadless Area, an AWC-proposed wilderness on the Coconino NF, with the middle Verde River and Cedar Bench Wilderness in the background. Photo: AWC

Arizona's National Forests from additional road building. Included in the bill is the abandonment of Arizona's two remaining BLM Wilderness Study Areas: Cactus Plain and Baker Canyon.

The “Roadless Rule”, which underwent more than 600 public hearings across the country and stands as one of the most popular rule-makings in the Forest Service's history, is intended to protect forested watersheds from further degradation while also conserving quiet recreation such as hiking, equestrian use, and wildlife viewing. The policy, which is now 10 years old, marks a fiscally responsible response to a backlog of hundreds of millions of dollars for road maintenance and public safety improvements.

In June of this year, AWC organized a statement from 20 conservation, angler, and mountain-bike groups that urges Arizona's federal lawmakers to oppose H.R. 1581:

“For more than 10 years, Arizonans have lived with and benefited from the 2001 Roadless Rule. For more than 20 years we have enjoyed our state's WSAs. The ecological, recreational, and economic benefits of unroaded areas in Arizona are straightforward and clear. While these areas represent a small fraction of our public lands, they pay large dividends to our state's health and economy. With years of public engagement and support behind them, it is not appropriate to remove protections for these areas in such a unilateral way.”

H.R. 1581 is unfortunately moving through the legislative process. In coming months, AWC will be working to ensure its defeat, including asking our members to call their congressional representatives and urging them to oppose this ill-sighted bill.

In a radical overreach, H.R. 1505 would exempt DHS from 36 laws within 100 miles of U.S. land and sea borders:

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act
- National Historic Preservation Act
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Clean Air Act
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act
- Safe Drinking Water Act
- Noise Control Act
- Solid Waste Disposal Act
- Superfund Law, or CERCLA
- Archeological and Historic Preservation Act
- Antiquities Act
- Historic Sites Act
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Farmland Protection Policy Act
- Coastal Zone Management Act
- Wilderness Act
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act
- National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act
- Fish and Wildlife Act
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
- Administrative Procedure Act
- Otay Mountain Wilderness Act
- California Desert Protection Act
- National Park Service Organic Act
- National Park System General Authorities Act
- National Parks and Recreation Act
- Arizona Desert Wilderness Act
- section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899 (navigable waters)
- Bald And Golden Eagle Protection Act
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act
- Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act.



## WILDERNESS TO WATCH

# Off-Roaders Take to Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

by AWC Staff

In 1990, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge became home to one of the largest wilderness complexes in the lower 48 states. With a delicate, unique low-desert ecosystem, Cabeza has been a long-time favorite for desert rats who sought out its stark beauty. The refuge still hosts one of the most critically endangered mammals on the continent – the Sonoran pronghorn antelope.

In April, the Cabeza Prieta Refuge manager began permitting off-road vehicles (ORVs) for entry into the refuge. Despite a spiderweb of unauthorized routes (about 8000 miles!) and a decade-plus legacy of impacts from border-related incursions and enforcement, the refuge says they must allow ORVs to travel through their lands. In past years, the Refuge has not allowed ORVs due to resource concerns.

Beginning in the late 1990's, Cabeza began to enter



More than 8,000 miles of unauthorized routes have carved up the refuge. © USFWS

the spotlight as a landscape heavily used by illegal immigrants and the Border Patrol agents in charge of catching them. In a long-story short, thousands of miles of routes now criss-cross this once pristine desert landscape, requiring decades to recover (see inset). At

times, the refuge closed its interior roads to visitors, fearing for public safety and not wanting to expose visitors to the military-style offensive being waged against immigrants and drug smugglers. Despite the daunting challenge of restoring the refuge's wilderness character, one can now fill out a permit and ride out on the refuge without any clear guide as to which road to stay on and which, of the thousands, to stay off.

AWC is participating in a field visit and policy discussion with refuge officials in late July. We hope to find common ground on the wilderness values of the refuge and seek ways

in which we can restore – not further degrade – this incredible landscape. Cabeza needs our help. If you'd like to share your concerns about allowing recreational off-road vehicles on the refuge, call its manager Sid Slone at 520-387-6483 or email at sid\_slone@fws.gov.

## WILDERNESS PROFILE

# Mazatzal Wilderness

by Sam Frank

**Size:** 252,390 acres

**Managing Agency:** Tonto National Forest

**Location:** 15 miles west of Payson, 20 miles north-east of Cave Creek

**Number of Trails:** 38 official trails, over 240 miles of trail

**Elevation:** 2,100-7,903 ft

**Fun Fact:** Largest US Forest Service wilderness area in Arizona

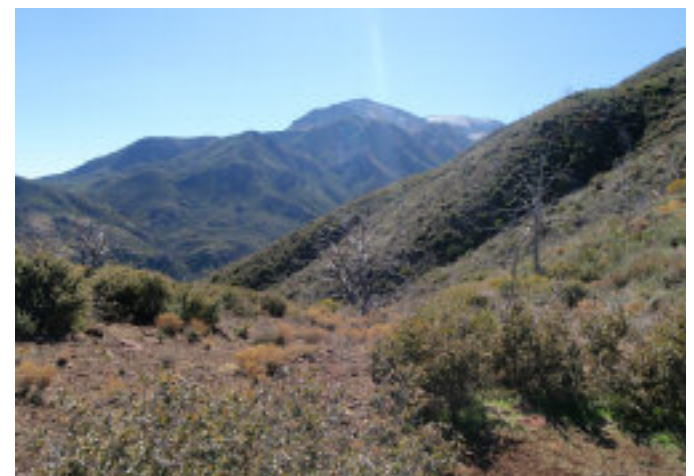
Usually the first thing people want to know about the Mazatzal Wilderness is how to pronounce it. Some people say 'Mat-a-zel' and clarify it by saying just like 'Mad as Hell'. However, the commonly accepted pronunciation is 'Mah-ZAHT-zahl.' While origins and meanings of the word vary slightly they all point towards Native American lineage, predominantly Aztec, and generally mean 'Land of Deer' or some closely related derivation. Today, the Yavapai and Tonto Apache tribes maintain spiritual ties to the land and yes, there are plenty of deer out in this large wilderness area.

The Mazatzal Wilderness is one of those unique wilderness areas that actually predates the Wilderness Act of 1964, which is the legislation that gave Congress the power to designate federal lands as wilderness areas. In 1938, approximately 217,000 acres were designated as the Mazatzal Primitive Area, under a 1929 USFS regulation that gave the Forest Chief the ability to establish predominantly roadless lands as "primitive areas." In 1940, it was renamed the Mazatzal Wilderness, but that was merely an administrative title that could have been changed at the whim of the Tonto Forest Supervisor. Then in September

1964, the Wilderness Act became law and the Mazatzal Wilderness became a legal designation, which meant the conservation benefits that came with that title could only be undone through an act of Congress. But that wasn't the end of the legislative wilderness history for the Mazatzals: in 1984, Congress passed the Arizona Wilderness Act, which added another 35,000 acres to the Mazatzals, bringing the total acreage up to the current 252,390. That grand total makes it the largest Forest Service managed wilderness area in Arizona.

Although 'Mazatzal' means 'Land of Deer', there are a healthy variety of birds, mammals, and amphibians in this diverse landscape. Visitors might see everything from bears to beavers, otters to osprey, ringtails to rattle snakes, and a host of other Arizona natives. The three main reasons for such biodiversity are sufficient water, elevation, and a lack of human encroachment. The Wild and Scenic portion of the Verde and the East Verde rivers flow through the wilderness, providing reliable year-round water. The Mazatzal Mountains reach up to just shy of 8,000 feet and support ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, while the lower elevations in the west and south are home to Sonoran Desert vegetation such as saguaro and Palo verde. And because it's a designated wilderness area, it "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable" (Wilderness Act, Section 2(c)1).

In 2009, Congress designated the 800-plus mile Arizona National Scenic Trail, which traverses the length of Arizona and runs straight through the



Views from within the Mazatzal Wilderness with North Peak in the background. Photo: Tim Craig

Mazatzal Wilderness. In 2010, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition and Back Country Horsemen of Central Arizona (BCHCAZ) co-adopted a segment of the Arizona Trail in the Mazatzal Wilderness known as the Red Hills segment (Segment 24). This 14-mile segment is one of the most remote and difficult sections of the entire Arizona Trail, but offers adventurers a chance to visit some beautiful and secluded Arizona wilderness lands. As segment stewards, AWC and BCHCAZ must monitor and perform maintenance along this stretch of trail. We always welcome reports from hikers on trail conditions and of course, encourage volunteers to help us keep the trail passable.

To find out more about upcoming outings into the Mazatzal Wilderness, sign up for AWC email alerts at [www.azwild.org](http://www.azwild.org) or contact Sam Frank at the Prescott Wilderness Center (928-717-6076).

\*\*\*\*\*

Sam Frank is AWC's Central Arizona Director based in Prescott.



# Solar Power on Public Lands: How can we get it right?

by Alex Daue and Mike Quigley

Today, we face a challenge and an opportunity with the increasing momentum to use public lands for the generation of renewable energy, particularly solar energy in Arizona. Public lands have a place in serving our renewable energy future, but how can we ensure projects are built in the right places and in the right ways? This has proven to be a tough path, but we understand that a key element in the fight against global climate change is how we produce and conserve energy.

The Wilderness Society (TWS), Arizona Wilderness Coalition, and other partners recognize the emblematic nature of our work to ensure the planet we pass on to our grandchildren is one we can be proud of. Home to some of America's most beautiful and cherished wildlands, the state also boasts incredible landscapes yet to be preserved. Arizona also has incredible renewable energy resources, including some of the best solar power opportunities in the world. With large population centers and heavy electricity demand to keep homes cool and businesses and industry running smoothly, it's not surprising that wind and solar developers are lining up for permits to build projects in the state. Even green energy has impacts, however, so the question of how and where renewable energy is built has become a hot topic among environmental groups, lawmakers, local communities, electric utilities and many others. With so much at stake, we are committed to finding solutions that drive environmentally responsible development across the nation, and especially in the West.

As climate change threatens to radically alter the West's landscapes, TWS and our conservation partners have come to understand that we must use every tool we have to tackle this enormous challenge and build a clean energy economy. Real solutions will include building solar, wind and other renewable energy projects at all scales on private and public lands; putting solar on residential rooftops, businesses and parking lots; and dramatically increasing energy efficiency and conservation. The benefits from doing so in the right ways are huge, from addressing climate change to increasing our energy security, from protecting wildlands, clean air and water to building a new energy economy.

What role do our public lands have to play in the transition to a clean energy future? Though energy development has always been a traditional use of the public lands, past use was restricted to mining and drilling for oil and gas. We have seen the damage those activities have wrought; we must do things differently and better with renewable energy development, not repeating the mistakes of the past.

The Obama Administration and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar have put a priority on developing environmentally responsible renewable energy on public lands, steadily putting in place the policies necessary to support renewables programs on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in the West. The BLM has also been hard at work conducting environmental reviews and processing permits for projects – last year saw the historic approval of nine solar projects on public lands in California and Nevada, the first ever approved on BLM lands. Three solar projects proposed for public lands in Arizona are currently under review.

Recently, some conservationists have posed the

question of why large, “utility-scale” projects are necessary in addition to building solar on rooftops and increasing conservation and efficiency. The scale of the climate challenge and our nation's energy needs are simply so great that we must use all the tools we have if we are to achieve success. Numerous models have been developed to estimate what a mixture of solutions might look like, and it is clear that utility-scale projects will play a critical role in meeting demands.

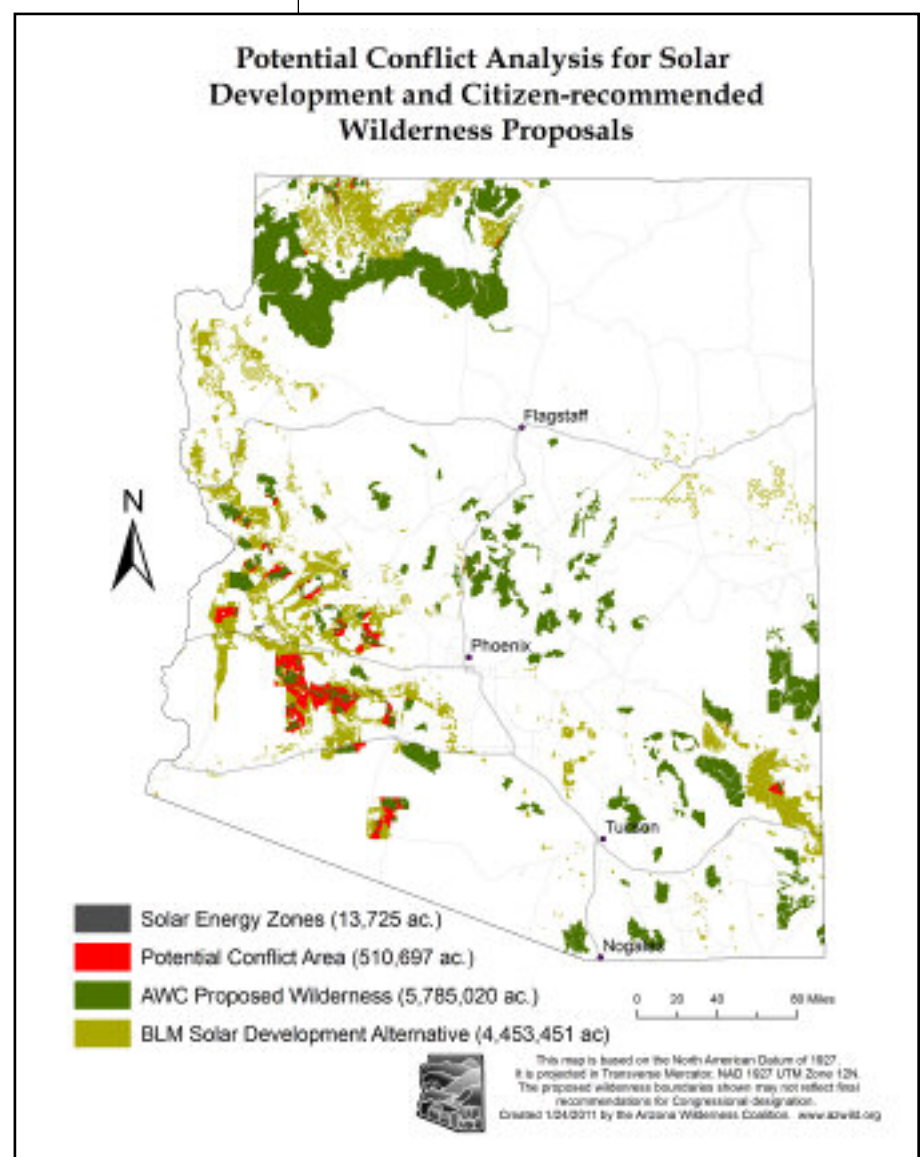
For example, Google's Clean Energy 2030 plan assumes extremely aggressive energy efficiency and conservation gains, as well as putting solar on 25% of all rooftops in the U.S. (for comparison, the city with the most solar rooftops is currently Berkeley, California, with 2.6%). This would total 170,000 Megawatts (MW) of power, 17% of the U.S.' current generation capacity of roughly 1,000,000 MW. Even with these assumptions, Google's report still has 80,000 MW of utility-scale solar being built by 2030, in addition to 460,000 MW of utility-scale wind and geothermal. The nine solar projects permitted on public lands last year total 3,600 MW. If we are serious about tackling the climate challenge, we have a long way to go.

However, as noted before, utility-scale solar projects have serious impacts, and they are not appropriate everywhere. There are significant opportunities to build projects on fallow agricultural lands and areas disturbed by industrial uses, such as abandoned mines and other “brownfields” sites. Arizona BLM's “Restoration Design Energy Project” is an exciting effort to identify such places. In general, projects should only be built on sites where limited conflicts with wildlands and wildlife habitat exist, as well as avoiding recreation areas and places with rich historical and cultural resources.

With this administration's prioritization of environmentally responsible renewable energy development on public lands, we have a historic opportunity to shape the future of these programs and projects. One such opportunity is the BLM's plan for solar development, which is currently being crafted by the agency with input from the public. The new plan, known as the Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), will be the blueprint for the federal

government's approach to solar energy development across the west. A good blueprint for a solar program on public land will help renewable energy grow and develop while minimizing costs – to the environment, rate payers, and us taxpayers as owners of the public lands.

One key element of the PEIS is a means to guide development to the most appropriate places. Under



The BLM's current proposal for public lands available for solar development includes about 500,000 acres of citizen-proposed wilderness. TWS and AWC are working to minimize conflicts between solar development and wildland resources by guiding projects to low-conflict areas. To see how you can get involved in BLM's solar plan, please visit the agency's website at <http://solareis.anl.gov/>. For additional solar resources and color map, visit [www.azwild.org](http://www.azwild.org).

Secretary Salazar's leadership, the BLM has, for the first time, begun to take a hard look for places appropriate for renewable energy development. It has studied 24 “Solar Energy Zones,” areas in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah with great solar resources, close to existing roads and transmission lines, and with limited conflicts with wildlife, and wildlands. We and our partners are actively engaged in this effort, providing recommendations to the agency to improve the program. Critical to the success of this effort is ensuring that the program requires that projects are sited in low-conflict areas such as the Solar Energy Zones. Without a guided development program, irreplaceable wildlands are at stake – under one BLM alternative for the PEIS, millions more acres



would be open for development, including about 500,000 acres of citizen-proposed wilderness in Arizona (see map below).

We are also engaging on solar projects that are currently proposed on public lands in Arizona, including the proposed Quartzsite, Hyder Valley and Sonoran solar projects. We are working to ensure that sites avoid key wildlife habitat and other sensitive natural resources, that cooling technology and water use are appropriate for the state's arid climate, and that thorough environmental review and open, transparent engagement opportunities for stakeholders are prioritized in the process.

This is an exciting time, with great opportunities for anyone with an interest in Arizona's environment and clean energy future to engage. We encourage people to get involved, learn more about what's happening by giving us a call or visiting our website, attend a public meeting for a proposed project, and comment on the places you'd like to see protected or prioritized for development as we search for appropriate sites. With your help, we can build a renewable energy future that is as clean as it is green.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Alex Daue is The Wilderness Society's Renewable Energy Coordinator within the BLM Action Center. Mike Quigley is TWS's Arizona Wildlands Campaign Coordinator.*

## Staff Updates

### *From AWC's Prescott Wilderness Center: Sam Frank* **Upper Verde River Wild & Scenic Designation**

Work on our wild and scenic designation proposal for the upper Verde River has come a long way over the past few years. Conversations have been held with private land owners and land managers along the river and their feedback has been incorporated into the proposal. A proposal has been drafted, edited, and refined. News articles and a handful of public presentations have helped spread the word about the benefits of wild and scenic designation for this segment of the Verde. The efforts of this campaign will shift to widespread public presentations in order to generate broad, local support for a congressional bill. Do you know of a Verde Valley group that would like to find out more about this effort? If so, please contact Sam Frank at AWC's Prescott Wilderness Center at 928-717-6076.

### **Prescott National Forest Wilderness Stewards Program**

AWC's Wilderness Stewardship Program has been active in many wilderness areas of the Prescott National Forest (PNF) so far this year. Stewards and volunteers have contributed more than 800 hours through trail maintenance, invasive plant surveys, and general monitoring and reporting. If you haven't made it out on the trail with us yet, we still have a few more events lined up for later this year! Visit our "Events" page on [azwild.org](http://azwild.org) to find an event. The Wilderness Stewards program offers people of all outdoor experience levels a chance to explore the wilderness areas of the PNF and share some time with fellow outdoor enthusiasts. At the same time, the variety of volunteer work accomplished through the program contributes to the well being of the PNF wilderness areas and helps to meet the U.S. Forest Service's 10 Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge. To find out more or be a part of the 'Wild Stew' program, contact Sam

## Spotlight On... The Sonoran Solar Project

In April of 2010, the BLM issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a 3,700 acre solar array several miles north of the Sonoran Desert National Monument, on BLM lands. The original project plan, proposed by a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources LLC, would use Concentrated Solar Thermal (CST) technology to focus the sun's rays on a central tower, which in turn would power a steam turbine producing about 375 Megawatts (MW) of electricity, or enough power to feed about



*Sonoran Solar is shifting away from water-intensive trough technology, shown above.*

65,000 Arizona homes. The Draft EIS analyzed this "proposed action", as well as two other CST alternatives, a reduced footprint alternative and a "dry-cooled" alternative that would use less water.

CST technology can demand large quantities of water. In the case of the Sonoran Solar Project, it was projected that 3,000 acre-feet of water per year would be required, prompting questions from conservationists and community leaders about the impact of "wet-cooled" solar.

In a recent development, and based on public comments on the BLM's Draft EIS, the BLM has announced an exciting new alternative to the proposed action that the agency is considering. The new alternative would use a Photovoltaic (PV) array that would require only 33 acre-feet of water per year – or about 1% of what the wet-cooled CST alternative would use! While the capacity of system would be reduced to 300 MW with the new alternative, the project's footprint would be lessened to 2,000 acres.

AWC applauds the BLM for responding to concerns and making significant improvements in this new alternative! Going forward, the BLM will finalize its analysis of the proposed action and other alternatives included in the Draft EIS as well as the new PV alternative. When the agency publishes its Final EIS (scheduled for October 2011), it will select a preferred alternative for the project, which could be any of the alternatives considered to-date. AWC is encouraging the BLM to select the PV alternative to minimize impacts to water resources while getting clean solar energy online. For more information, google "Sonoran Solar Project".



*Volunteers enjoy their Wilderness Stewardship experience in Castle Creek Wilderness. Photo: Sam Frank*

Frank at AWC's Prescott Wilderness Center at 928-717-6076, or visit [www.azwild.org](http://www.azwild.org).

### *From AWC's Central Phoenix Office: Kate Mackay* **Media and Events**

Usually a time of slower pace and fewer obligations, this summer has been busy for AWC in Phoenix! Following the avalanche of great media that came on the heels of our Sonoran Desert Heritage public rollout on May 25th, Kate has been busy building the media strategy for our next major event, the 4th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival on August 18th at Tempe Center for the Arts (see pages 8 and 9). We have secured several NPR public service announcements that will run on KJZZ and KBAQ two weeks before the event, to help shore up ticket sales and get the word out about the event. Kate has been working closely with Carla Olson, event coordinator, to help with logistics of the event itself, finding additional sponsors, securing speakers, and attracting media coverage from the *Arizona Republic*, *Green Living Magazine*, and *Arizona Highways*.

### **Land of Legends**

Kate has also been following the progress of outreach and grassroots organizing on our Land of Legends Campaign in Cochise County. Working with southeastern Arizona partners, Sky Island Alliance, The Wilderness Society, and Campaign for America's Wilderness, the goal is to keep the momentum on the campaign moving forward while Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords continues her remarkable recovery. On July 26th, however, the campaign faced its first major obstacle, as the Cochise County Board of Supervisors voted on amending their county plan with language that would thwart any future public lands protection, especially wilderness. The proposed language falsely claims that "Wilderness designation is not an appropriate, effective, efficient, economic or wise use of land." In fact, several recent studies show that \$370 million in sales tax revenue, more than \$5 billion in retail sales across the state, and 86,000 Arizona jobs are supported by active outdoor recreation on protected public lands (see page 11). Equally troubling, this language comes not from a local, home grown interest group, but from a Texas-based organization dedicated to undermining federal authority over public lands. Amending the County Comprehensive Plan to include this anti-wilderness language will only serve to undermine the collaboration, communication, and open dialog that has been at the forefront of cooperative agreements and responsible land management efforts for the last several decades, and will make it increasingly difficult to protect Cochise County public lands in the future. AWC is working to pack the Supervisors' meeting with wilderness supporters to prevent this language from passing.



# Get Out There!

Join AWC for an exciting line-up of fall and winter events! As always, our electronic action alerts are the most up-to-the-minute way to get more details on each of these events and whether we need volunteers to help us out with tabling, outreach, phone banking, letter writing, and other important activities. Visit our website at [www.azwild.org](http://www.azwild.org) to sign up for our action alerts, if you haven't already!

**Please Note: cancellations due to fire restrictions, weather, or agency policies are always possible. Please check with the trip leader on status before signing up.**

## September 24 & 25 (Sat & Sun) National Public Lands Day 2011 Castle Creek Wilderness, Willow Springs Trail (236)

Difficulty: ELK—4-7 miles of hiking, significant elevation change, strenuous work  
The Willow Springs Trail is easy to find on maps but has nearly disappeared in real life. AWC, as the official Castle Creek Wilderness Steward, is hosting this overnight camping-on-the-trail event to make Trail 236 navigable once again. Horse support will supply extra water and transport supplies to and from the trail to the campsite. Beautiful views from 6,000 feet of elevation overlooking the Aqua Fria National Monument.

## October 15-16 (Sat & Sun) Juniper Mesa Wilderness, Multiple Trails

Difficulty: RACCOON—3-6 miles hiking, minor trail work, monitoring  
Head up to the northwest portion of the Prescott National Forest and explore Juniper Mesa Wilderness. Volunteers will have learning opportunities for recreation site monitoring, trail maintenance, and traditional tool skills such as proper use of a cross-cut saw.

## Upcoming... Mazatzal Wilderness, Tonto National Forest

AWC and Back Country Horsemen of Central Arizona (BCHCAZ) have become co-segment stewards for the Red Hills section of the Arizona Trail which lies within the Mazatzal Wilderness. This 14-mile stretch of trail is remote, high elevation, and over looks the Verde River drainage. As co-segment stewards we need to check on the trail and give it some TLC as necessary. AWC and BCHCAZ will be leading hikes along this beautiful stretch of trail as well as organizing other outings in the Mazatzal Wilderness. See our Wilderness Profile piece in this newsletter to learn more about the Mazatzal Wilderness.

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# You Have the Power to Choose: be a Regional Steward of Wilderness

## Sonoran Desert Guardian



As a Sonoran Desert Guardian you will be with us as we launch one of our largest wilderness programs to date! As Guardians of this desert region, you will have the chance to be face-to-face with some of the most beautiful, geologically- and historically-intriguing terrain in the country. Opportunities include: restoring portions of the SDNM, hiking into the Western desert on various restoration treks, exploring the subtle differences between wilderness and wildlife refuges, tabling at relevant events, and being a spokesperson for the Sonoran Desert.

## Land of Legends Champion



Be a champion for our beautiful sky islands and help us protect the Whetstone, Dragoon and Chiricahua mountain ranges. These sky islands are home to more than 4,000 species of plants, 100 mammal species and more than half the bird species of North America. Opportunities include: attending public meetings and collaborative events with AWC and its campaign partners, taking part in voluntary wilderness inventories, restoring portions of damaged areas, and serving as a public ally of the region.

## Upper Verde River Defender



Verde River Defenders will help AWC work toward gaining wild and scenic river designation for one of Arizona's few perennial rivers. Fed by the Big Chino aquifer in central Arizona, the Verde nurtures habitat essential to imperiled species like the desert bald eagle, southwestern willow flycatcher, and several native fishes. Opportunities include: garnering community support to protect the Upper Verde River, networking with your fellow river advocates, and working restore damage to fragile riparian areas (while seeing some of Arizona's greenest areas).

**Want to be a regional steward? Here's how.** To begin, fill out the following form. You may also phone in your support by calling: 602-252-5530 or make a pledge online: [www.azwild.org](http://www.azwild.org)

Yes! I want to be a:  Sonoran Desert Guardian  
 Land of Legends Champion  
 Upper Verde River Defender

Here is my gift pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to this campaign made as a  
\_\_\_\_\_ one time or \_\_\_\_\_ monthly contribution.

Check enclosed  Please charge my debit or credit card

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip and mail to: Arizona Wilderness Coalition, PO Box 40340, Tucson, AZ 85717

*On behalf of Arizona's wilderness, thank you!!*





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**What is Wilderness?**

Wilderness is an area of undeveloped federal land that appears “to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of mans’ work substantially unnoticeable,” as written in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Unlike national parks, wildlife refuges, or monuments, wilderness designation from Congress provides the highest level of natural resource protection available in the world. The Wilderness Act created the National Wilderness Preservation System to preserve the last remaining wild lands in America. Currently, about 4.7 percent of all available land in the United States is protected as wilderness. In Arizona, wilderness designation protects approximately 6.2 percent of our land and wildlife habitat.



**What is a Wild and Scenic River?**

To be eligible for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a river must be free-flowing and contain at least one “outstandingly remarkable value,” i.e., scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar value. The Act mandates that selected rivers be preserved in a free-flowing condition and be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. Today, approximately 600,000 miles of once free-flowing rivers (approximately 17% of the America’s rivers) have been altered by 60,000 dams.

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CONSERVATION'S COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**SUPPORT OUR CHALLENGE TO BENEFIT**

**ARIZONA WILDERNESS COALITION**  
WWW.AZWILD.ORG

Conservation and the Environment receive *only* 2% of charitable giving in America. Put simply, conservation is not as well supported as it should be to ensure our future quality of life. By supporting recipients of the Earth Friends Challenge, you are smartly leveraging your investment. There is no time to lose, please invest the Arizona Wilderness Coalition today!

**2% IS NOT ENOUGH**

\*Conservation only receives 2% of all charitable giving. Most people believe it deserves more. Source: USA