



Verde Watershed

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Arizona House of Representatives bill HB 2772, signed into law on May 20, offers a very specific and limited exception for an otherwise illegal inter-basin transfer of ground water.

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VERDE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP: CAN IT COORDINATE WITH OR MERGE WITH THE YAVAPAI COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE?

The Verde River Basin Partnership (VRBP) formed in response to the federal legislation of Title II of Public Law No. 109-110, the Northern Arizona Land Exchange and Verde River Basin Partnership Act of 2005, which was signed into law by President Bush on November 11, 2005. Title II authorizes federal assistance for a "...collaborative and science-based water resource planning and management partnership for the Verde River Basin in the State of Arizona, consisting of members that represent (1) Federal, State, and local agencies; and (2) economic, environmental, and community water interests in the Verde River Basin." Accordingly, a series of meetings brought together representatives of counties, municipalities, state and federal agencies, tribes, business, agriculture, and citizens groups to lay the groundwork for the Verde River Basin Partnership. In October 2006 the members of the Partnership ratified a structure (see the bylaws, including the structure at <http://tinyurl.com/4q6rpx>) under which these groups and agencies could collaborate in overseeing the Partnership's work. This structure was crafted to represent the diversity of stakeholders that is called for in Title II while assuring that jurisdictions represented by elected officials have the greatest representation. However, the City of Prescott, the Towns of Chino Valley and Prescott Valley, and Yavapai County have to date declined to participate in the VRBP.

In spite of attempts by Senator McCain to get funding for the Partnership's work included in the federal

Administration's budget request to Congress in FY-08 and FY-09, funding has not been forthcoming. It seems likely that combined support from the affected communities is a necessary prerequisite to getting federal funding in the very competitive federal budget.

In the absence of federal funding, the VRBP is essentially an organization of volunteers. Among them is a strong Technical Advisory Group that worked closely with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a detailed hydrology science plan (see <http://tinyurl.com/2c7jym>). That plan, completed in late 2006, is the basis for the request for federal funding for the USGS. At that time, the estimated cost of the planned hydrologic work over the four-year work period specified in Title II was approximately \$5M. Clearly, the Partnership's planned scientific work is critical in addressing the difficult issues related to protecting the health of the Verde River in the face of burgeoning groundwater demand that stems from extraordinary current and expected growth in the Verde watershed.

Recognizing that a coordinated effort among the Verde River Basin communities might succeed in obtaining federal funding for the Partnership's work, City of Prescott Councilman Robert Luzius proposed in mid-May that the City of Prescott Council support an effort to consolidate the region's three primary water groups: the Yavapai County Water Advisory Committee (WAC), the Upper Verde River Watershed Protection Coalition (UVRWPC) and the VRBP. Reaction from the Prescott City Council

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HB 2772 SIGNED INTO LAW

PERMITS LIMITED PUMPAGE FROM VERDE RIVER GROUND-WATER BASIN BY THE CITY OF WILLIAMS

Arizona House of Representatives bill HB 2772—Coconino Plateau groundwater basin; withdrawal—was signed into law by Governor Napolitano on May 20, 2008. Sponsored by Representative Lucy Mason, the bill offers a very specific and limited exception for an otherwise illegal inter-basin transfer of ground water. The bill stems from recognition that two deep (and expensive) wells drilled by the City of Williams were inadvertently emplaced within the Verde River ground-water basin. As evident in the provisions (below) this legislative exception applies only to these two deep wells at Williams, and it imposes strict limits on both the amount of ground water these wells can pump and the conditions under which pumping may occur.

Provisions:

- Allows a city or town with a population of not more than 8,000 persons that is located in the Coconino Plateau ground-water basin to transfer groundwater to its service area from an adjacent groundwater basin if the following conditions are met:

- o The city or town has been transporting water since January 1, 2001.

- o The Director of the Department of Water Resources (Director) determined that the wells were drilled erroneously and without knowledge that the wells were in an adjacent basin.

- o The groundwater is withdrawn from a well located outside of the groundwater basin but within two miles of the

boundary.

- o The well is drilled at least 2,500 feet below the land surface.

- o The groundwater is only used within the municipal water service area of the city or town and as a secondary source to the available surface water supplies.

- o The total amount of groundwater transferred does not exceed 700 acre feet per year.

- Allows the city or town to apply to the Director for an increase in the amount of groundwater that may be transferred in order to meet fire protection needs. The Director may increase the amount and may specify other conditions that apply.

- Requires the city or town to stop transporting water from the wells located outside of the groundwater basin when all of the following occur:

- o After January 1, 2009 the city or town obtains the legal right to receive water other than groundwater originating from outside of the city or town's corporate boundaries.

- o The water is physically available by pipeline or canal.

- o The Director determines that the new supply of water, in addition to the existing supply (other the ground-water originating from outside of the groundwater basin), is sufficient to provide a sustainable water supply for the city or town.

Prepared by Ed Wolfe

Yavapai County Water Advisory Committee (WAC) Update

The Water Advisory Committee (WAC) has identified its budget priorities for fiscal year 2008. Included in the work priorities is the Central Yavapai Highlands Water Resource Management Study (CYHWRMS) with cost share partners Arizona Department of Water Resources and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; support for the USGS Northern Arizona Regional Groundwater Flow Model and long-term water use and growth Scenario Development for the model; and Phase 2 of the Verde Valley Surface Water Modeling and Geospatial Database by Northern Arizona University. The WAC will also continue to fund hydrologic monitoring efforts by the USGS.

The CYHWRMS will have information posted on the WAC page of the Yavapai County website (<http://www.co.yavapai.az.us/Content.aspx?id=20562>). For instance, the Plan of Study will be posted on the website. The Technical Working Group (TWG) for the CYHWRMS has begun meeting and working on the first tasks of the study. The TWG is comprised of a wide range of people with expertise or management responsibilities in the study area. The TWG typically meets on the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM after the meeting of the Technical Administrative Committee of the WAC either in Cottonwood or Prescott. Video links between the County Buildings will be established for these meetings when possible.

Additionally, the WAC will continue to fund education through a position at the County Cooperative Extension with duties split between Arizona Project WET and U of Arizona

Cooperative Extension water-education programs. A Project WET Make-a Splash water festival for Fourth graders is scheduled for the Verde Valley on October 23, 2008 at Dead Horse Ranch State Park. For more information, or to volunteer and help with the Water Festival, please contact Ms Chris Moran at the Cottonwood County office (chris.moran@co.yavapai.az.us 928-639-8110). For more information on Cooperative Extension water programs contact the program coordinator Ms Edessa Carr (Edessa@cals.arizona.edu 928-445-6590 x227).

The July 16, 2008 meeting of the WAC will be located at the County Building in Cottonwood (10 South 6th St at 2:00 PM); the regular August meeting is cancelled; and the September 17 meeting is currently scheduled for Cottonwood. Greg Kornrumpf of SRP will present SRP issues in the Verde at the July meeting, and Kyle Blasch of the USGS will speak about the USGS regional groundwater model at the September meeting.

WAC meetings are typically held on the third Wednesday of each month at 2:00 PM alternating between the County buildings in Prescott and Cottonwood. Please contact the WAC Coordinator, John Rasmussen, for more details on any of the WAC activities and or if you would like to be added to the WAC email-recipient list (john.rasmussen@co.yavapai.az.us or 928-442-5199).

Prepared by John Rasmussen, Coordinator, Yavapai County Water Advisory Committee

Prescott National Forest Plan Revision Update July 2008

Several items related to Forest Plan Revision are of interest:

“Your Forest Vision and the Way Forward”, an open house to share the draft community vision that was developed for Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Chino Valley, was held April 17, 2008, from 6:00-8:30 p.m., at the Highlands Center. Approximately 30 interested publics attended the open house. The vision was presented by representatives of co-hosting sponsors, and there was general agreement on the Final Vision. Attendees also discussed next steps for achieving the vision and talked about ideas like a “stewardship” group that could form to continue working on Forest Planning issues as well as look for ways to increase capacity of the Forest Service.

The open-house was co-hosted by the Arizona Trail Riders, Arizona Off Highway Vehicle Coalition, Arizona Wilderness Coalition, Back Country Horsemen, City of Prescott Parks and Recreation Department, Hyde Mt. Vista Group, Open Space Alliance of Central Yavapai County, Prescott Area Wildland/Urban Interface Commission, Prescott Cycling Club, Prescott National Forest, Prescott Open Trails Association, and Yavapai Cattle Growers Association. Two new groups, Northern Highlands Center, and Yavapai County Trails Committee asked to be included in future discussions.

In other communities, visions for Black Canyon City, Castle Hot Springs, Cherry, Cottonwood, Crown King, Jerome, Mayer, Paulden, Prescott, Wilhoit have also been developed. The draft and final Visions are on the Prescott National Forest web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/prescott/plan-revision/vision.shtml>

Stewardship Group: Representatives of communities from throughout Yavapai County met at Arcosanti on April 15 to compare their vision statements, identify common themes, and consider next steps. Groups voiced similar concerns. Many expressed frustration about irresponsible use of Forest lands and the lack of enforcement. There was group consensus that some kind of stewardship effort would be a desirable result of the visioning process. Therefore, the group is considering development of such a group that would support the Prescott National Forest and help

resolve common issues, such as irresponsible recreational use, illegal dumping, maintenance backlogs, weed control, open space protection, monitoring, and enforcement. The group met most recently on July 8 at Jerome. For additional information about the stewardship group or how to become involved, please contact Charles Pregler, Community Network Specialist, at 928-443-8218.

Ecological Sustainability Assessment

The Prescott National Forest is also working on its ecological assessment. A draft list of species to be analyzed in the ecological sustainability process is available on the PNF website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/prescott/plan-revision/species-list.shtml>. Species will be grouped, where possible, by habitat associations. If, during the ecosystem analysis, no deviation from reference condition is found for the associated habitat system, or if there is a deviation but it is trending toward reference conditions; the habitat needs of the species will be considered to be met and to be sustainable. Otherwise, specific threats to species groups or individual species will be analyzed to determine Forest Plan components required.

Once analysis work is complete, it will be summarized in an Ecological Need for Change document. This information will be combined with the Social and Economic Needs for Change to identify Needs for Change in the current Forest Plan, and the Forest Supervisor will select high priority needs from that list to focus efforts during development of a proposed Revised Plan.

The National Forest System Land Management Planning Final Rule (also known as the 2008 Planning Rule) was signed April 10, 2008, with a suit filed against it on April 11, 2008. The Federal Register Notice for the Rule was published April 21, 2008. The Rule is available on the web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/index.htm>

Contact Sally-Hess Samuelson, Forest Planner, at 928-443-8216 or shesssamuelson@fs.fed.us to discuss the Forest planning process. Written comments may be submitted at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/prescott/plan-revision/get-involved.shtml>.

Prepared by Pamela Jarnecke

FOSSIL CREEK WILD AND SCENIC DESIGNATION UPDATE

Arizona Public Service restored historic flows to Fossil Creek, a tributary of the Verde River, in 2005, and legislation to protect Fossil Creek as a Wild and Scenic River was introduced in January of 2007. Unfortunately the legislation stalled in both the House and Senate, leaving the U.S. Forest Service uncertain about how to manage Fossil Creek. Concurrently, a dramatic increase in unregulated public visitation has led to extensive littering, deposition of human feces, and streamside degradation. Due to concerns over damage resulting from public abuse and over-use, the U.S. Forest Service and Northern Arizona University convened a Fossil Creek Stakeholders Meeting in November of 2007. The purpose of the meeting, as stated by USFS Red Rock District Ranger Heather Provencio, was to provide short-term solutions for protection of Fossil Creek during the period that preceded the anticipated inclusion of Fossil Creek as a Wild and Scenic River. Work groups were formed and potential action items were identified with a goal of implementing action prior to the summer season of 2008.

On May 22, 2008, a follow-up meeting was attended by forty persons representing fourteen organizations/government entities. The focus of the meeting was consideration of a possible Forest Service vehicle closure at Fossil Creek. Such a closure would be a temporary and emergency closure for reasons of public health and safety as well as for cultural and ecological concerns. The Forest Service has the ability to enact such an emergency closure for up to one year.

During the meeting the stakeholders agreed to pursue the following specific tasks:

- The U.S. Forest Service will explore the need for, and determine the logistics of, a vehicle or full “closure” at Fossil Creek.
- The U.S. Forest Service will continue baseline law enforcement at Fossil Creek, complete regular, focused law

enforcement events with media participation, and investigate the cost of installing a radio repeater to allow radio communication for law enforcement officers at Fossil Creek

- Pursue funding for the Middle Reach campsite work and implement this project once funding is obtained.
- Design and install educational signage at the Fossil Springs Trailhead and at all kiosks along Fossil Creek.
- Explore the possibility of a fundraising event to fund temporary toilets at Fossil Creek during the heavy-use summer months.
- Develop a media/public relations strategy and campaign designed to educate the public regarding good stewardship practices at Fossil Creek.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held after the Forest Service made a decision regarding a Fossil Creek closure or in early August at the latest.

The following events occurred subsequent to the Stakeholders Meeting:

- The Center for Biological Diversity filed a sixty-day notice of Intent to Sue the U.S. Forest Service for Endangered Species Act violation. The notice states that the Forest Service has failed to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over the repatriation of native fish while management strategies continue to adversely impact the fish and their habitat.
- The U.S. Forest Service, assisted by Michele James from NAU, applied for a Water Protection Fund grant to partially fund relocation of campsites out of the riparian area.
- Senate Bill S.86, the Fossil Creek Wild and Scenic River Act, is again active and may be heard on the floor of the Senate within 30 days as an inclusion to a larger package of pending legislation. *Prepared by Chip Norton*

Verde River Basin Partnership *Cont'd from pg 1*

was mixed, but discussion continued at the June 18 meeting of the WAC.

At the June 18 WAC meeting, WAC-member Doug Von Gausig, Mayor of Clarkdale and Chair of the VRBP's Coordinating Committee, proposed consideration of the WAC's taking over the Partnership with two primary conditions: (1) that the WAC's technical group be expanded to include representatives of the U.S. Geological Survey,

the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; and (2) that the WAC's requirement for unanimity in voting be modified to a requirement for only a supermajority. A committee of six—two from the WAC, two from the UVRWPC, and two from the VRBP Coordinating Committee—agreed to further discuss this proposal. *Prepared by Ed Wolfe*

SIERRA CLUB AND CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY PLAN SERIES OF UPPER VERDE RIVER FIELD TRIPS FOR SUMMER AND FALL

Be part of the Verde River habitat. With several dates available now and more to come, you can get down to the Verde and see for yourself what we are working to protect. Photos, films, music, and slide shows are wonderful, but they don't come close to the experience of the real thing. Pick a date, join Joanne or Gary, see the beauty, and learn how you can help save the Verde River. Please call or write for more information and to pre-register.

Dates and Descriptions:

JULY 26 (Sat) Verde Springs and Stillman Lake

4 mi., 200' elevation change

Guide: Joanne Oellers, Center for Biological Diversity
Verde Campaign Coordinator 928-772-8204
joellers@biologicaldiversity.org

Entering through private property (with permission), we will hike down to Granite Creek on a trail, then downstream to the Verde River, then upstream along the shore of Stillman Lake. We should see lots of birds and hundreds of petroglyphs. Then we will hike down the Verde into the new Nature Conservancy property to view beaver dams and Verde Springs. Easy, pretty, and cool hike. Lots of fun and info!

AUGUST 23 (Sat) Hell Point to Bull Basin

10 mi., 600' elevation change

Guide: Gary Beverly, Sierra Club Outings Coordinator
928-636-2638 gbverde@cableone.net

After shuttling vehicles (4WD, 7 mi), bushwhack up the Verde River through the most isolated and beautiful section of the river. There is no trail: be prepared to push through the brush, wade the river, and climb around cliffs. This will be a long day, but there is outstanding scenery and photography, including a cliff dwelling, a ruin, and wildlife.

AUG 30 (Sat) Verde Springs and Stillman Lake with Catered Lunch

4 mi., 200' elevation change

Guide: Joanne Oellers, Center for Biological Diversity
Verde Campaign Coordinator 928-772-8204
joellers@biologicaldiversity.org

Same format hiking format as July 12, with an added delicious after-hike lunch provided by host Ann Harrington at Little Thumb Butte Bed and Breakfast overlooking Granite Creek. Cost \$10.

SEP 28 (Sun) Verde Springs and Stillman Lake

4 mi., 200' elevation change

Guide: Gary Beverly, Sierra Club Outings Coordinator
928-636-2638

gbverde@cableone.net

Same format as July 12.

October 25 (Sat) Perkinsville Bridge to MC Canyon

7 mi., 300' elevation change

Guide: Gary Beverly, Sierra Club Outings Coordinator
928-636-2638 gbverde@cableone.net

After shuttling vehicles (some 4WD, 17 mi), bushwhack up the Verde River 7 mi through a very pretty part of the river. There is no trail: be prepared to push through the brush, wade the river, and climb around cliffs. This will be a long day, but there is outstanding scenery and photography, and fall color should be excellent.

Prepared by Joanne Oellers

Membership Form for the Verde Watershed Association

Government units	\$ 100 per year
Business for profit	100 per year
Civic groups and non-profits	50 per year
Individuals	25 per year

Make check payable and mail to:

Verde Watershed Association
P.O. Box 4001
Cottonwood, AZ 86326

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Fax: _____

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