

Working Collaboratively for a Healthy Verde River



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2014 Annual Report

Working Collaboratively for a Healthy Verde River



Cover: VWRC partners apply their new stream bank erosion-prevention skills at Oak Creek Valley Estates, during a “Repairing Riparian Habitat –Streambank Bioengineering Workshop” sponsored by Salt River Project .

Pictured here: Jamie Nielsen (Tamarisk Coalition) hammering in stakes to hold in place a waddle of willows , while Sara Van Marel, (Arizona Conservation Corps) fills a bucket to water in her completed vertical bundle. More on Page 8.

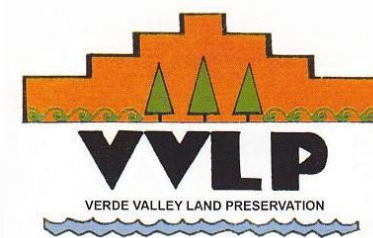
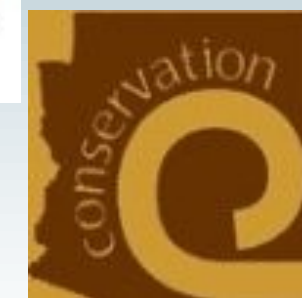
The Mission

Friends of Verde River Greenway restores, preserves, and promotes the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreation resources of the Verde River and its tributaries.

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Thank You to Our Partners



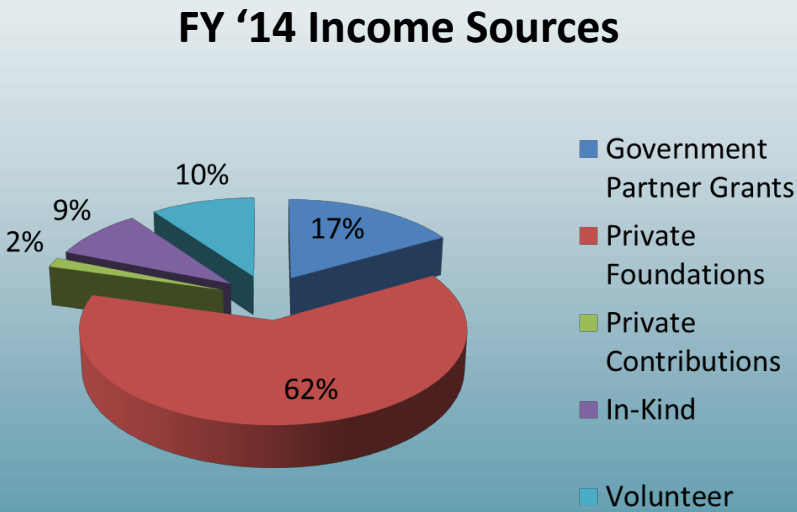
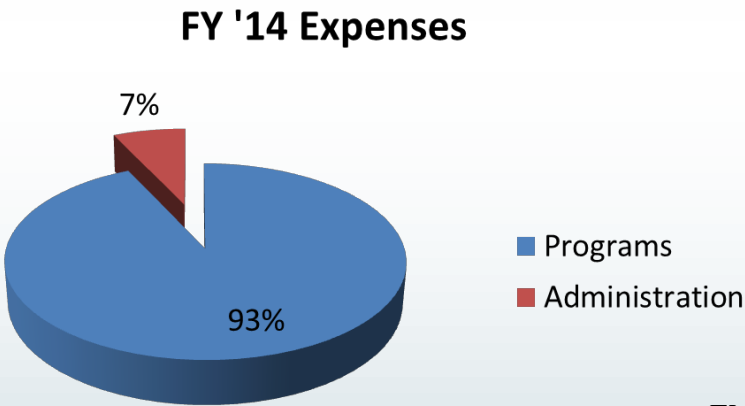
Financial Overview

Financial performance for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2014, was strong. Overall the support and revenues grew due to a 15% increase in contributions from private donors and increased grant revenues during the fiscal year. FVRG’s annual program efficiency (93%) increased slightly from the prior fiscal year (92%).

The financial results depicted here are a result of FVRG’s annual audit of June 30, 2014, including consolidated financial statements, which contained an unqualified audit opinion. Friends of Verde River Greenway’s complete audited financial statements can be obtained by calling our office at 928-301-4934.



Harry Sweet
Treasurer, Board of Directors



A Message from the President



Dear Friends,

As 2014 drew to a close we looked back on another busy year of building partnerships and completing field projects. Working with our partners, we all continue to learn together how river conservation projects consistently serve local employment and economic development in rural communities. Time and again, local and regional partners “stepped up” to demonstrate how much they value healthy, flowing rivers and streams.

Collaborating through the **Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC)**, local landowners, municipalities, agencies and public land managers “stepped up” to improve riparian habitat on approximately 2,000 acres of riparian corridor. In doing so, VWRC contracted **The Vetrplex** and **Arizona Conservation Corps** as conservation corps work crews comprised of recent-era veterans and local youth. Special thanks to our **private landowner champions**, who “stepped up” to improve riparian habitat on their properties. We are now working with over 200 local landowners to improve habitat on more than 35 miles of river and stream.

Hauser and Hauser Farms took the first step to improve their irrigation system by completing the planning phase for conversion to sub-surface drip irrigation on their farm in Camp Verde. The new irrigation system will use approximately 200 acre feet less per year than the current flood irrigation system, with the water savings remaining in the Verde River. Installation will begin in 2015.

Local elected officials, business leaders and land managers “stepped up” and traveled to Grand Valley, Colorado to learn how the Colorado Riverfront Project has contributed to local job creation and become an economic asset, how it has enhanced the tourism benefit for the region, and how a community based approach has changed the hearts and minds of the public to support the continued life of the local river.

Our **volunteers**, led by founding member **Marsha Foutz**, “stepped up” and worked throughout our communities, building and maintaining trails, clearing river access points and removing invasive plants and trees.

Our accomplishments of 2014 clearly demonstrate how, working together, we can build a future in which healthy rivers and streams flow through vibrant communities in the Verde Watershed!

Best wishes,



Chip Norton
President, Board of Directors

Board of Directors	
President	Chip Norton
Vice-President	Tony Gioia
Treasurer	Harry Sweet
Secretary	Peggy Chaikin
Founding Members	Marsha Foutz Max Castillo
Board Members	Denise Lerette Kim Schonek Bob Rothrock
Staff	
Program Manager	Anna Schrenk
Community Outreach & Development	Laura Jones
Office Administrator	Laurie Parker
Field Data Coordinator	Hannah Farrell 2013/2014 Robby Bryson 2014/2015
Chipper Foreman	Phil Hall
Field Supervisor	Sara Van Marel

Community Partners



“We now have an opportunity to focus on a collaborative plan to create our own String of Pearls with trails and river access points that will promote economic development and protection of the Verde River and its tributaries.”
~Cottonwood Mayor, Diane Joens



Arizona “String of Pearls” group with the Riverfront Commission at Riverbend Park in Palisade, CO.

String of Pearls

In April of 2014, Friends of Verde River Greenway, (FVRG) in conjunction with Southwest Decision Resources, the Cross-Watershed Network and the Colorado Riverfront Commission, organized what is called the “String of Pearls” tour. During this visit, representatives from across

the Verde Valley traveled to Colorado’s Grand Valley to learn first-hand how the City of Grand Junction, City of Fruita and Town of Palisade worked together with Mesa County, the Colorado Riverfront Commission, and many other stakeholder groups to restore and protect 35 miles of the Colorado River that runs through their communities. The result of their efforts has been the development of a series of premier riverfront recreational assets (“pearls”) for their citizens and

Government Grantors

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- AZ State Forestry
- US Forest Service
- AZ Game and Fish Department
- National Park Service

Individual & Foundation Donors

Desert Bald Eagle Circle \$10,000 +

- Walton Family Foundation - Habitat Restoration
- Walton Family Foundation - Recreation

Desert Willow Circle \$1000—\$2,499

- Oak Creek Watershed Council
- Chip Norton
- Paul & Sheri Young

Black Hawk Circle \$500—\$999

- Sedona Verde Valley Realtors Association

Beaver Circle \$100 - \$499

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Karen Aikins | Tony Gioia |
| Tim Carlson | Steven Hahn |
| Mary Chicoine | Phil Hall |
| Story Clark | Sharon Harrison |
| Kathy Davis | David Jones |
| Gary Field | Laura Jones |

Dragonfly Circle Up to \$99

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Wade Albrecht | Cindy Emmett |
| Stacy Beaugh | Erin Estes |
| Rachel Bennett | Marsha Foutz |
| Ann-Marie Benz | Anita Goss |
| Benjamin Bloodworth | J D Greenberg |
| Alexandra Booth | Tina Greenawalt |
| Peggy Chaikin | Phillip Hanson |
| Jane Cipra | Lori Harakal |
| Carole Dearborn | Scott Hudson |
| Marian Diamond | Chris Jensen |
| Kathy Dunham | Daniel Eric Kates |

Friends of Verde River Greenway is deeply grateful for the generosity of the public agencies, individuals and foundations listed here. This support enables FVRG to fulfill its mission and work in restoring, preserving and promoting the natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources of the Verde River and its tributaries.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous donors who made gifts and grants between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.
On behalf of our staff, volunteers and a free flowing Verde River, we thank you all.

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Denise & Ed Lindow | Beverly Sass | Toni Wackerly |
| Laura Moser | Kim & Nick Schonek | |
| Jesse Oppenheimer | Anna Schrenk | |
| Gary Rideout | Stephanie Sundolf | |
| Tahnee Robertson | Jet Tennant | |
| Bob & Kristin Rothrock | Elaine Vallely | |

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Denise Lerette | Laurie Parker | Craig Stevens |
| Judy Lewis | Julian Peterson | Melinda Szatlocky |
| Rusty Lloyd | Robyn Prudhomme-Bauer | Nancy Walls |
| Alison Marino | Heather Reading | Leslie Yardley |
| Sharon Masek-Lopez | William Regner | |
| Eirk Nielsen | Kathleen Reynolds | |
| Jamie Nielsen | Dennis Rhoades | |
| Lisa O'Neil | Elaine Rothrock | |
| Lynne Ordean | Carla Rueck | |
| Bruce Orr | William Scales | |
| Margaret Paddock | | |



Public Agency Champion

S. Max Castillo, AZ State Parks

Steven "Max" Castillo started his career with Arizona State Parks on January 20, 1975, as a seasonal Ranger. He became a full time employee with the agency on December 1, 1976. Max was assigned to the Verde River Greenway in April of 1998, the third Greenway Coordinator, preceded by Bonner Davis and Kevin Stevens. The mission of the Greenway is to protect the riparian corridor along the 36 mile stretch of the Verde River from Clarkdale to Camp Verde. The most significant natural resource within the Greenway, besides the perennial river, is the rare Goodding's Willow and Freemont's Cottonwood gallery forest.

One of Max's major accomplishments during his career include working on the acquisition of the 60 acre Heath Property formerly known as Valley Concrete. The operation was located in the river bottom between Dead Horse Ranch and Old Town Cottonwood. Another notable accomplishment was the acquisition of 60 acres known as "Stone House" located between Dead Horse Ranch and Rocking Chair Ranch Road. In 1999 Max was awarded Employee of the Year. Max also was one of the founding members of FVRG back in 2007 and has served on the board since that time.

Max has expressed appreciation for the years of help with removing invasive species along the Greenway, from volunteers and in recent years VWRC crews. When asked what he has enjoyed most about his career with Arizona State Parks Max said, "It was working in my office. Not the office with computers, paper, and phones, but my outdoor office under the sun and occasional clouds".



visitors, enhanced river conservation, improved quality of life, and robust economic development across the Grand Valley. The river is the "string" that connects the "pearls." In addition to meetings that allowed the Verde Valley and Grand Valley participants to share information about their projects, the group toured numerous riverfront sites, including parks, trails, wildlife areas, and commercial projects, revitalized downtown Grand Junction, and Colorado Mesa University. Throughout the trip, it was apparent that the success in the Grand Valley came as a result of an agreed upon shared vision and a commitment to regional cooperation. The region's development of the Colorado Riverfront Commission ensures that a broad cross-section of community representation is involved in the planning and advocacy for riverfront projects.

Next steps locally are to begin regional public participation processes relating to restoration and recreation projects on the Verde River and the development of a resource management and master plan/vision for the Verde River corridor.



Friends of Verde River Greenway Accolades

- AZ State Parks:**
Partnerships and Collaborations Award 2013
- Town of Clarkdale:**
Spirit of Clarkdale Award 2013
- Southwest Vegetation Management Association:**
Anna Schrenk-Weed Manager of the Year 2013



"The clear lesson from this trip is that with a strong and committed collaboration of communities, agencies, and businesses, the sky is the limit!

~Clarkdale Mayor
Doug Von Gausig



"We learned how the Grand Valley's Riverfront Project has contributed to local job creation and become an economic asset, how it has enhanced the tourism benefit for the region, and how a community-based approach has changed the hearts and minds of the public to support the continued life of the river."

~Yavapai County Supervisor
Tom Thurman





AZCC Crew demonstrates how to use a cross cut saw to youth during Verde River Day. FVRG and VWRC Partners hosted the inaugural VWRC River Scavenger Hunt, attracting participation of more than 50 Verde Valley youth.

Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC, pronounced vee-work), made great

strides this year in the effort to cooperatively manage invasive plants on a watershed scale. FVRG, the lead non-profit of this public/private watershed partnership, also made strides towards accomplishing VWRC goals.

VWRC includes more than 20 different partnering agencies and organizations and over 200 private landowners. This year FVRG secured new Habitat Improvement agreements with 61 private land-owners, bringing the total to over 200 participating landowners.

VWRC’s three field crews tackled the removal and treatment of woody invasive plants identified by VWRC stakeholders as threats to the health of the watershed. A total of 1,109 acres were treated dur-

ing the field season along the Verde River, Oak Creek, Beaver Creek, Fossil Creek and West Clear Creek.

Between a small team of AZ Conservation Corps Interns and FVRG volunteers, VWRC was able to survey almost 4,000 acres of private and public land for invasive plants this year. Close to 10,000 acres have been mapped since 2011.

Many thanks to all VWRC Partners who contributes to the success of this program, especially our funders! Continued support and participation from VWRC Partners, especially land management agencies and private landowners, are essential if the Verde Watershed is to be a self-sustaining, diverse, and resilient riparian ecosystem.



“Serving as an AmeriCorps member with Friends of Verde River Greenway and VWRC has prepared me for my graduate assistantship at the University of Arizona where I will be starting in the fall”.

Hannah Farrell, Field Data Coordinator/AmeriCorps

Friends Volunteers Making a Difference

Friends of Verde River Greenway Volunteers work throughout our communities building and maintaining trails, clearing river access points and removing invasive plants. During the fiscal year FVRG volunteers have contributed more than 3,300 hours with a total value of \$ 82,690.17!

THANK YOU FVRG VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

Friends of Verde River Greenway’s Founding Board Member Marsha Foutz has a passion for the Verde River and inexhaustible energy when it comes to engaging volunteers. During the fiscal year, Marsha led crews in array of projects across the valley including:

- ◆ Dorothy Benatz Trail Work: Town of Clarkdale
- ◆ Tree of Heaven Tree Digging/Removal: Dead Horse Ranch State Park
- ◆ Jail Trail Work: City of Cottonwood/Verde River Greenway State Park
- ◆ Invasive Plant Retreatment and Removal: Verde Lakes Club Estates, Camp Verde
- ◆ Invasive Plant Removal: Coconino National Forest Mormons Crossing at Oak Creek
- ◆ Invasive Plant Mapping: Verde River



Zachary Aichrath	Gregory Cooper	Wendy Harford	Bailey Lentz	David Perrey	SarahSterner
Sydney Alexander	Jeremiah Coriz	Matthew Harry	Harley Lindamood	Julie Polovitch	Brian Stultz
Nawaf AlQasim	Jason Crupe	Racheal Harvey	Gayle Mabery	Christopher Pope	Brandon Swapp
Tait Andersen	Stephen Darling	Joshua Higginz	Savannah Mackett	Kim Poucher	Crystal Tallman
Michael Aresty	Ida de Blanc	Sheryl Houston	Lori Makarick	Kendall Prasad	Hugh Taylor
Kathy Bainbridge	Audria Denna	Nancy Hughes	Jason Martinez	Megan Pump	Sarah Taylor
Sam Balda	Art Dinazo	Theresa Hughes	James Mast	James Quinn	Brad ThiUminy
Martin Ball	Hank Dingemans	Idean Hughshenas	Erica Masten	Ashley Razo	Robert Thomas
Edovard Beardsley	Dayle Dodge	Ahsa` Jensen	Bruce Maurer	Hannah Rice	Dale Torgerson
Ashton Bedford	Shahed Dowlatshahi	Anthony Jensen	Michael McCarthy	Jesse Rinehart	Bobby Treadwell
Daniel Boughter	Lyneth Dressler	Chris Jensen	Justie McClellan	Chad Roberts	Hayden Tull
Karen Bowers	Bob Ellis	Nick Johnson	Niz McDermot	John Robertson	Aiden VanDeuren
Kevin Bradley	Heather English	Nick Johnson	Maggie McDermott	Mike Roseman	Sara VanMarel
Haley Brandt	Stephaney Esqueda	Guy Jones	Melissa McMaster	Daihler Russel	Preston Vaudivier
Becky Brassfield	Erin Fall	Laura Jones	Jeremy McMurtry	Stacey Santos	Nico Visser
Tanner Bryson	Austin Fenton	Eric Jurisin	Rita Miller	Scott Schieve	Sophie Watso
Jan Busco	Marsha Foutz	Andrew Kantarov	Brandon Minenda	Rodin Schimper	Garrett West
Adrian Cardwell	David Fox	Steven Kappel	Christian Morgan	Charlie Scully	Margo West
Sarai Carter	Carmen Francesco	Theresa Kennedy	Jack Morgenstern	Matthew Sevinski	Caroline Yaros
Peggy Chaikin	Helga Freund	Austin Kessler	Karim Mour	Garrett Shae	Yavapai County Adult Probation
Diane Circincione	Jack Freund	Jillian King	Owen Murphy	Shannon Shaw	Britney Zell
Sal Circincione	Jeffrey Frisch	Zach King	Tammy Naef	Mike Snodgrass	
Bob Coates	Justin Gigliotti	Logan Kline	Chip Norton	Christi Sorrell	
Felicia Coates	Anthony Godina	Debra LaFrance	Nadine O'Brien	Matt Sovenski	
Colette Condon	Greg Gunlock	Jayne Lee	Katy Parker	Jake Spahr	
Ron Condon	Audrey Hamann	La Donna Lee	Levi Parker	Kurt Starbuck	



Friends Staff

Verde Watershed Re

THANK YOU!

Private Landowner Champions

You know that neighbor that is always willing to help out? At Oak Creek Valley Estates that neighbor is Will Blume. After the Oak Creek Valley Estates Property Owners Association signed a Habitat Improvement agreement with FVRG in 2012, Will joined them by signing his own agreement for his private parcel. Will showed up to all of the presentations FVRG gave to the board and larger community, supporting the HOA's decision to participate in VWRC's goals to improve riparian habitat.

When FVRG came to map the site for invasive plants, Will made sure to come and find us to say hello. He was interested in the process from the beginning, asking good questions and finding other ways he could participate. Once treatment started and there were

piles of *Arundo donax* that needed chipping, Will pitched in. After the VWRC crew's initial treatment, Will made sure invasive species didn't return by doing vigilant maintenance.

Will Blume



When VWRC held its annual meeting, Will came and spoke about his experience working with our crews. He provided valuable private landowner insight at the 2014 FVRG Strategic Planning Sessions. Will has not only donated his time but has made several cash contributions in support of re-treatment on his property and the HOA's riparian habitat.

Private landowner champions like Will are key to the success of VWRC.

Thank you, Will Blume!

For a project to go from just an idea to actual implementation there are many stages, and those stages often require people that are willing to take a risk. Bob and Barbara Predmore of Alcantara Vineyards & Winery took that risk in 2011.



At that time the Predmore's were approached by FVRG and asked if they would allow their river side property to be a demonstration site for Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC). Demo sites were created in areas with public access where VWRC could test field techniques and application methods. Knowing that the health of the Verde River is vital to the success of their vineyard, they enthusiastically signed on.

Since the time of initial treatment,

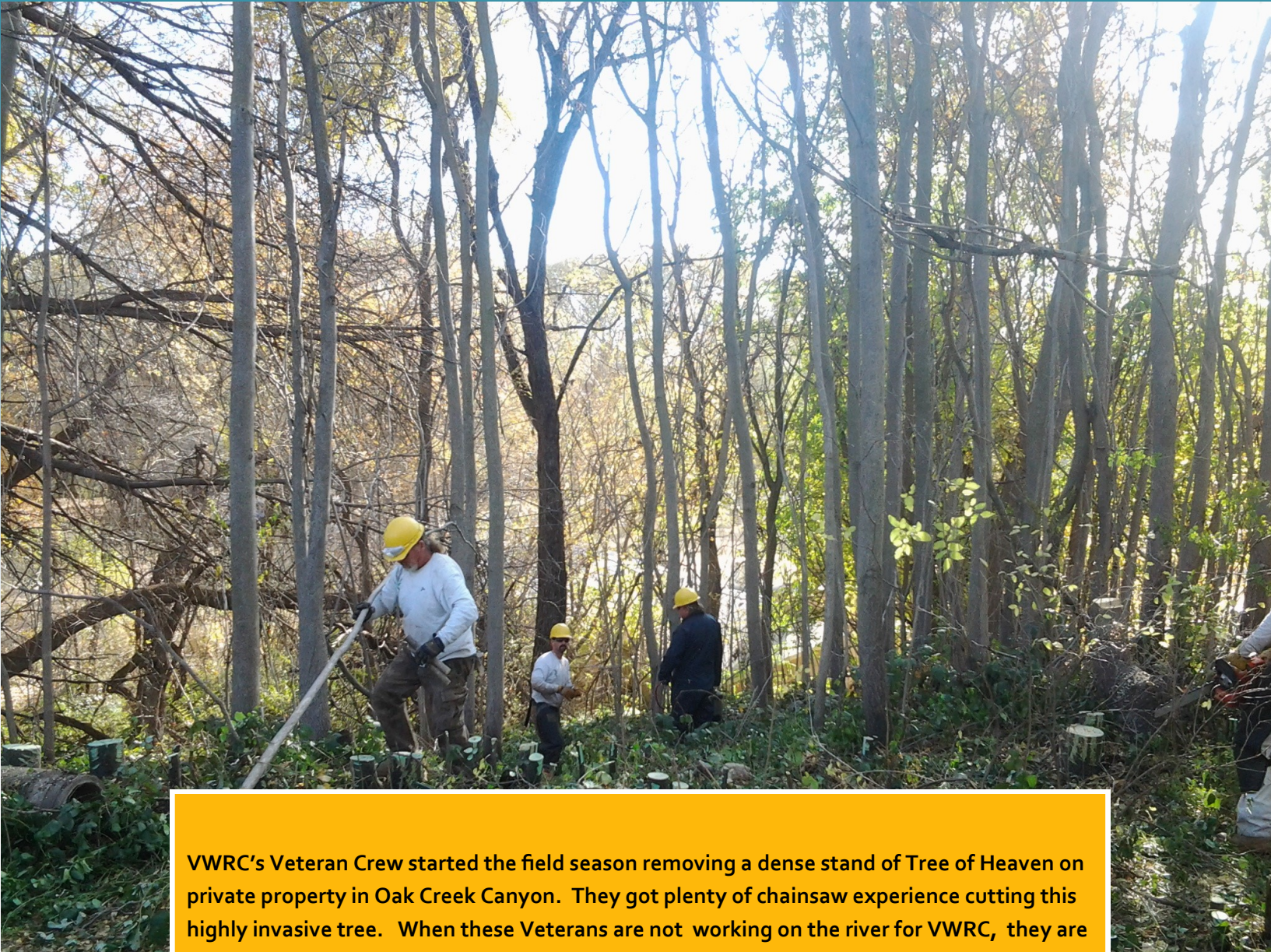


Bob, Barbara and Brian Predmore

VWRC crews have returned to retreat plants and monitor for treatment effectiveness while the Predmore's continue to spread the word about VWRC's success.

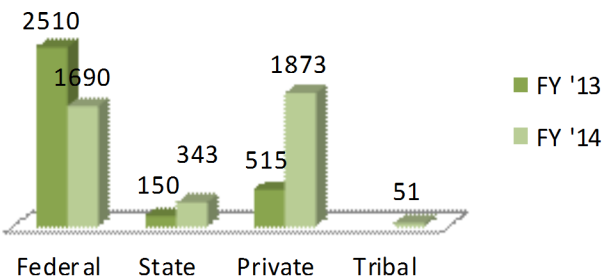
"As a private landowner of over 80 acres at the confluence of Verde River and Oak Creek, Alcantara Vineyard's association with Friends of Verde River Greenway has blossomed out of a common passion for the preservation of the Verde and creating a sustainable blend of our vineyards and wine venture, allowing tourists and the community access to the wonders of this special location as stewards of this wild river.

With Friends of Verde River Greenway providing the knowledge and experience in removal of invasive species, and our own efforts clearing manmade debris and controlling vehicular access points we hope to allow the river to return to its natural prominence. With the support of the String of Pearls access points and efforts to manage the uses drawing water from the river, we all have the same goal of a long term sustainable life for the Verde and its wildlife residents."

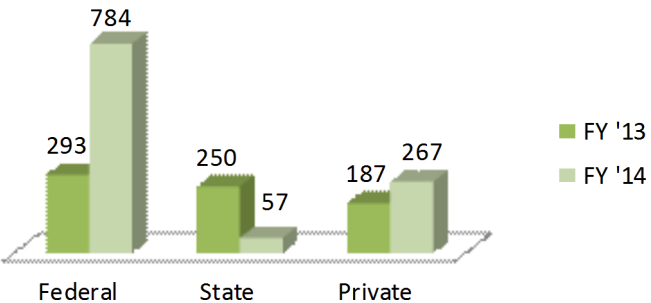


VWRC's Veteran Crew started the field season removing a dense stand of Tree of Heaven on private property in Oak Creek Canyon. They got plenty of chainsaw experience cutting this highly invasive tree. When these Veterans are not working on the river for VWRC, they are working on Hire a Vet projects in the Verde Valley with The Vetraplex, LLC.

Acres Mapped



Acres Treated



Salt River Project Hosts Stream Bank Restoration Workshop for VWRC Partners

In April of 2014, FVRG teamed up with Salt River Project (SRP) to sponsor a “Restoring Riparian Habitats” workshop focused on stream bank stabilization techniques using local native plant material. Natural Channel Design and Hoag Riparian and Wetland Restoration presented information and techniques to thirty people representing thirteen different organizations working on riparian restoration in the Verde watershed.

SRP offered to sponsor the workshop after several restoration sites with large infestations of *Arundo donax* along the banks of Spring Creek showed erosion potential. Oak Creek Valley Estates provided the site for the workshop, an area where VWRC crews had removed invasive plants in 2012.

Chris Hoag, a retired Wetland Plant Ecologist that spent decades working for the Natural Resource Conservation Service, developed many of the practices taught during the workshop. After a day in the classroom learning the science behind stream geomorphology and erosion practices, participants got a chance to apply their new knowledge on the banks of Spring Creek.

This valuable training will help VWRC partners working with private landowners who are concerned with bank erosion on their properties, especially after invasive plant removal.



VWRC Partner

“SRP views the sponsorship of this workshop as a continuation of our long-standing commitment to the health of the Verde River ecosystem.”

Ruth Valencia,
Manager, Biological and
Cultural Resources
Services, Salt River Project



Flow Restoration

In an effort to preserve the natural resources of the Verde River and its tributaries, Friends of Verde River Greenway (FVRG) is working with community partners to improve flow in the Verde River. Partnering with the Verde Natural Resource Conservation District and The Nature Conservancy, FVRG works with agriculture producers in the Valley to develop and implement conservation plans that address irrigation efficiency and habitat restoration. Implementing irrigation efficiency practices that result in reduced surface water use is one way to improve flow of the Verde River.

FVRG recently assisted Hauser & Hauser Farms to complete an irrigation efficiency conservation plan for 109 irrigated acres on their newly acquired Spur Ranch property. The Hauser Family farms 600 acres in the Verde Valley. When implemented, this plan could save more than 200 acre feet/year of surface water. Farm manager Zack Hauser, a sixth generation farmer, says that while they have gotten more efficient with their water use, watering his crops above ground still wastes more than necessary. Hauser and his family are interested in drip irrigation systems that would water the plants from below through subsurface drip tape. He estimates this could save one-third of what they currently use.

"When you're flood irrigating above the surface,

VWRC Partner



you have to run extra water just for evaporation and water going back into the ground," he explains.

Hauser isn't looking to save money on water because there's none to save, as payments are made based on the number of acres of land irrigated and not the amount of water used. There are, however, other advantages such as better crop yield and better land maintenance.

Then there's the simple desire to conserve a precious resource, a concept not lost on someone so connected to his environment.

Shield Ranch in Camp Verde, AZ where Zach leases 50 acres of agriculture land from The Nature Conservancy

