



Spring 2017

# Verde Watershed Currents

The Partnership has merged with Friends.

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Canada geese - our winter visitors shall return again.

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That wet winter seems far away from our normal spring.

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## The Partnership Has Merged with Friends of Verde River Greenway

2017 marks a new chapter in the pursuit to improve the health of the Verde River and its tributaries, and to secure their existence for future generations. This new era begins as a result of a decision made by two of the most prominent, effective organizations pursuing those goals, the Verde River Basin Partnership and Friends of Verde River Greenway. This momentous decision was to merge.

Over the last few years, both organizations have been working together on ways to coordinate our efforts to better serve the communities in the Verde River Watershed and to accomplish our similar visions. Leveraging the best of each organization and becoming a single entity allows us to combine our institutional knowledge and our successful programs to make the greatest impact. As of January 1, 2017, our merger became official.

Since its creation by federal legislation in 2005, the Verde River Basin Partnership has been a constantly evolving organization, fostering an increased awareness of the significant challenges facing our communities in regard to preserving our limited water resources. The Partnership became a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation in March of 2011 and expanded its efforts in educational outreach.

Throughout its history, the Partnership has been producing and distributing free, science-based educational materials from simple FAQ sheets, to discussion papers, to an in-depth illustrated textbook (Verde River Basin Water-Resources Primer) on water resources in the Verde River Watershed. It also has been promoting scientific studies that are germane to regional water issues, bringing high-profile speakers to our communities for water-resource presentations, and exhibiting at local events.



Ed Wolfe (left), former Chairman of the Partnership's Board of Directors, signed the merger documents with Chip Norton (right), President of the Board of Directors, Friends of Verde River Greenway.

Title block photo:  
Fossil Creek, by Valerie Millett

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Verde River, Derek von Briesen

## Our Merger (continued from page 1)

The Verde Watershed Association, a nonprofit that also shared a similar vision for the future of the Verde River Watershed, merged into the Partnership in 2013, advancing the Partnership’s outreach further through incorporating the Association’s successful monthly program series of free public presentations and field trips, as well as its newsletter publication, the Verde Watershed Currents.

Approaching 2017, the Partnership and fellow Verde River Watershed organization Friends of Verde River Greenway (Friends) explored a new evolutionary option. Identifying an opportunity to advance thoughtfully, efficiently, and strategically, the two organizations decided to pursue a merged future. Friends, which was established in 2007 as an affiliate of the Arizona State Parks Foundation, became an independent 501(c)3 in 2011. Friends envisions a healthy, flowing Verde River and tributaries, which support the environment, a thriving economy, and a high quality of life for current and future generations.

Friends works towards its vision through riparian restoration, community outreach, a business program to support river projects, a voluntary water-offset program, and by supporting the integration of land-use planning with water-resource management. Friends partners with many organizations, having key relationships with The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and local farmers in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (for

flow and habitat restoration). Additionally, Friends provides active support to the Verde Front and Sedona Verde Valley Tourism Council for river recreation and sustainable tourism efforts.

We are enthusiastic and ready to work together as one combined entity: Friends of Verde River Greenway. Moving forward, community members, stakeholders, and interested individuals will continue to benefit from similar programs and activities previously offered by the Partnership, as well as through the existing programs of Friends.

The Partnership’s vision - to secure the long-term health of the Verde River Basin’s groundwater and surface waters, by assisting citizens and community leaders in exploring strategies and management practices that will sustain the Verde River system for all future generations - will live on through the Friends. **Here’s to an even better future!**

Article written by Board Members and staff of both organizations, along with Currents Editor Marianne Davis

Below: Programs administered by Friends of Verde River Greenway



*“Any river is really the summation of the whole valley. To think of it as nothing but water is to ignore the greater part.” ~ Hal Borland*





## Canada Geese

The widespread Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is one of the most recognized birds in North America. Native to arctic and temperate regions of North America, its migration occasionally reaches northern Europe. It has been introduced to the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, and the Falkland Islands.

There are seven recognized subspecies, one of which, the giant Canada goose, is the largest goose in the world, with some individuals weighing more than 20 pounds. The lifespan of wild geese that survive to adulthood ranges from 10 to 24 years, but some have lived much longer.

Naturally migratory, they have typically summered in northern North America and migrated to the southern U.S. and northern Mexico when cold weather arrives. However, because of changing weather, settlement, and farming patterns, many Canada geese have altered their migrations. Some are not going as far south in the winter as they once did and others have taken up permanent residency in some areas.

>> *continued on page 4* >>

Article by Kathy Davis

## The State of the Watershed

Although we are experiencing some drier days as of late, looking back in the Verde River Watershed as spring began, conditions were completely different this year when compared to the end of recent past winters. This was the result of well above normal precipitation over the previous several months. The wet weather created a healthy snowpack over the higher elevations, wet soils, and high flows on the Verde River and its tributaries.

For the October through mid-March period, the Verde Basin accumulated an average of 12.37 inches of precipitation, which is 149 percent of normal. Much of the higher elevations received the abundant precipitation in the form of snow, with snow water peaking twice, once on Jan 25, 2017 and again on March 3, 2017. Peak snow water came in at 145% of median and resulted in above normal flows on the Verde River and its tributaries. For the December through March 15 period, the Verde River produced a volume of 350,000 acre-feet which is well above normal and almost 4 times the volume seen last year for the same period. In addition, the Verde below the Tangle Creek streamflow gauge recorded a peak flow of 29,000 cubic feet per second on February 28, 2017. Volumes this large and flows this high have not been seen on the Verde River since the winter of 2010.



Verde River

What does the remainder of the spring look like? For precipitation, the most likely outcome looks to be at least normal. However, with most of the snow gone, increasing sunshine, and warming temperatures, soils will begin to dry out with flows on the Verde River receding to more typical spring like conditions.

Article by James Walter, Salt River Project

## Conservation versus Efficiency

Water efficiency and water conservation are often used interchangeably; however, they are not quite the same. Both achieve the goal of using less water, but they approach it differently. Water efficiency generally refers to technological changes such as upgrading to a high-efficiency showerhead. Water conservation, on the other hand, reflects behavioral changes such as taking shorter showers.

Outdoors, an example of this may be in landscaping and irrigation choices. For instance, irrigation systems with features like timers and moisture sensors can



yield impressive water savings for your existing plants or lawn - an example of water efficiency. Conservation outdoors may include deciding to refrain from having a lawn in a dry environment, but instead choosing xeriscape or native plants to use less water. For irrigation, conservation can motivate us to check for leaks routinely throughout the system or harvest rainwater as a water source.

Water efficiency is important since it makes saving water automatic without behavioral or preference changes, yet it is still important to conserve water to avoid wasting a limited resource. A conservation mindset, combined with employing water efficiency, will help us ensure that there are adequate and sustainable water supplies for everyone, both now and into the future.

# Friends of Verde River Greenway

The Partnership's tagline, "informing the community about our water" captured the essence of the educational outreach work the organization accomplished over its many years.

Enhanced by the knowledge and experience that the Partnership brings to the union, that work will persist within the continuing merged entity, Friends of Verde River Greenway. Friends is a nonprofit conservation organization that has been working collaboratively at the local level for the past decade to restore and sustain river flows and riparian habitat, while building community connections to the Verde River and its tributaries.

A key component of building these connections is educational outreach, and Friends couples it with opportunities for community members to get involved, whether they are concerned citizens, local business owners, educators, local landowners, natural resources managers, community leaders, recreationists, and/or river and watershed enthusiasts of any kind.

To learn more about us and get involved, visit our website [www.VerdeRiverGreenway.org](http://www.VerdeRiverGreenway.org).

*The Partnership appreciates all the support from members, volunteers, readership, and the community over the years. Thank you!  
We look forward to our future with Friends, merged as one organization.*

## Canada Geese (continued from page 3)

The adaptable Canada goose can live in a great many habitats near water, grassy fields, and grain fields. They are herbivorous, feeding on grasses, sedges, waste grain, and berries. Nesting habitats include tundra, freshwater marshes, salt marshes, and lakes in wooded country. Some have become residents of parks, golf courses, suburbs, and other human habitats. In some parks and airports, they are so numerous that they are considered a nuisance.

Calls overhead from migrating Canada geese signal the transitions into spring and autumn. They form impressive and aerodynamic "V-formations", in which they rotate the front position to conserve energy. An altitude of 3,000 feet for migration flight is common, but they have been reported as high as 29,000 feet. They can fly at 62.5 mph with favorable wind, but typically travel at a much more leisurely rate. They honk their way along established paths that include designated "rest stops." These social birds remain in flocks year round, except while nesting.

Current Canada geese populations represent a successful wildlife protection effort that revived their dwindling numbers from the early 1900s. The geese are now a popular game bird, and some management



concerns in specific locations focus on keeping populations low or away to protect crops and airplanes.

Canada geese are in the Verde River Watershed because of the river. Grass and crop stubble are important food for wintering geese. Native vegetation offers food as well as shelter. The habitat created by the Verde River and its tributaries gives the gift of seeing the large aerial V-formations and hearing the distinct honking of Canada geese.

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