

The Otter

SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF THE VERDE RIVER GREENWAY



VOLUME ONE
SPRING ISSUE

POST-SEASON WRAP-UP

The Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC) has successfully completed its first treatment season removing over 65,000 invasive plants along the riparian corridor of the Verde River and its tributaries.

VWRC consists of over 100 private land owners and numerous public agencies and private organizations such as the Prescott, Coconino and Tonto National Forests, The Nature Conservancy, Yavapai-Apache Nation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Verde Valley Land Preservation, City of Cottonwood, AZ State Parks, AZ Game and Fish, Verde NRCD, Arizona State Forestry and The Tamarisk Coalition and

the Walton Family Foundation all committed to improving the riparian corridor of the Verde Watershed through the removal of invasive plant species such as Tamarisk/Saltcedar, Russian Olive, Giant Reed/Arundo Donax and Tree of Heaven/Ailanthus.

VWRC started its on-the-ground battle against invasive plants in March 2012 with a series of demonstration projects. Crews were brought in to test methods for removing invasive plants along the Verde River and its major tributaries.

See **Post-Season Wrap-Up** on page 4

PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S LOG

Recently I was giving a tour of the treatment area at Dead Horse Ranch State Park to an out-of-town guest. As we walked down towards the river on the neatly mulched trails, I examined the effects the contract crew had on the treatment area. I observed no negative effects from the treatment; in fact it was challenging to find evidence that the crew had even been there. We finally found a patch of invasives that had been cut low to the ground, hardly noticeable amidst the lush sea of native vegetation. I was asked by our guest, "Would you determine this area restored?" As VWRC committees continue to search for a reasonable definition of "restored" for the Verde, I said, "Yes, I believe we have met the goals of our management plan for this site and it's on its way to becoming a diverse, self-sustaining and resilient riparian area." Maintenance and monitoring are essential to the long-term success of the site. This is where volunteers like you are also essential for the long-term success of the program. Become a VWRC Volunteer today!

Have a great spring!

Anna

*news you otter know
about VWRC*

- ◆ **Meander Land: Neighbors Working Together Page 2**
- **Upper Verde Treatment Efforts Page 6**
- ◆ **FVRG Volunteers Page 7**
- ◆ **VVPOA: Mission Accomplished Page 8**
- ◆ **AlterNative Plants Page 11**
- **VWRC Calendar Page 11**

MEANANDER LAND: NEIGHBORS COMING TOGETHER

Oak Creek beautifully meanders through the rural community of Page Springs. It passes vineyards, cattle ranches, small family farms and sweet old homes tucked into hill sides. Through time, to many people's dismay, it has changed course, adding to a bank here, taking from a bank there, with stagnant property lines holding fast.

While doing outreach, I regularly spoke to several landowners in Page Springs including Ron Rovey, who has two parcels along Oak Creek, his neighbor Bill Wasbotten, who also has a riparian parcel, and landowner Virginia Bates in the same vicinity. They were all enthusiastic to make sure that the invasives along their stretch of Oak Creek were removed.

I was excited that there were so many property owners along one

stretch of Oak Creek that wanted to work with us. The hitch was that the riparian corridor in this area was not only owned by these three neighbors, but also by several other

neighbors on their side of the creek but further there are three neighbors that live on the opposite side of the creek. To make it even more challenging, the Mason ditch runs through many of these parcels limiting access to the riparian corridor. There were a cou-

ple of foot bridges to get across the ditch, but they were not big enough give our crews access to the huge Giant Reed stands and the Russian Olive grove that grew along the creek.

Ron Rovey suggested that I speak with George Reeve. So I looked at the County GIS



Parcel map and saw that George has a large parcel that meets up with several other parcels along the creek and that he was going to be the key to working on all of these properties. I

called George and he agreed to meet with me one afternoon.

We crossed a foot bridge that brought us to the riparian corridor and took a long walk

down along the creek where we saw Giant Reed patches as big as houses, a Russian Olive



grove, a few Salt Cedars and some Tree of Heaven; all of the invasive species that VWRC is interested in removing from the

creek side habitat. We could see that they stretched through all of the adjoining properties on the County GIS Parcel map.

George quickly identified our biggest challenge... "How would we get the biomass of all of these plants and trees across the ditch?" He volunteered his pasture as a place to store them for chipping or burning, but that was the easy part; the hard part was how would be get them over the ditch.

Being a man that is used to finding solutions to complex problems, George started planning. "If you built a bridge, you could bring it all out here" he said. And right before my eyes he figure out the majority of the materials we would need, the estimated costs and the proper construction methods

needed to build a bridge big and strong enough to move the large amounts of biomass onto the other side. The only problem was that in our budget, we hadn't counted on the expense of building a bridge to get to the trees; we didn't have the money. I told George I'd take it back to my team to see if we could find a solution.

A few days later my phone rang; it was George. "I found a trailer in Phoenix we can use to build the bridge. I'll buy it and bring it up." I just listened. "And then I'll have my guy Roberto come out this weekend and we'll put it into place." And low and behold, by the time our crew was ready to tackle the area the bridge had been built giving us access to some of the most densely packed Arundo patches along Oak Creek.

In total, the crew worked on the properties for four weeks. They tackled invasive plants on

parcels owned by seven different landowners, removing thousands of stalks of Arundo, hundreds of Tree of Heaven and Russian Olive trees and a few Salt Cedars for good measure.



And George pitched in even further. To help remove the biomass, he loaned the crew two quads to quickly bring debris over the bridge and in three hours he used his backhoe to safely move and burn all of the bio-mass in his pasture. The crew said that they had never met anyone that worked

as hard as George to help them get their job done.

When we talk to land owners, we let them know we have the crews and the methods, but in many instances we need help: equipment, on-the-ground labor and just general know-how. In George's case, he brought them all to the table to help find a solution to the challenges along his meandering stretch of Oak Creek.

By Laura Jones

VWRC Community Outreach
Coordinator



Thanks to our Crews!

VWRC thanks CREC and The Vetraplex crews for a wonderful season: Bruno, Eric, James, Timmy, Mark, Sean, John, Abigail, Sarah, Alex, Shonto, Joey, Max and Samuel. We wish you luck and good fortune in your next life adventure!

POST SEASON WRAP-UP (cont. from page 1)

The demo projects were an educational starting point for the inaugural treatment season. In addition to testing removal and treatment techniques, the projects served as a tool to help educate the public on the threats posed by non-native invasive plants.



In October 2012, VWRC engaged two full-time crews to begin work. The first was an eight person young adult crew from the Coconino Rural Environment Corps (CREC). The second was a six person crew of veterans hired through The Vetraplex. Both crews completed a rigorous training program that included chainsaw training, plant identification, risk management, herbicide applicator training and certification and leave-no-trace practices. By mid-October the crews were equipped to go.

An ambitious treatment agenda was set. Priority areas were identified in the Upper Verde, West Clear Creek and Oak Creek. The plan was to work in the upper reaches of the watershed before moving into the main-stem of the Verde. Other considerations in this planning process included the nesting habits of the endangered Southwest Willow Fly-

catcher, the logistics of additional groups doing work on public lands, and the physical limitations of removing thousands of invasive plants from

some very hard-to-reach places. The crews were both scheduled to work for 22 weeks through the alternating heat, rain, wind, sun and cold. Ideally, herbicide treatment occurs when these target species are going dormant or are already dormant. By the spring, the plants are ready to grow again and quickly start



pouring their energy outward. Our goal was for the herbicide to be absorbed into the plants' root systems, so we knew timing would be crucial to our success.

Work began on October 15th.

The Vets headed to Oak Creek Valley Estates, a private home owners association on Oak Creek with particularly heavy Giant Reed infestations. They worked for weeks along Oak Creek, painstakingly removing each Arundo stalk and treating it with herbicide. This treatment method allows

the herbicide to be pulled into the root ball and for the stand of reeds to die, while holding the root ball in place, for better erosion control. In total the Vets crew removed over 10,000 Arundo stalks from the creek bank.

Meanwhile, the CREC crew headed to Page Springs Hatchery, managed by AZ Game and Fish. The hatchery had a large infestation of Russian Olive and Tree of Heaven. The Russian Olive trees hugged the bank below the Page Springs bridge and worked their way onto private property below. In total, the CREC crew removed over 18,000 Tree of Heaven and Russian Olive trees on this property.

During this time, the crews also took advantage of the work that Yavapai County was doing along

See **Season** Next Page

POST SEASON WRAP-UP CHART

LAND MANAGER	ACRES MAPPED AND INVENTORIED	ACRES TREATED
USDA-Forest Service	445.49	292.67
AZ State Parks	Previously Mapped	111.31
Arizona Game & Fish Department	149.78	98.59
Private Landowners	233.35	234.43
Total Acres Completed During 2012/2013 Season	828.62	737

POST SEASON WRAP-UP (cont.)

this stretch of Page Springs Road. The County was working to remove a giant Sycamore tree that was rubbing against the bridge that crosses over the creek. They brought out a chipper and closed the road. This allowed the crews to safely work along Page Springs Road. This was a cost-share both or , since the county crew usually cuts the Tree of Heaven on this stretch but doesn't ever treat it so it simply comes back stronger the next year. Hopefully this collaborative effort will significantly reduce the regrowth of these trees.

Throughout the season the CREC crew also tackled some back country work in the West Clear Creek and Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Area. They went into these areas on eight-day spikes (work sessions), bringing with them all of the tools and supplies needed to treat the invasive plants they found. In the back country of West Clear Creek crews found only seven Tamarisk saplings, which they treated manually without herbicide. In the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, however, there were patches of Tree of Heaven that were over 10,000 square feet.



During this treatment season, the crews removed more than 65,000 plants from the watershed. They worked on 25 private properties, the Prescott and

Coconino National Forests, AZ Game and Fish Department , AZ State Parks and City of Cottonwood.

This work came with numerous challenges and great successes. The crew members shared a variety of feedback on their season end evaluation:



“Learned the importance of the riparian area.”

“I now have extensive herbicide experience and mapping skills... this will surely help me get a job with an agency in the future.”

“VWRC was very supportive and we had great communication.”

“Great job taking on this massive project and its complex logistics.”

Thanks to all of the individuals, agencies and partners that helped to make this inaugural season such a great success.

By Laura Jones

VWRC Community Outreach Coordinator

Phil Hall

VWRC Volunteer

UPPER VERDE TREATMENT EFFORTS

On February 27th, two AmeriCorps members and three volunteers set out along the Upper Verde River just outside Perkinsville. Their mission: to seek and destroy non-native Salt Cedar trees invading the river's riparian corridor. The team trekked blindly into the backcountry armed only with hand saws, loppers and herbicide. At first, they encountered invasive trees in discrete patches, which the troupe naively attacked with gusto—lopping, sawing, swamping, and applying herbicide with a tremendous air of optimism. To their awe and horror, as they moved down-



stream, the trees seemed to morph and grow and they soon found themselves in the midst of a seemingly infinite

mass of Tamarisk. "I better get my name in the newsletter for this!" declared nearly-

hypothermic volunteer Chris Jensen as he dragged cut Tamarisk across the river to stash it far above the flood zone.

Discouraged but not beat, the group pushed on. Luckily, backup was on its way (with chainsaws).

With the help of additional volunteers, AmeriCorps members representing Friends of Verde River Greenway (FVRG) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and personnel from FVRG, the Forest Service, and AZ Game & Fish, VWRC conducted three successful treatment trips on the upper Verde during the end of February/beginning of March.

The collaborative nature of VWRC was tangible as members of the different agencies helped each other through creek crossings, dug Tamarisk trunks out of piles of flood debris, and sat down for well-earned lunches together by the creek. The ever-changing cohort of workers, with

volunteers and members of different agencies arriving and departing as their busy schedules allowed,

left a sea of blue herbicide-drenched Tamarisk stumps in their wake (including one stump spanning nearly two feet in diameter). The rag-tag crew treated nearly two river miles and



cleared tamarisk from 41 acres of riparian forest. VWRC would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who contributed to making these treatment efforts a success!

By Veda Gobrecht

VWRC AmeriCorps Member

FVRG VOLUNTEER PROFILES

Marsha Foust

HVCOC

Marsha has an official title on the Friends Governing Council, “Co-Secretary, Friends of Verde River Greenway” —a volunteer role—but her unofficial title for all that know her is **Head Volunteer Cheerleader and Organizer in Charge!**



When Marsha enters a room you can feel the energy level rise. Her fast talking, stream of consciousness discussion often moves from topic to topic but she is sure to make her point known:

Marsh loves the Verde River, she loves her volunteers and she loves to have a good time removing invasive vegetation from the riparian corridor!

Over the last decade, Marsha has been bringing together a small but dedicated group of volunteers to tackle invasive plants along the Greenway. This work is part of the initial efforts that helped develop VWRC.

With loppers in hand, snacks and water stocked at the sign in table, and a quick stride, Marsha leads the way!

Martin Ball

FVRG Volunteer

Have you ever met someone with an energy level you can't imagine keeping pace with—maybe a child with boundless enthusiasm? In this case,



that someone is a grown man with the enthusiasm and energy of several people put together.

At most FVRG volunteer events you can pick Martin out of the crowd. You could say it's his lanky frame or his floppy hat.

But truly it's because he's the first to arrive, tools in hand, and a sharp eye for spotting the Giant Reed or Tamarisk trees to be tackled that day.

Martin has been a FVRG volunteer for 10 years. He has worked tirelessly on public and private lands, helping to reduce invasive vegetation within the riparian corridor. Usually, when the rest of the volunteers are ready to head home, Martin is still pointing out the next Arundo bunch to be tackled!

VVPOA MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Verde Village Property Owners Association's 35 acre riverside property is complete! Our partners mobilized, funds realized, and work began and we are happy to announce a successfully completed project.

With the hard work of our contract crew from The Vetraplex, we significantly reduced the invasive Giant Reed, Tree of Heaven and Salt Cedar trees along the river. VWRC staff and volunteers swamped and chipped tons of slash during this process and placed over 70 one-ton boulders to block existing wildcat trails, previously used by all forms of motorized vehicles. The avenues for ATV-riding, four-wheeling and large scale dumping of mattresses, appliances, and electronic gear have been barricaded.

A locked gate at the property's main entrance now provides a clear message that there is no vehicular traffic allowed along this floodway. Pedestrian access gating has been installed at the

main south entrance to the property. Finally, an informative kiosk welcomes visitors, announces the transformation of the area into a nature preserve, and provides a guide for acceptable use of the property.

On May 9th we held a dedication ceremony and dinner at the VVPOA Club House to celebrate this special collaboration among VWRC partners: Verde Valley Land Preservation, Friends of Verde River Greenway, Verde Village Property Owners Association, the US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife, Yavapai County and all the volunteers who made this project possible.

For now it is sufficient to say, mission accomplished!

By Steve Estes

VVPOA Community Outreach Director

VVPOA MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



Verde Villages Property Owners Association Nature Preserve
Margaret Paddock, Former President VVPOA



Thank you, VWRC Stakeholders and Supporters, for being a watershed steward & improving habitat in the Verde watershed.

Friends of the Verde River Greenway	Sierra Club	988 LLC	The Harper Family	Kohnan Family Trust
Verde Valley Land Preservation	SRP	Robert Ivie	The Sepulvedas	Chuck Sechrist
The Nature Conservancy	VVPOA	Shirley Roberts	William Wasbotten	Jan & Nancy Albright
NRCS	OCPOA	Ronald Mattia	The Youngs	Preston Blair
Arizona Game and Fish Dept.	Town of Clarkdale	Sugarloaf Realty Trust	Sunrise Arizona Subsidiaries	Joe Nackard
USFWS	Cemex	The Rachel's	Koss Family Trust	Jim Byrd
USDA-Forest Service	The Vetraplex, LLC	Virginia Barrett	Nina Hurley	John Parker
Verde NRC	CREC	Richard Schilke	Margie Brown	Betty Scroggins
Fred Phillips Consulting LLC	Oak Creek Watershed Council	Mary R. Ranch	JoEllin Dahlin	Don Reitz
Walton Family Foundation	Yavapai County	Harry Zweber	Elaine Vallely	Joel Edie
UA, Yavapai County Extension Services	Alcantara Vineyard	Deb Wahl	Bobby Ohlwiler	Donna Knipschild
National Park Service	Tate Family	The Ronan's	The Turners	James Mast
Arizona Wildlife Federation	Todd Robinson	Gloria Warner	Northern Arizona LLC	The Paleckis
Arizona State Park Foundation	Steve & Erin Estes	The Belcher's	Morgan Langen	Gehard Mayer
Yavapai-Apache Nation	Todd Robinson	The Wiehle's	Jan Krolczyk	Yavapai County
Arizona State Parks	The Hamiltons	The Tyrell's	Ryne Reed	Javelina Leap Winery
Home Depot	The Mohoneys	The Burn's	The Fatouts	The Shop in Cornville
Verde Valley Hardware-ACE	Oak Creek Ranch School	The People's	George Reeve	Bent River Books
NAU	Cup of Gold Water Co.	Dixie Hughes	City of the Lord	Windmill Nursery
Community Forest Trust	The Lindows	Barbara Mitchell	MUHS	
City of Cottonwood	Arleen Freeman	Pam and Allen Welch	The Baxendells	
Tamarisk Coalition	Linda Harkness	Margaret Thede	The Ledbetters	
Arizona State Land Department	Patsy Claus	Paul Thomas	The Archeological Conservancy	
	Keren Heuman	Dean Taraborelli	Caroline Di Re	
	The O'Connors	The Carstens	The Roveys	
	Sandy Lee	The Sitterleys	The Cook's	
	Elise Pokhias	Page Spring Vineyards	Edward Kvetko	
	John Lucero	Rhone Vineyards	The Savios	
	The Georges	The Wackerlys	Patterson Family Trust	
	The Livingstons	Mark Stevens	The Searwards	
	The Dominguezs	Otter Bend LLC		

Thanks for improving wildlife habitat in the Verde watershed



Special Thanks to VWRC & FVRG Volunteers!!!

Marsha Foutz

George Reeve

Chip Norton

Chris Jensen

Phil Hall

Mal Otterman

Duane Edwards

Martin Ball

Hank Dingemann

Jim Quinn

Joan Otterson

Bea Sass

Jesse Miller

Earl Poucher

Jessy Schmott

Kimberly Poucher

Kipian Horcos

Jim Kreunen

Jodi Allen

Theresa Hughes

Bruce Maurer

Shannon Shaw

Sarah Sonrenbery

Mick Emerson

Lo Modric

Devin James

Nawaf Al Q

Krystina Karczewski

Martin Yassi

Hugh Taylor

VWRC Steering Committee Members

Friends of the Verde River Greenway-**Chip Norton**

The Nature Conservancy- **Kim Schonek**

Coconino National Forest- **Laura Moser**

Arizona State Parks-**Steven “Max” Castillo**

Arizona Game and Fish-**Wade Albrecht**

Salt River Project-**Ruth Valencia**

National Park Service-**Matt Guebard**

Natural Resource Conservation District-**Chris Jensen**

USFWS (Partners for Wildlife)-**Kris Randall**

Tamarisk Coalition-**Jamie Nielson**

Yavapai-Apache Nation-**Fred Sanchez**

Prescott National Forest-**Albert Sillas**

Staff: Anna Schrenk, Laurie Parker, Laura Jones, Steve Estes, Veda Gobrecht and Amy Zimmermann

VWRC Sub-Committees

Outreach , Education and Engagement

Co-coordinators: Steve Estes and Laura Jones

Members: Max Castillo, Chip Norton, Anna Schrenk, Jaime Nielsen, Tahnee Robertson, Lynda Zanolli , Laurie Parker

Research and Monitoring

Co-coordinators: Kim Schonek and Ruth Valencia

Members: Laura Moser, Chip Norton, Jaime Nielsen, Max Castillo, Anna Schrenk, Kris Randal, Veda Gobrecht, Amy Zimmerman

Planning and Implementation

Co-coordinators: Anna Schrenk and Laura Moser

Members: Chris Jensen, Kim Schonek, Chip Norton, Ruth Valencia , Veda Gobrecht, Amy Zimmermann, Laura Jones

Sustainable Funding

Co-coordinators: Jamie Nielson and Chip Norton

Members: Anna Schrenk, Wade Albrecht, Laura Jones, Kristin Jespersen, Nancy Walls

Facilitators: Tahnee Robertson and Larry Fisher

Volunteer with VWRC!

Please contact Tom Brennen from Community Forest at communityforesttrust@gmail.com

VWRC Map & Monitor property for invasive plants.

No experience necessary!

ALTERNATIVE PLANT OF THE QUARTER

Native Plants of the Verde Valley

Get to Know: Arizona Sycamore (*Platanus wrightii*)

The Verde Valley lays in the heart of the *Arizona Transition Zone*- a diverse zone of mountains, valleys, and canyons which stretches diagonally across our state from the northwest to the southeast. This issue of *The Otter* features a native of the Arizona Transition Zone: the **Arizona Sycamore** tree. Known and loved for its giant trunk, beautiful arching white branches, and star-shaped leaves, our namesake sycamore is abundant in riparian (water-side) areas, canyons, and near streams and springs throughout the Verde Valley.



Described as one of the most handsome trees of the American Southwest, the Arizona sycamore has been providing wildlife habitat *and* benefits to humans in the Verde Valley for thousands of years. The main beams of Montezuma Castle at Montezuma National Monument are made of Arizona sycamore.

Information on native plant alternative for landscaping visit our web site at www.verdewrc.org

VWRC CALENDAR OF EVENT

JUNE

Thursday, June 6, 2013 9:30AM-11:30PM

Planning & Implementation Committee Meeting

Where: TBD

Wednesday, June 19, 2013 10 AM-3:30 PM

Improving Riparian Area on Private and Tribal Lands Conference

Where: Cottonwood Recreation Center

Tuesday June. 25, 2013 1-3 PM

VWRC Steering Committee Mtg.

Where: Yavapai County BOS, Cottonwood

Wednesday, June 26, 2013 9-11 AM

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

JULY

Wednesday, July 24, 2013 9-11 AM

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

AUGUST

Tuesday August 25, 2013 1-3 PM

VWRC Steering Committee Mtg.

Where: TBD

FVRG Governing Council

Chip Norton — President
 Tony Gioia — Vice President
 Diane Joens — Treasurer
 Marsha Foutz — Co-Secretary
 Peggy Chaikin — Co-Secretary

Councilors

Jane Moore, Yavapai County Water Advisory Committee
 Bob Rothrock, Verde Valley Land Preservation Institute
 Steven "Max" Castillo-Arizona State Parks

FVRG and VWRC

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 Cottonwood, AZ 86326

Visit our new office in "Old Town" at:
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 Cottonwood, AZ 86326
 (upstairs above the Red Rooster)

Call us: 928-301-4934