

The Otter

SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF VERDE RIVER GREENWAY

Adventures into the East Verde:

A Week in the Life of a Conservation Corps Crew



VOLUME TWO
SUMMER ISSUE

This April I had the pleasure of joining our Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) interns as an “alternate” for a week long back-country backpacking trip to map invasive species along the East Verde (an underexplored tributary to the Verde River located downstream of Fossil Creek). Prior to leaving, we heard stories of bears, cougars, boating mishaps; recollections of pure and rugged wilderness. Beyond the myths, no one seemed to have much concrete information about the East Verde. We were packed and ready for an adventure!

We got to the Twin Butte Trailhead and start down the Hardscrabble Mesa Trail in good

spirits, thinking “our hike is only eight miles downhill to the confluence of the Verde and East Verde,” where we were to begin our survey. We knew from planning that we would drop off the Mongollon Rim and descend around 2,500 ft., but the mood was still, “no worries, we’re tough, we got this”. Well, let’s just say it turned out to be considerably more challenging than expected! The trail was much longer and the terrain much steeper than we could have imagined (in-fact, the estimated mileage increased by the day!).

See **Adventures Page 3**

PROGRAM COORDINATOR’S LOG

Hi Friends,

Summertime for me has included boating the Verde (even with a Flow of 32 CFS), eating Camp Verde corn, enjoying monsoon storms, gardening, fireworks, farmers markets, LEAF interns, synthesizing data and planning for the upcoming VWRC treatment season, with a lot of grant writing sprinkled on top!!

During the past few years VWRC AmeriCorps Interns and field crews have inventoried and mapped over 10,000 riparian acres for invasive plants. (Contact us if you are interested in giving to this Intern program). Recent data management efforts show that VWRC is on target to accomplish the goals in the Verde River Cooperative Invasive Plant Management Plan in the five years a planned, IF we all continue to work collaboratively to support and promote this watershed-scale project.

I want to personally thank Hannah Farrell, FVRG’s AmeriCorps Field Data Coordinator, for the exceptional capacity you’ve added to this organization and partnership!

Enjoy this issue of *The Otter*, summertime and thank you for your continued support of VWRC.

Anna

News you otter know about VWRC

- ♦ **Meanderland Private Landowner Partners Stepping Up Page 2**
- ♦ **2014 Tamarisk Coalitions Annual Conference Page 4**
- ♦ **Yavapai County Adult Probation Team Pitches In Page 5**
- ♦ **Happenings Around the State Page 6**
- ♦ **Summer Interns Hit the Ground Running Page 7**

MEANDER LAND: PRIVATE LANDOWNER ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

In 2012 when the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC) began its collaborative partnership of public land managers and private landowners, many people thought that it would be difficult to get private property owners involved.

The common refrains were: “people won’t let you on their property; people only care about what is happening on their property, or people aren’t concerned about weeds growing in their neighborhoods.”

Well, 3 1/2 years later we are happy to say that the naysayers were wrong. Over 200 private landowners have signed Habitat Improvement agreements and are participating in the watershed-scale effort to control the spread of invasive plants in our riparian areas (VWRC).

These landowners are from throughout the Verde Watershed, from Dry and Wet Beaver and West Clear Creeks, to the Verde from above Sycamore Canyon all the way to Beasley Flats and from Oak Creek Canyon down to the confluence of the Oak Creek and the Verde River. Collectively they own and manage over 65% of the riparian acres on private land.

We will continue to recruit landowners throughout the watershed to participate in

VWRC. Our success of pulling together to tackle a watershed-scale project does come with a few challenges.

Our treatment season is only 22 weeks long (including a two week training program), beginning in September and ending in February. During the past two treatment seasons, our crews have put in 40 weeks of work on private land.

In scheduling our habitat restoration, we have been, for the most part, moving from upstream reaches of the river and tributaries to downstream reaches and tributaries. As we treat land in the upper part of the watershed we are controlling the seed source of invasive plants for downstream land and landowners. Our treatment schedule is also determined by the funding we are able to secure; some funding pays for work on private or state land only and some funding pays for work on federal land or all.

During these two treatment seasons, our Veterans river crew contracted from The Vetraplex has worked on nearly all of VWRC private land projects. During the 2013/2014 treatment season, the Vetraplex removed invasive plants from 191 acres on 20 private properties along Oak Creek. Also, the VWRC CREC Crew worked on six additional private properties adjacent to Dead Horse

Ranch State Park and in Camp Verde. VWRC and FVRG funded the treatment of invasive plants on 267 privately owned riparian acres during the last season alone.

This included removing more than:

34,973* Arundo/Giant Reed
665* Tamarisk/Salt Cedar Tree
8,817* Ailanthus/T of H
812* Russian Olive
*individual stems

As we prepare for VWRC’s 2014/2015 treatment season, we are filling in the watershed map with treatment and re-treatment projects. Here’s a sneak peak at what’s in store for the coming season...

- Oak Creek, below Cornville Road
- Verde River, Prescott National Forest land between Perkinsville and the Sycamore Creek confluence
- Clarkdale private and town properties.

These particular properties have been chosen because of the density of invasive plants and our ability to work adjacent to public lands making our treatment all the more effective.

Laura Jones FVRG

Private Landowner Fact Box!

Private landowners have contributed hours and equipment as in-kind match that value \$14,237.

ADVENTURES ...



The beautiful Verde River from our hike down... "We can see water!!!!"

Continued from page 1

The only thing more daunting than the climb in was the anticipation of the climb out, which ended up taking us longer than our 10 hour work day.

We endured rain, high wind gusts, clambering through slot canyons, across creeks, and through dense and often sharp brush. Fortunately (or unfortunately?), the only "threatening" wildlife we came across were five Gila Monsters (no joke!).

OK, enough of complaining about our miseries!

The truth is that we discovered a genuine paradise and oasis in the midst of the Sonoran desert. I love the feeling of knowing that you are so far into the wilderness that few humans have ever witnessed the special place you are standing (we were far off any trails and did not see a single other person the entire time). What a rare treat it is to see Saguaro Cacti so close to a natural flowing water body.



Swimming Hole

We found that the lower East Verde consisted of shallow riffles followed by deep pools, which made for many idyllic swimming holes and picnic locations. We also discovered a lot of tamarisk, of all sizes, our survey data shows that the canopy cover of tamarisk occupies more than 10% of the total riparian area of the E. Verde.

Oh, I almost forgot one of the best parts: breakfast the morning after the climb out at the Pinion Pine (formerly the Knotty Pine) in Payson (a Conservation Corps tradition!).



Riverside Saguaros

Our interns have moved on to work for the Coconino National Forest for the rest of the summer. During their internships with VWRC, they surveyed 2652 acres for invasive species, re-treated giant reed, lead volunteer groups, entered data, and participated in outreach events. We hope to see these interns come back in the fall for VWRC's next treatment season!

Written by **Hannah Farrell-Field Data Coordinator, AmeriCorps Intern**

SURVEYING A WATERSHED FOR WEEDS

When VWRC stakeholders set out three years ago to start implementing the actions outlined in Verde River Cooperative Invasive Plant management Plan, they could not have imagined the infestations field crews would discover in our riparian areas. During the past three years several AmeriCorps Interns, Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) Interns and Friends Volunteers have hiked across more than 10,000 acres along the Verde Watersheds rivers and creeks searching for these non-native invasive plants; Tamarisk, Tree of Heaven, Russian Olive and Giant Reed. Three years ago, crews used a handheld GPS and a clipboard with paper and pencil to collect inventory data, whereas today we are using android tablets with mapping and form software to collect the same information. Crews mark the location of each plant or cluster of plants they find using the tablets internal GPS and record information about each infestation and the site. VWRC's use of tablets has greatly reduced the processing time and cases of errors. Data entry is no longer a laborious task, the tablet is simply synced with our main database and voila! Okay, there's a little more to it than that, but not much.



Mapping is mostly complete. As new private landowners agree to participate in habitat improvement projects their property will be surveyed. On public land many of the unmapped areas lie in remote hard to access areas where either there are no known populations of these four target plants species or they lie in areas where we assume some exist and have estimated the infestations from nearby mapped populations.

These Interns have provided VWRC a great service by walking the riparian area and mapping invasive plants for this partnership. In turn, we have provided them the opportunity to participate in a watershed-scale restoration project, expand their ArcGIS skills, and work for a non-profit organization. Interns say they enjoy the field time more than any part of their service. It sure beats office work!

See Page 5 to view our current inventory map, the yellow and orange squiggles show what stretch of riparian area Crews and VWRC Partners have surveyed for invasive plants.

A few results from our inventory and mapping efforts show that of these four target plants, tamarisk was the most prevalent throughout the watershed. Crews found it up at the headwaters of the Verde River near Paulden to the East Verde River that drains Payson. Tree of Heaven is mostly in our urban areas, except for one surprisingly large infestation found in Sycamore Canyon. VWRC's goal is to reduce the cover of tamarisk and tree of heaven to less than 10% of the total riparian area. The good news is that a majority of the tamarisk is already less than 10%. Whereas the tree of heaven, if present, is typically greater than ten percent! The Giant Reed is dominate in some parts of the Verde River and Oak Creek and Russian olive is thick and spreading in a few isolated areas. See Page 6 to view our current treatment map, the yellow and red squiggles shows what treatment work was accomplished pre-VWRC (2012) and what has been treated in the past two years.

We are on the right path to accomplishing the five-year goals outlines in CIPMP, IF we continue to work collaboratively to support and promote this program.

WATERSHED FACTS

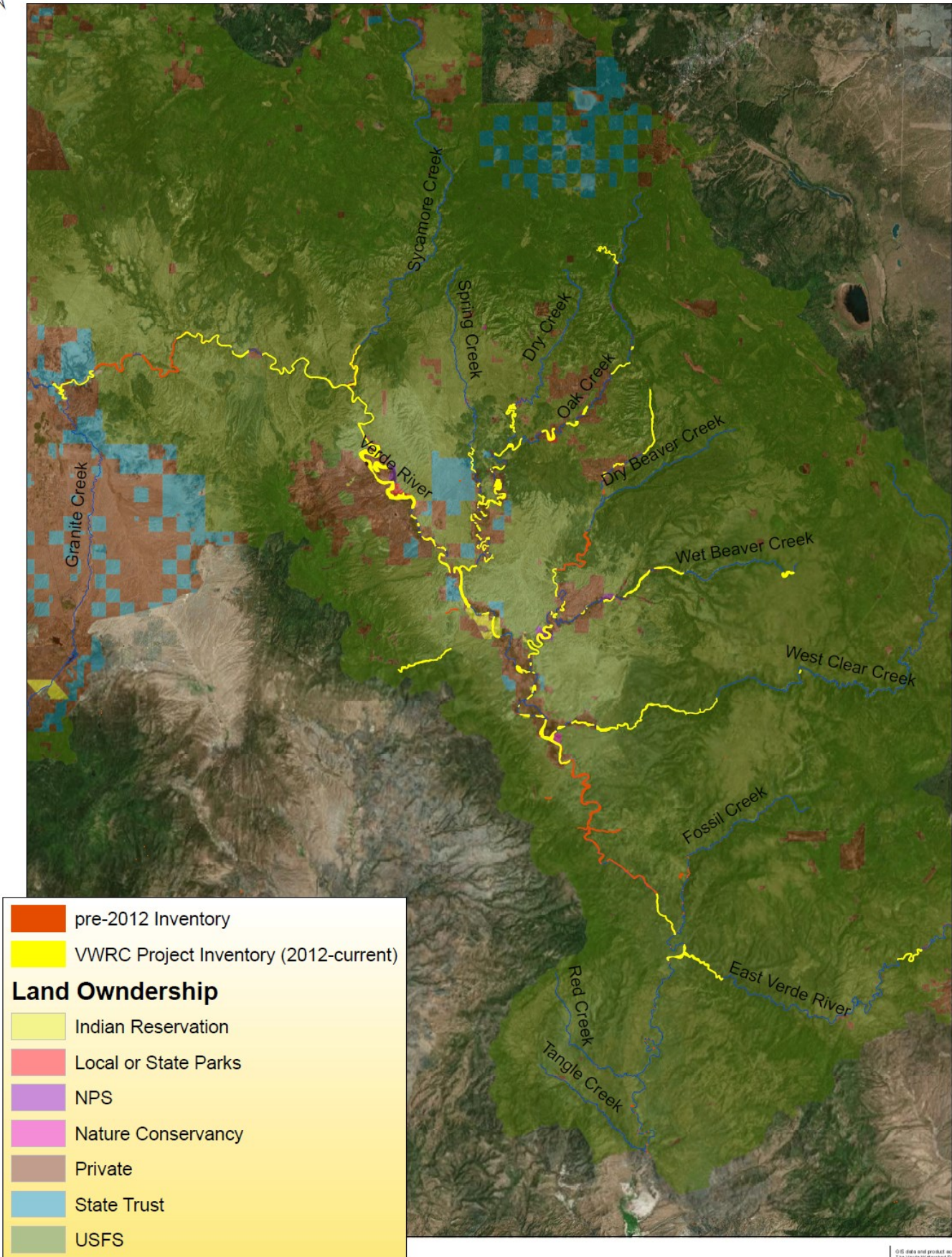
The headwaters of the Verde River is at Sullivan Lake.

The Verde Watershed is 3.7 million acres.

Rivers and Creek drain over 568 miles.

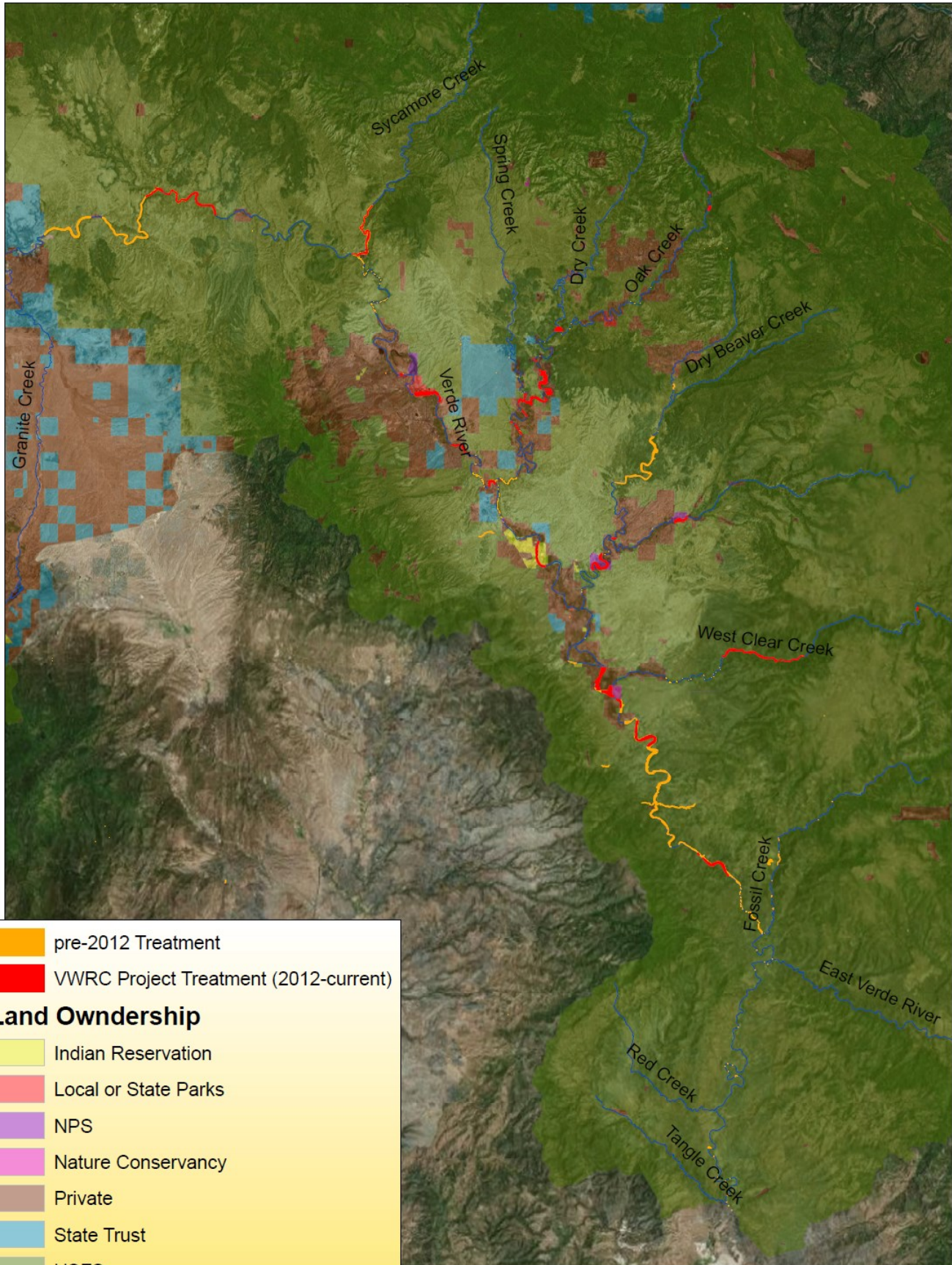


VWRC Total Inventory Area



GIS data and product accuracies vary.
The Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition
reserves the right to correct, update, modify
the GIS data based on re-inventories
and new information.
Paula Duff, Coordinator Hannah Perrell

VWRC Total Treatment Area



GIS data and product accuracy may vary.
The Verde Watershed Restoration Council
reserves the right to correct, update, modify
the GIS data based on new inventories
and re-evaluation.
Map Data Coordinator: Hannah Parnell

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE WATERSHED, STATE, BASIN

Grant Awards

Friends has received grant funding totaling \$180,200 this spring to further support the boots-on-the-ground work of VWRC! Here's a breakdown of the awards:

- ◆ **Coconino National Forest...** \$36,000
- ◆ **National Fish & Wildlife Foundation: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationist...** \$49,700
- ◆ **Yavapai County Community Foundation...** \$5000
- ◆ **Yavapai County Title II RAC Grant...** \$76,500
- ◆ **Arizona State Forestry– Invasive Plant Grant...** \$13,000

Thank You funders for supporting VWRC!

Thank You

Nancy Wall, Natural Resource Officer for the Prescott National Forest and an integral member of the VWRC Steering Committee and Funding Sub-Committee has taken a new position with the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest.

Thank you Nancy for your enthusiasm for community partnerships and collaboration. VWRC is a success because of your participation.

We wish you luck in your new job and all your future partnerships!

Albert Sillas

Thank You Albert for your strong support of VWRC since it's inception. Your participation will be missed, I hope we can still ask you to come talk to our crews about fish!

Save these Dates for VWRC

Tamarisk Coalition Annual Meeting
Advancing Riparian Restoration in the West
February 10th, 2015 to February 12th, 2015
Albuquerque, NM
Visit www.tamariskcoalition.org for details

River Network: River Rally
May 1st to May 4th, 2015
Santa Ana Pueblo, NM
Visit www.rivernetwork.org for details

Special thanks to the private landowners and organizations that joined FVRG and VWRC Partners in improving habitat in the Verde Watershed this quarter.

- ♦ **Steven Clough**
- ♦ **Lazy 5S Partnership**
- ♦ **James & Celelia Rappaport**
- ♦ **Judith Clark**
- ♦ **Bill & Tamara Gibbons**
- ♦ **Greg & Pam Darling**
- ♦ **Joan & Charles Harrington**
- ♦ **Nancy & John Allen**
- ♦ **Kate Joy**



Goodbye and Good Luck!!!

Many thanks to **Hannah Farrell**, who has worked tirelessly over the past year for Friends as our Field Data Coordinator. Unfortunately the first day of her job was a week before our crews start, therefore the learning curve was steep. Hannah took challenges like this in stride, adding great value to our organization and to the VWRC partnership. Hannah is off to graduate school at the University of Arizona where she has received a full graduate student assistantship in the School of Resource Management. We wish her the best of luck and thank her for her AmeriCorps service.

Many thanks to **Chris Bertrand**, who has served as an AmeriCorps Member during the year for The Nature Conservancy's Verde Program. Chris has contributed greatly to VWRC, helping with our website and mapping hundreds of acres with Hannah and getting creative with data syncing. Thank you Chris for your service and good luck in your future pursuits!

Special Thanks to VWRC & FVRG Volunteers!!!

Marsha Foutz

George Reeve

Chip Norton

Chris Jensen

Mal Otterman

Duane Edwards

Martin Ball

Hank Dingemann

Jim Quinn

Joan Otterson

Jesse Miller

Earl Poucher

Becky Brassfield

Kimberly Poucher

Kipian Horcos

Jim Kreunen

Jodi Allen

Theresa Hughes

Bruce Maurer

Shannon Shaw

Sarah Sonrenbery

Mick Emerson

Lo Modric

Devin James

Prescott College Ecology Class

Krystina Karczewski

Martin Yassi

Hugh Taylor

Jeremy Mc Murtry

VWRC Steering Committee Members

Friends of 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 Department-**Wade Albrecht**

Salt River Project-**Ruth Valencia**

National Park Service-**Tina Greenwalt**

Natural Resource Conservation District-**Chris Jensen**

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

Tamarisk Coalition-**Jamie Nielson**

Yavapai-Apache Nation-**Fred Sanchez**

Prescott National Forest-**Albert Sillas and Nancy Walls**

Staff: Anna Schrenk, Laurie Parker, Laura Jones and AmeriCorps Member Hannah Farrell

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, Chris Bertrand

Research and Monitoring

Co-coordinators: Kim Schonek and Ruth Valencia

Members: Laura Moser, Chip Norton, Jaime Nielsen, Max Castillo, Anna Schrenk, Kris Randall, Hannah Farrell, Chris Bertrand

Planning and Implementation

Co-coordinators: Anna Schrenk and Laura Moser

Members: Chris Jensen, Kim Schonek, Chip Norton, Ruth Valencia, Laura Jones, Chris Bertrand and Hannah Farrell

Sustainable Funding

Co-coordinators: Jamie Nielson and Chip Norton

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

Volunteer with VWRC!

Please contact Laurie Parker from FVRG at admin@verderivergreenway.org

VWRC Map & Monitor property for invasive plants.

No experience necessary!

ALTERNATIVE PLANT OF THE QUARTER

Native Plants of the Verde Valley

Get to Know: Smallflower Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea parvifolia*)

Sixteen different species of native mallow (Family Malvaceae) grow in Arizona, bringing a splash of bright color to dry, rocky slopes, roadsides, and sandy area. The globemallow, also known as “small-leaf mallow” or “Nelson’s globemallow” because it was named by Aven Nelson in 1904.

What it looks like

Native, perennial plant that grows to 2-3 feet tall. Many-flowered clusters of orange-red or peachy-colored flowers with 5 petals, growing up to one inch wide. Broad, whitish gray-green leaves can have 3 lobes or none (shallowly 3-lobed). Leaves are more triangular- or kidney-shaped, as opposed to the more deeply divided or narrow-lobed leaves of other mallows. White hairs on stems.

Uses

Of special value to native bees, providing nectar and a nighttime home for some of the smaller species of bees, which have been known to spend the night tucked safely into globemallow flowers! Traditionally used by Hopi people for a variety of medicinal and ceremonial purposes.

Non-native, invasive plants spread aggressively into natural areas, negatively impacting the economy, the environment, and human health. By working to control the spread of invasive plants in the Verde Valley, VWRC is also helping native plant communities that are home to smallflower globemallow and many other unique native species- a valuable part of our Arizona natural heritage.



VWRC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER

Wednesday, October 15, 2014 9-11 AM
Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.
Where: Cottonwood Middle School

NOVEMBER

Tuesday, November 4, 2014 10 AM—12 Noon
Sustainable Funding Subcommittee Meeting
Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building
Tuesday, November 4, 2014 1—3 PM
Steering Committee
Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building
Wednesday, November 19, 2014 9-11 AM
Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.
Where: Cottonwood Middle School

DECEMBER

Tuesday, December 2, 2014 10 AM—12 Noon
Sustainable Funding Subcommittee Meeting
Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building
Tuesday, December 2, 2014 1—3 PM
Steering Committee
Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building

FVRG Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Chip Norton — President
Tony Gioia — Vice President
Harry Sweet — Treasurer
Peggy Chaikin — Co-Secretary

Board Members

Marsha Foutz Bob Rothrock, Steven “Max” Castillo,
Kim Schonek, Denise Lurette

FVRG and VWRC

P.O. Box 2535
Cottonwood, AZ 86326

Visit our office in “Old Town” at:
903 N. Main Street. Suite B
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
(upstairs above the Red Rooster Restaurant)

Call us: 928-301-4934