

The Otter

SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF VERDE RIVER GREENWAY

Arundo Free Oak Creek



VOLUME FOUR
SPRING ISSUE



We are getting ready to roll out an all new and exciting educational campaign:

Arundo Free Oak Creek!



Keep your eyes out for our 10 foot tall Arundo banner and informative posters. Over **\$500,000** has been spent on crews specifically working on arundo removal on Oak Creek in the past four seasons. We will be working to finish the job but will need your help! Sign up to host an event or to participate in community outreach at the Farmers Markets.

PROGRAM MANAGER'S LOG

Hi VWRC Partners,

We have done it again! VWRC has completed our fourth year of coordinated efforts to improve riparian health, support our local economy, create jobs for young adults, tribal members and local Veterans, and engage and educate our community. Thank you for your support in making this season a success, whether you are one of our field crew members, a donor, a VWRC Steering Committee Member, a business owner, a volunteer, or simply a supporter of healthy rivers we are collectively making a difference in the Verde Watershed.

Please join me on Arizona Gives Day on April 5th, by giving back to Friends of Verde River Greenway so that we may continue to support the young adults and local veterans crews who have implemented the on-the-ground work that is improving the health of our streams.

Happy Spring,

News you otter know

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1/11/15: Service Day 1

We set off toward the Verde River to clean up the stretch of land between the Tuzigoot Bridge and the 10th street bridge. We split up into 2 groups, starting at different ends with high hopes to meet in the middle. Everything went wrong. Well, not everything, just the part where we were hoping to meet up in the middle of the wilderness.

Some interesting items we found included: a single croc, a diaper, clothing, toilet paper, a traffic cone, a chair, and many more items. Regardless of initial navigation troubles, both groups were able to meet up and dispose of the collected items properly.

Many of us thought today was especially rewarding as we had an opportunity to explore the outdoors, an opportunity many of us do not have in our day-to-day schedules.

We're looking forward to the rest of the week!

1/12/15: Service Day 2

We started our

morning at the Tuzigoot National Monument to learn about the history of the area. Our guide, Mary Ontiveros, was wonderful. She informed us about the early settlers, history of the ruins, environmental importance of the marshes in the area, and more. Back in Missouri, we're accustomed to the same kinds of



Mizzou Alternative Breaks College Students Volunteering with VWRC

ecosystems, we've learned that the Verde Valley houses many different kinds in very close proximity.

Since our service spanned the south side of the river the previous day, we completed our trash pick up along the north side. We found much more trash and amazing environmental sites along the trek. At one moment we would be making our way through a desert environment, the next a lush green forest. We also made extra effort to pay attention to the plants that were passing by thanks to identification cards that Sara Van Marel, Field Supervisor at FVRG gave us.

Throughout the clean up process it was easy to get discouraged by the never-ending trek or the large amounts of trash; however, at the end, being able to see the surprisingly large amounts of trash we were able to collect was amazing.



1/13/15: Service Day 3

Early in the morning we met up with Sara and Laura Jones of Friends of Verde River Greenway at the Dead Horse Ranch State Park. Here, we met with park rangers Dusty Humphreys and Justin Swiger. They provided insight and education on governmental initiatives pertaining to conservation in the area as well as history of the park itself.

We then travelled to an area along the Verde River to eradicate a particularly ornery patch of Tree of Heaven. We passed this area the previous day while cleaning up trash! These plants are particularly nasty because if you try to remove them they will grow back with 5 times the tenacity and multitude. The Tree of Heaven is no angel. They must be treated with herbicide and/or completely uprooted and removed.

Mizzou Alternative Breaks

College Students Volunteering with VWRC

Our group, using nothing but our hands, were tasked with pulling the smaller variety of the Tree of Heaven plants in the area. Of course, members of our group were nothing but ambitious. We ended up working together to uproot entire trees. Needless to say, those plants aren't growing back anytime soon.

Having the opportunity to not only learn but execute invasive species removal as a team was memorable. Even though the day was tiring and physically demanding, we were energized by each other's high spirits and the piles of Tree of Heaven remains we were creating!

1/14/15: Service Day 4

We woke up bright and early in order to meet up with Sara and a crew of AmeriCorps

Conservation Corps volunteers that was camping in the back

country, working to remove Tamarisk in the area. After trekking into the wilderness and traversing an ice cold river up to our thighs (only one member fell in completely), we split up into smaller groups to work with different crew members individually.

There is a lot of teamwork involved in removing large Tamarisk infestations from the riparian habitat. First, a group prepares and cleans up the area, exposing the primary trunk and roots of the plant. Second, a group works with chainsaws (utilized by the crew member, not us) to cut down the plant. Third, an assembly line forms to transport the carcass of the invader up the wall of the canyon. Fourth and finally, herbicide is sprayed on the exposed roots of the intruder. Keep in mind, these tamarisk colonies were literally the size of a small village.

Today was a rewarding day and a first of many kinds. Not many of us have worked around chainsaws before

and nearly none of us have crossed a river before either. One would think an ice cold river would be enough to dampen one's spirits but thinking of the volunteers who did this day in and out, we could be nothing but humbled and grateful for the opportunity.

Having the chance to speak with and learn from the volunteer's experience was incredibly insightful. Many of us are in our last year of education and we saw this week and these volunteers as important reminders of chasing our own dreams and goals.



1/15/15: Service Day 5

We spent the morning restoring trails in Dead Horse Ranch State Park. The trail we were working on was pretty thin and overgrown with branches, making it pretty difficult for people to walk or bike through. We used a variety of different tools to widen and level the trail to

make it safer for everyone, including (at one point) our feet!

After a few hours of that, we went to the Friends of Verde River Greenway office for a surprise: a pizza lunch! We really enjoyed hearing the stories of everyone in the office; we'd gotten the chance to talk with Sara a lot throughout the week but not Anna Schrenk, Program Coordinator or Laurie Parker, Program Administrator. It was pretty interesting how they got to work for the Friends of Verde River Greenway, especially to those of us graduating / still trying to figure out what we want to do after graduation. And we got some free swag to show our love of the nonprofit!

We had such an awesome week working with Sara and Friends of Verde River Greenway and learned a ton about the environment. We can't wait to bring it home!

Crew Update

WRAPPING UP THE SEASON

982 Acres Initial Treatment
 224 Acres Retreated/Survey
 454 Acres Initial Inventory
Total: 1216 Acres (43.5 River Miles)

It is hard to believe but our three crews are wrapping up their six month season. They have endured freezing temperatures, multiple river crossings a day, flat bottom boats and even an angry swarm of bees in the middle of winter. They've seen countless bald eagles, otter, beaver, turkeys and other wildlife. Together, their boots have touched more than 1000 acres of riparian habitat along more than 40 miles of the Verde River leaving little blue stumps in their wake.

Michelle Norris led our "Special Forces" crew from the upper reaches of the Verde near Paulden to the middle reach of Oak Creek and everywhere in between. The crew became plant ID experts taking detailed notes of all the plants they did (and didn't) see. They surveyed or retreated

over 800 acres focusing mostly on retreating private properties from two seasons ago and on surveying a gnarly 12 mile stretch in the upper Verde between Paulden and Hell Canyon.



The supervisor for the Initial Attack crew, Kevin Kennedy, fearlessly led his crew across the river twice a day for almost two months in the middle of winter. The crew worked from the Sycamore Creek Confluence downstream to private property. They started the season by

finishing up the stretch between the Tuzigoot bridge and the 10th Street bridge closing the gap in treatment. They wrapped up the season working alongside the Vetraplex crew at the Oak Creek

Confluence; a site with surprisingly difficult access considering its proximity to town.

Sean Borruso stepped up as the Vetraplex crew leader this year leading the crew through gigantic, tedious stands of arundo. The crew has perfected their chipper techniques after logging many hours chipping arundo.

Fortunately, they were

able to get a break from arundo and ended their season working at the Oak Creek confluence where they saw nesting bald eagles, hiked miles a day to get to the work site and encountered all four target species as well as multiple secondary species.

WELCOME TO THE VERDE WATERSHED RESTORATION COALITION!**Welcome to the new Nature Conservancy Volunteers!**

Rae Byars is a Verde River Technician Intern with The Nature Conservancy. She is the youngest of four children and was born and raised in Flagstaff. Rae graduated from Coconino High School in 2003, and moved to Ohio in 2004 to volunteer with a youth mentor organization. She worked as a hairstylist in Cincinnati for several years before returning to Flagstaff and starting her own salon in 2009. Rae was inspired to pursue geology from doing trail conservation work with the Coconino Rural Environment Corps in 2010. After working for two years on trails she returned to school to pursue a degree in geology with an emphasis in hydrology. Rae received her Associate degree from Coconino Community College in December 2012 and was awarded her Bachelors degree in Geology from

Northern Arizona University in December 2015. During her academic career she was awarded a Hooper Undergraduate Research Award (HURA) and studied turbidity levels in Upper Lake Mary. This research was presented at the annual HURA symposium. She was also selected for the Arizona Hydrological Society's 2014 Charles C. Avery summer internship. Rae is very excited about the projects that are currently in place along the Verde River and is looking forward to getting involved.

**Welcome Riley Scantelbury**

Riley grew up in the Verde Valley and has always loved the Verde River as a source of recreation and beautiful, natural habit. After graduating from Camp Verde High School Riley attended Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah and graduated last year with a B.S. in biology. While in college she worked and did research in and around the Great Salt Lake, and this experience cemented an interest in wildlife ecology and conservation biology. When returning to Arizona after graduation Riley jumped at the opportunity to work with The Nature Conservancy and be a part of the exciting work they are doing in the Valley to ensure that the Verde River remains a source of pride in our community, as well as an invaluable part of our natural environment.



HAPPENINGS AROUND THE WATERSHED, STATE, BASIN

The Tamarisk Coalition Conference was a great experience. This conference illustrated the confluence of pragmatic invasive management techniques into a wider environmental restoration framework. From skirting in and out of the various workshops at the conference, I developed deeper knowledge of both scientific and social issues that drive invasive proliferation, as well as prudent methodologies to curtail invasive spread. These workshops seamlessly fit into an overall riparian restoration theme. Whether it is wetland creation, remote sensing techniques to map tamarisk blooms, or the geomorphic impacts of vegetation removal, these workshops connected various restoration ideas into a wider framework.

In addition to simply increasing my knowledge of riparian restoration, this conference also increased my capacity to work on



projects in the Verde Valley. For example, we visited a restored gravel pit which had been made into a wetland. This is very similar to a project I am working on with Friends of Verde River Greenway, where we are in the planning phase of restoring a gravel pit to a healthy functioning wetland. Thus we were able to question the tour guide on the methodologies for creating wetlands, potential problems with the project planning and implementation, and methods to monitor the success of the project. This information has been crucial in the planning phase of our gravel pit reclamation project. From this conference,

I took away a copious amount of information and I am very happy I was able to go.

Click the link above for more information and pictures.

Submitted by: John Ford, The Nature Conservancy

Volunteer Opportunities

Mapping and Monitoring Training

Learn proper techniques for monitoring with

April 11-14th

3 hour commitment

Oak Creek Confluence Volunteer Day - May

Boating into the project site

Secondary invasive removal

Continue the work the crews have started

Pollinator Garden at Shield Ranch

June and July

Planting and
Site Prep

Tree Planting

Sometime in May

More Info to Follow

Cottonwood Experimental Garden

Farmer's Markets Need YOU!

Camp Verde
Saturday Mornings

Cottonwood
Thursday Afternoons

Cornville
Monday Evenings

For more information on any of these events or to sign up to participate contact Sara (515) 460-8788 or sara@verdewrc.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

VWRC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee

Wednesday, April 20, 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Mtg

Tuesday, April 26, 10AM- Noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Room

VWRC Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 26, 1-3 PM

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Room

May

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee

Wednesday, May 18, 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Meeting

Tuesday, May 24, 2016, 10 AM-Noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 24, 2016, 1-3 PM

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Room

JUNE

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee

Wednesday, June 15 2016 9-11 AM

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

Sustainable Funding Meeting

Tuesday, June 28, 2016 10AM- Noon

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting room

Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 28, 2016, 1-3 PM

Where: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors Meeting Room

Save the Date!

Click on any of
the logos for
more
information

SUPPORT US ON
ARIZONA
GIVES ★ DAY
APRIL 5, 2016



VERDE VALLEY
scitech festival

Week of April 3rd



**AlterNative Plant
Festival
April 18**

**Yavapai Apache Nation Earth Day
April 18**



April 21-24



**Arizona Water Sentinels
Program
River Monitoring Training
April 30**

Volunteer with VWRC!

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

No experience necessary!

For additional event info visit verderivergreenway.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS!



Come celebrate the Verde River!

RIOT In Old Town

4:00—9:00 p.m.

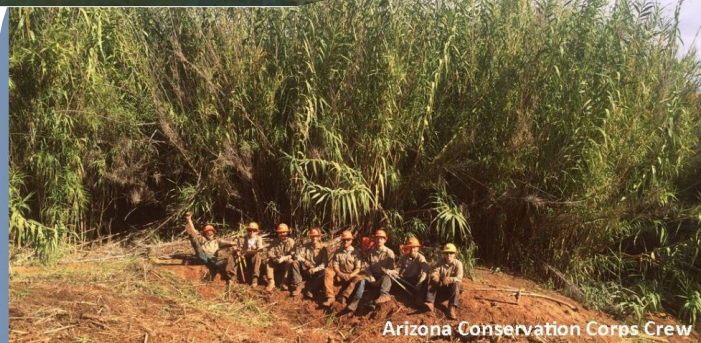
Free Beer School
@ 6:00 with
donation for a
healthy
Verde River!

SUPPORT US ON
ARIZONA
GIVES ★ DAY
APRIL 5, 2016

**The Jerome
Ukulele Orchestra**

Performing on the Patio
from 6:00—7:30 p.m.

Donate now



Arizona Conservation Corps Crew

Arizona Conservation Corps Crew in front of a stand of *Arundo donax*/ Giant Reed on Oak Creek.

In four years, our crews have removed more than 4,000 acres of invasive plants on public and private land along the Verde River and its tributaries.

The Vetraplex Veterans Crews at the Tuzigoot River Access Point where our crews have worked over several seasons to remove Salt Cedar, Tree of Heaven, Russian Olive and Giant Reed.

Our conservation crews work to remove all four of these non-native invasive species from the Verde Watershed creating healthy riparian habitat, improving river access and encouraging the growth of native vegetation.



The Vetraplex River Conservation Crew

Special Thanks to VWRC & FVRG Volunteers!!!

VWRC Steering Committee Members

Friends of Verde River Greenway-**Chip Norton**
 The Nature Conservancy- **Kim Schonek**
 Coconino National Forest- **Laura Moser**
 Arizona State Parks- **George Christianson, Dusty Humphreys**
 Arizona Game and Fish Department-**Wade Albrecht**
 Salt River Project-**Heather English**
 National Park Service-**Tina Greenawalt**
 Natural Resource Conservation District-**Chris Jensen**
 USFWS (Partners for Fish & Wildlife)-**Kris Randall & Jennifer Kaplan**
 Tamarisk Coalition-**Jamie Nielson**
 Yavapai-Apache Nation-**Vivian Stevens & David Lewis**
 Prescott National Forest-**Chris Thiel & Michael Kellett**
 Verde Valley Land Preservation- **Steve Estes**
 Verde NRCD Ed Center- **Erin Cody**

Staff: Anna Schrenk, Laurie Parker, Laura Jones, Sara Van Marel, Alex Heeren

Facilitator: Tahnee Robertson, Southwest Decision Resources



VWRC Sub-Committees

Outreach, Education and Engagement

Co-coordinators: Steve Estes and Laura Jones

Members: Anna Schrenk, Laurie Parker, Mary Ontiveros, Sara Van Marel

Research and Monitoring

Co-coordinators: Ruth Valencia and Michael Kellett

Members: Laura Moser, Chip Norton, Max Castillo, Anna Schrenk, Kris Randall

Planning and Implementation

Co-coordinators: Anna Schrenk and Laura Moser

Members: Chris Jensen, Kim Schonek, Chip Norton, Ruth Valencia, Sara Van Marel, Chris Thiel

Sustainable Funding

Co-coordinators: Wade Albrecht and Chip Norton

Members: Anna Schrenk, Laura Jones, Kristin Jespersen, Chris Thiel, Jenise Nyquist, Sara Van Marel

Facilitator: Tahnee Robertson

Special Thanks to all of VWRC's Funders

Arizona Water Protection Fund

Arizona Conservation Corps

Bonneville Environmental

Freeport McMoran

Friends of Verde River Greenway

National Forest Foundation

The Nature Conservancy

Coconino National Forest

Prescott National Forest

Yavapai Apache Nation

Walton Family Foundation



Thanks for improving
wildlife habitat in the
Verde Watershed!!

ALTERNATIVE PLANT OF THE QUARTER

Xeriscaping

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines xeriscaping as “a landscaping method that employs drought resistant plants in an effort to conserve resources, especially water.” This term is frequently misunderstood. Xeriscaping does indeed conserve water. Xeriscape plants are drought tolerant, low water use, often native plants. In this arid area where landscaping can use 30% – 60% of domestic water, the use of xeriscape plants offer an opportunity for significant water conservation.

Water conservation is not the only advantage of xeriscape plants though. Low water native plants also support the local food web, require less work and money to maintain. Milkweed, a native plant to the southwest, is an excellent example of this. Milkweed is critical to the monarch butterfly because it is the only plant that monarchs lay their eggs on. Milkweed also attracts different species of butterflies, bees and other pollinators that increase biological diversity.

Low water native plants require less work to maintain because they are already adapted to the environment. They contribute to environmental health because they do not need fertilizer and other chemicals, saving money. They also save money for homeowners due to reduced water costs. Clearly, there are many advantages to landscaping using xeriscape plants.

Frequently people immediately think of cactus when they hear xeriscape. This is another common misunderstanding of xeriscape plants. Cactus are indeed xeriscape plants, but there are other types of xeriscape plants. There are three general categories of low water, drought resistant plants. One category is



drought tolerant plants. These plants have adaptive characteristics that allow them to thrive in hot, arid environments by retarding water loss. Examples of these plants are mesquite, catclaw, fourwing saltbush, and creosote.

Another category of drought resistant plants are drought avoiders. This type of plant accomplishes its entire life cycle before extended dry periods. Examples of these plants include perennial desert wild flowers and grasses. The last category is succulents. Succulents frequently have thick waxy skins and extensive shallow root systems. These traits allow rapid absorption of water in wet times to survive dry times. Examples of these plants include cacti, agave and yuccas.

There are a wide variety of attractive xeriscape plants that conserve water, support the food web and are good for our environment. The University of Arizona Yavapai County Extension also provides information regarding xeriscape plants and principals at <http://cals.arizona.edu/yavapaiplants/>. Just click the link below to check it out!

Submitted by: **Chris Jensen, NRCD**



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FVRG and VWRC

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