

# CURRENTS & FLOWS

*Caring for our Verde Watershed*

## **IN THIS EDITION**

***Community Science on  
the Verde River***

***Upcoming State of the  
Verde Watershed  
Conference***

***'On the Verde River' is  
award-winning!***

***Historic Water Rights  
Agreement Reached***

***River Friendly Living  
Featured on Arizona's  
Family***

*Summer 2024*





## *Who are* **Friends** *of the* **VERDE RIVER**

This magazine is lovingly created by Friends of the Verde River, a purpose-driven community benefit organization and 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Friends envisions a healthy, flowing Verde River and tributaries that support our natural environment, vibrant communities, and quality of life for future generations.

*Learn more at*  
***verderiver.org***





# Your Support Sustains the Verde River

## ***We Appreciate You***

Watersheds are natural marvels that connect land, water, and communities. They provide crucial services such as clean drinking water, flood control, and wildlife habitats, which are vital to healthy ecosystems. By recognizing their importance and actively participating in their conservation, we can protect the Verde River and ensure the well-being for future generations.

## ***The Heart of Our Efforts***

As we prepare for the upcoming State of the Verde Watershed Conference, we remind ourselves of the true essence and purpose behind this significant event. While planning workshops and field trips, we focus on the real reasons for the conference.

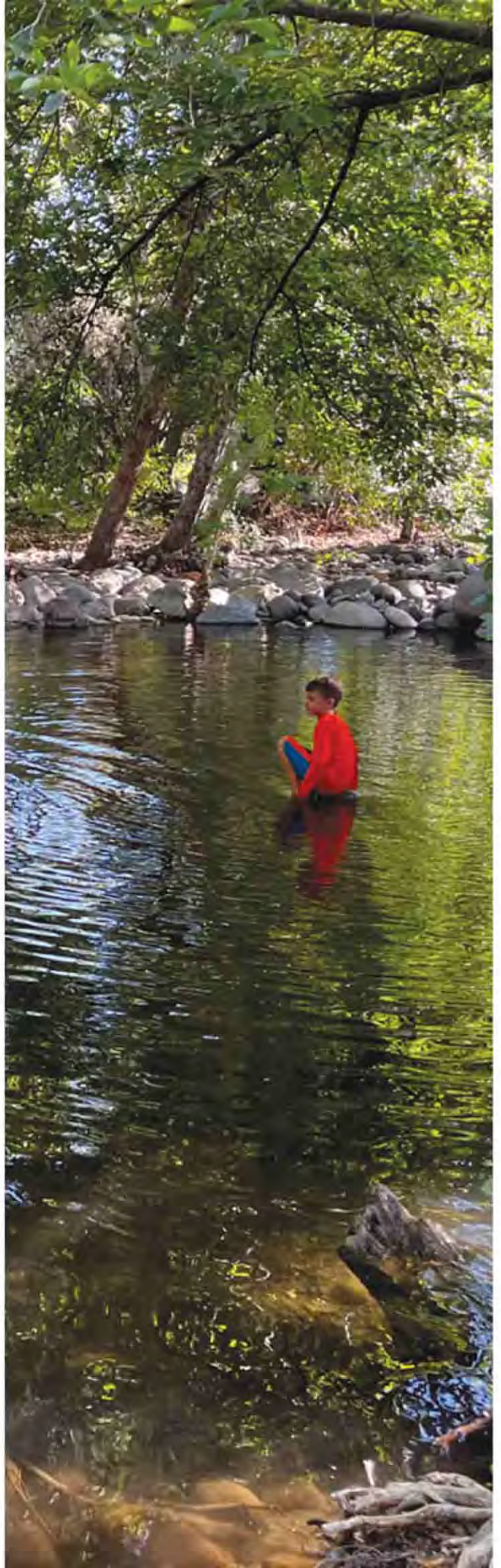
Your support ensures a healthy and flowing Verde River. Whether you volunteer, donate long or short-term, or subscribe to our e-news, your continued involvement is crucial for the future of this magnificent river that countless species call home.

## ***Join Us in Stewardship***

Each of us plays a role in this ongoing journey of stewardship. Together, we can make a difference, ensuring that the wonders of our watershed endure for years to come.

**From the Heart of  
the Verde River**

*Thank you*



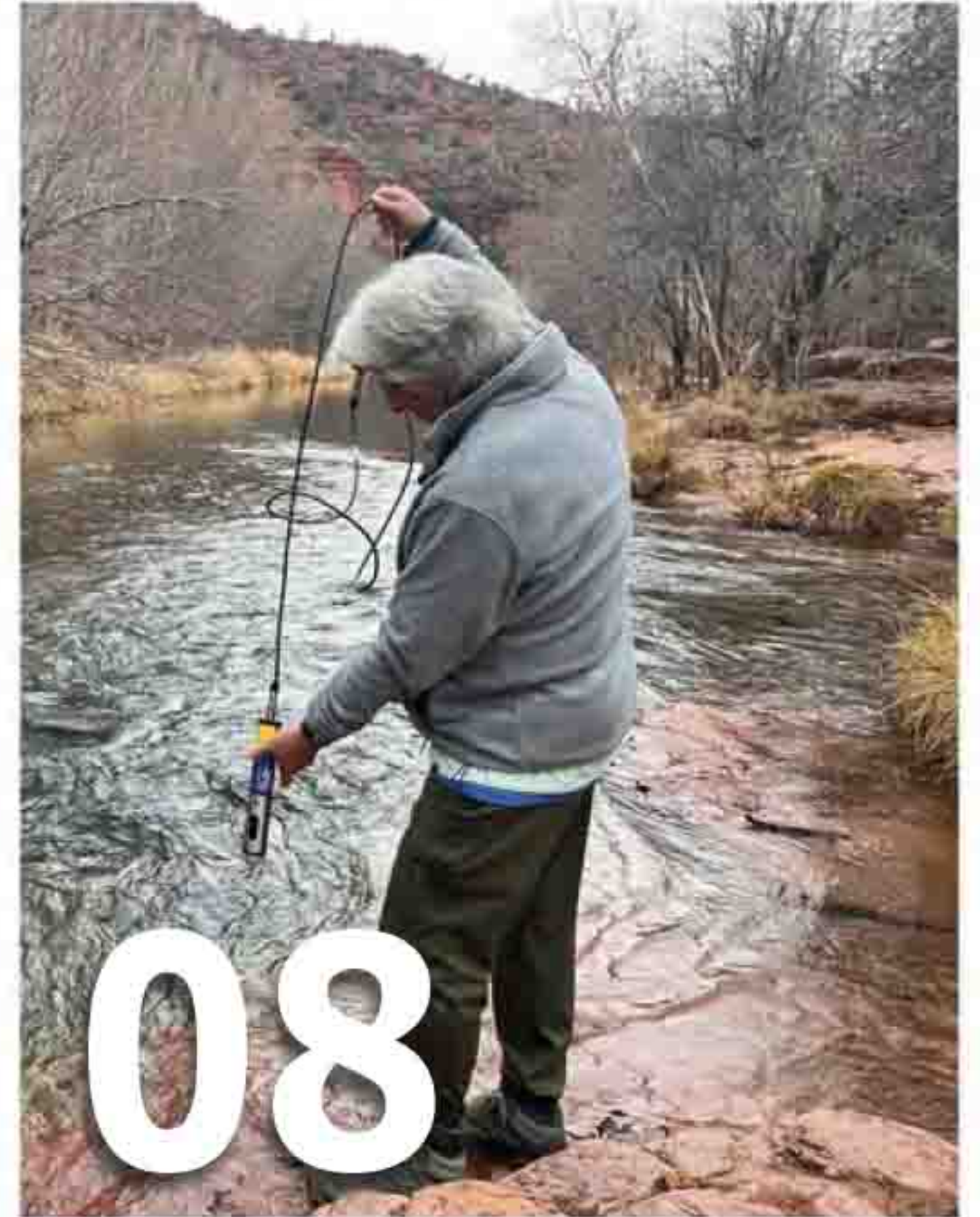




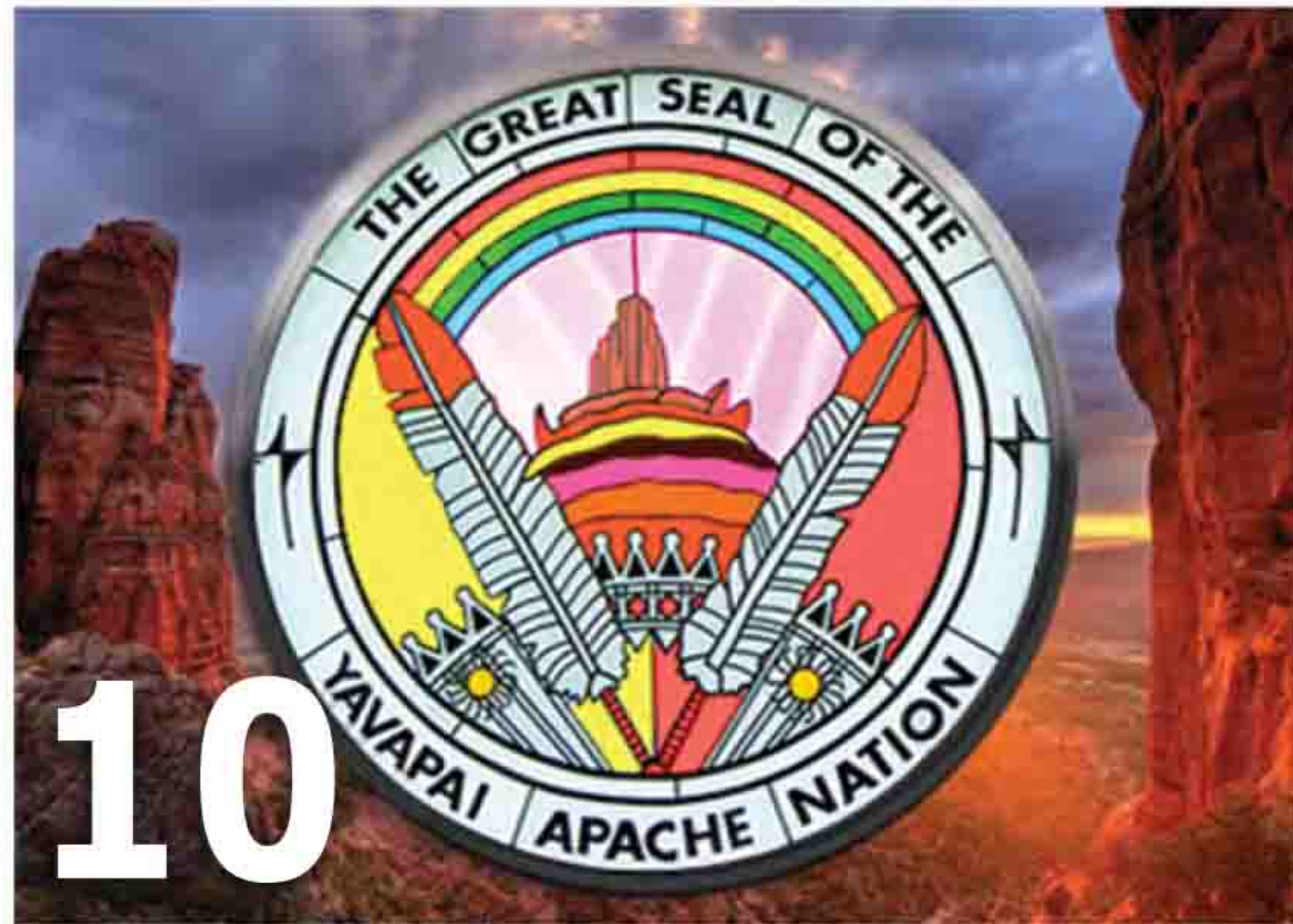
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# Community Science on the Verde River

Friends of the Verde River uses evidence-based science to inform restoration decisions. To accomplish this goal, FVR is reliant on community members who are willing to participate in science-based data collection. Our community science projects gather information about water quality, bird populations, otter populations, biodiversity, and watershed health. These efforts help us gain a better understanding of the state of the Verde Watershed

## Water Quality

### ***Program***

The Verde Water Watchers program involves community scientists visiting various locations throughout the Verde Watershed collecting water samples for turbidity, E. coli, Total Metals, and other parameters depending on the site.

### ***Why?***

Through this program, we are gaining a baseline understanding of the health and quality of our rivers and streams. These efforts will help evaluate and re-prioritize action plans to improve water quality throughout the Verde Watershed.

## Biodiversity

### ***Program***

The Annual Verde BioBlitz is a two-week-long event where volunteers observe as many species as possible throughout the watershed using iNaturalist.

### ***Why?***

Biodiversity has been declining at an alarming rate throughout the world. The Verde Watershed has an incredible number of species. By recording these species we can compare species over time. We can see species ranges changing with a changing climate. We can identify invasive species issues and more.

## Bird Populations

### ***Program***

In partnership with Audubon, community scientists conduct bird surveys along the Important Bird Area in Cottonwood.

### ***Why?***

Birds require healthy habitats, understanding their populations can help us understand the health of the ecosystem as a whole.

## Otter Populations

### ***Program***

The Otter Spotter project is a partnership with the River Otter Ecology Project and Fieldscope. Community scientists record otter sightings throughout the watershed.

### ***Why?***

There is very little data about otter populations in the Verde Watershed. River otters depend upon healthy watersheds and their presence is a sign of improving watershed conditions.





# Watershed Health

## ***Program***

Gully Busters is an erosion monitoring project where volunteers map and measure gully systems on the landscape.

## ***Why?***

This project identifies accelerated erosion on the landscape. This information will be used to plan and monitor restoration projects. These projects will reduce erosion and therefore build the resiliency of the landscape.

Reduced sediment loss will have positive impacts throughout the watershed resulting in improved groundwater recharge, water clarity, healthier ecosystems, and much more.

## **Register Now!**

### **2024 State of the Verde Watershed Conference**

**Registration is open for the State of the Verde Watershed Conference!** This conference gathers senior practitioners to share the latest science-based knowledge and to promote stronger partnerships to support the watershed.

Join your peers, experts, and dedicated river stewards for Ripples of Impact: Strengthening Watershed Partnerships. Our keynote speakers include former Arizona Governor and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, Yavapai-Apache Nation Chairwoman Tanya Lewis, and State Director for the Arizona Chapter of The Nature Conservancy Daniel Stellar. The conference will follow up on the 2022 State of the Verde Watershed Conference and preview the 2025 Verde Watershed Report Card. Projects have been implemented over the past few years to improve report card scores.

**Dates:** September 24-26, 2024

**Location:** Cliff Castle Casino Hotel, Camp Verde, Arizona

**Early registration for the 2-day conference is \$200, increasing to \$275 after August 20.**

The D.A. Ranch Social is \$60 for early registration and \$65 after August 20, while field trips are \$40 for early registration and \$60 after August 20. Participate in everything for a total of \$300 with early registration, or \$400 after August 20.

**You can help keep the Verde flowing into the future by sponsoring events like the State of the Verde Watershed Conference.**

Download the Sponsorship Packet by clicking [here](#) to see what each level of sponsorship offers your organization.

For sponsorship questions, contact:  
Susan Van Norman, Director of Stewardship  
Phone: 928-301-4543





# Boots on the ground

## Another successful monitoring season in the books!

Each year, Hudson Keffer, FVR's GIS Specialist/Restoration Technician, leads a crew from the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) to map the location of invasive species (tamarisk, giant reed, Russian olive, tree of heaven, Siberian elm, and Himalayan blackberry), complete habitat assessments, and monitor the success of restoration projects on the Verde River, over time.

This is one of our most rugged crews - who are happy to spend their 10-hour work days bushwhacking through the dense (and thorny) vegetation alongside the Verde River and its tributaries. In addition to the rough terrain and dense vegetation of the Verde River, this crew can expect to encounter the diverse and sometimes dangerous wildlife that call it home: rattlesnakes, great horned owls, javelina, toads, turtles, Gila monster, black bear, and many (MANY) insects.



*SCC Crew Member mapping invasive tamarisk*







By the end of the season, monitoring crew provides us with valuable insight into questions

***Which areas of our watershed are struggling?***

***Where are invasive species the most problematic?***

***Where should we be focusing our efforts to make a lasting positive impact?***



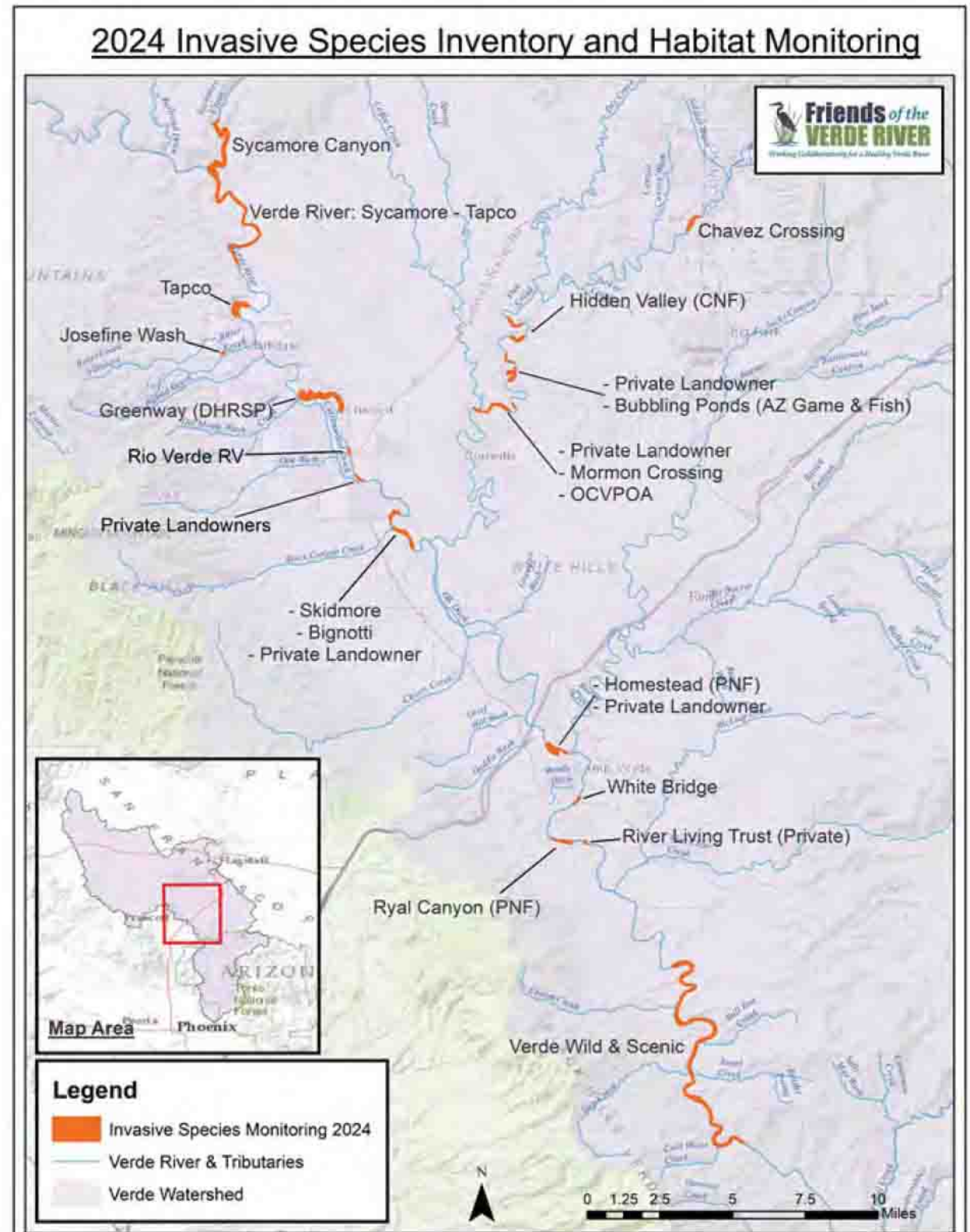
These questions are answered by the large amount of data that is collected by FVR staff and the SCC monitoring crew. Staff then summarize, share, and report back this information to our many partners through the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC) - allowing us to coordinate restoration efforts in priority areas.

This season we have:

***Mapped 1,494  
Invasive Species Stands  
Monitored 23 sites  
(public and private land)  
Assessed 1,821 acres***

## PRIVATE LANDOWNERS!

If you live along the river and have invasive plant species you would like to remove please reach out to us!





# Verde River Watershed

## Water Quality Monitoring

One of the most significant natural resources found in Arizona is the Verde River, its tributary streams, and its riparian forests. From the headwaters in Chino Valley to the confluence with the Salt River, the Verde is one of Arizona’s last perennial flowing rivers.

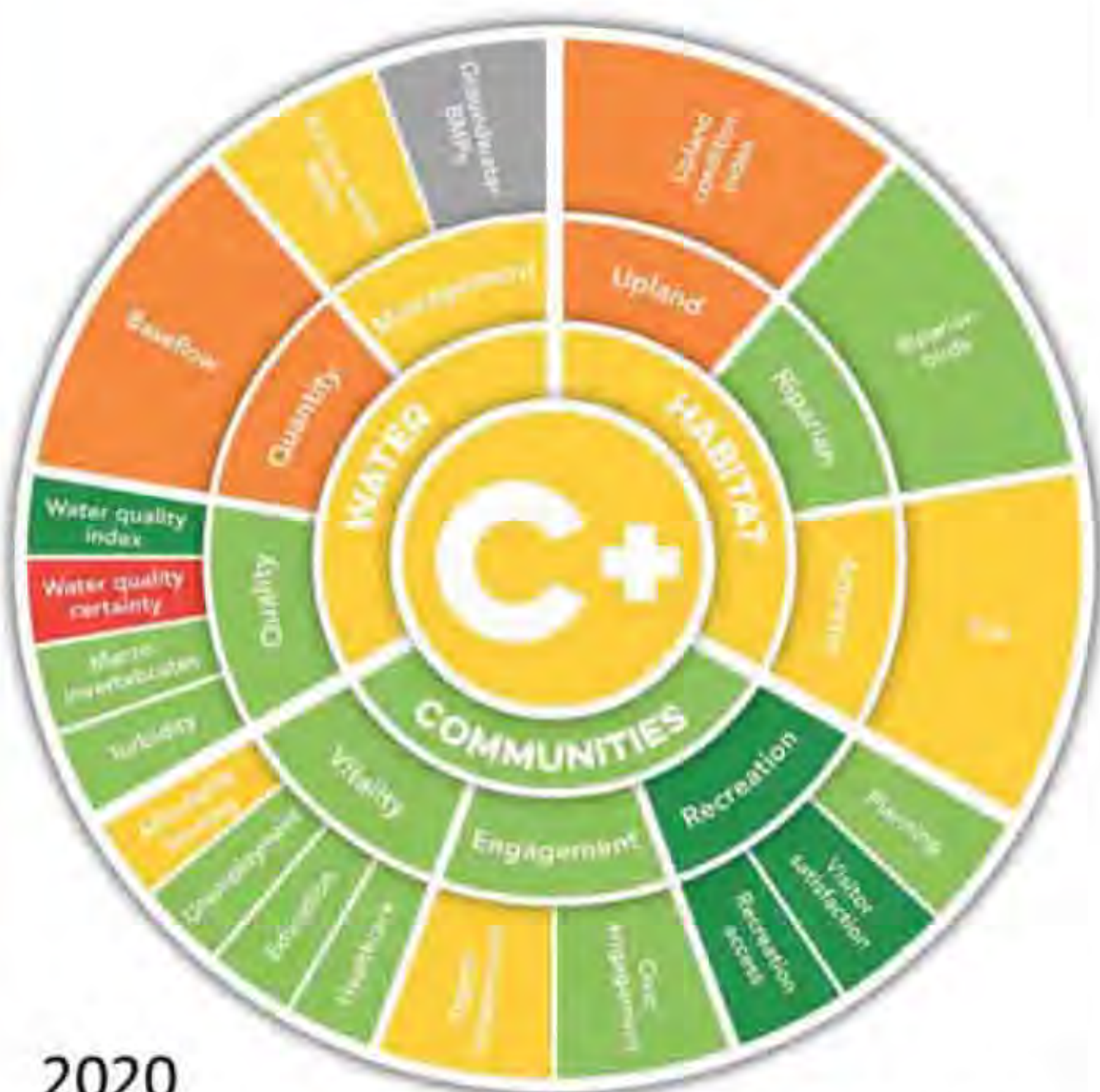
The Verde River is treasured for its wildlife habitat, water supply, recreational opportunities, and natural beauty. The river supports native plants, fish, and wildlife; local agriculture; and recreation and municipal water needs. Riparian forests are one of Arizona’s rarest forest types (<0.5% surface area), and the riparian forests of the Verde River are home to a Fremont Cottonwood-Goodding’s Willow Riparian Gallery Forest – one of the most threatened forests in North America.



In 2019, Friends of the Verde River (FVR) and our partners, including The Nature Conservancy, and U.S. Forest Service, developed the first Verde River Watershed Report Card. Through that process, we found gaps in our knowledge about where water is polluted and where it is clean. Where we had enough information, water quality was relatively good. Some areas of the Verde River Watershed are under-sampled primarily due to inaccessibility of those areas. Without enough information, we can’t locate problem areas to address issues.

To address this finding, FVR and our Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC) partners developed a Water Quality Monitoring Plan (WQMP or Plan) for the Verde River Watershed. Development of the WQMP was a collaborative effort. Once fully implemented, the data collected through the program will fill in data gaps. Better, consistent data will help us to identify areas of concern not meeting state standards and implement restoration projects to improve water quality in the Verde River and its tributaries.

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) identified 75 reaches within the WQMP area and, when fully implemented, water quality samples will be collected from each reach based on certain timeline (annually or quarterly). This will allow FVR and our partners the ability to assess water quality throughout the entire watershed and better identify concerns.



### 2020 VERDE RIVER WATERSHED REPORT CARD

Grade scale		
<b>A</b> Very good (100–80%)	<b>G</b> Moderate (59–40%)	<b>F</b> Very poor (19–0%)
<b>B</b> Good (79–60%)	<b>D</b> Poor (39–20%)	<b>U</b> Unsourced



To implement the plan, FVR is working with VWRC partners throughout the watershed and community science volunteers through the ADEQ Arizona Water Watch program. FVR leads Verde Water Watchers as a sub-group of the ADEQ program. Volunteers are trained to monitor water quality using ADEQ methods and annually audited to assess their skills. Water quality data is collected using specific equipment that is calibrated regularly and meets ADEQ standards. Data is shared directly with ADEQ and submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



*A Verde Water Watch volunteer, Hamilton, using probe to take water measurements in Oak Creek.*



*Aspen recording probe water data*

## ***How can you help?***

Join the Verde Water Watchers! The Verde Water Watchers are community scientists who have completed the ADEQ training to monitor water quality. The community scientists sample monthly and help us inform management decisions. As we implement the WQMP, we are looking for additional volunteers. If you are interested in learning more, please email [contactus@verderiver.org](mailto:contactus@verderiver.org).

**To learn more about what you can do to protect water quality, visit:**  
**[verderiver.org/what-we-do/water-quality/](https://verderiver.org/what-we-do/water-quality/)**



*Yavapai Flood Control District staff prep the turbidimeter to check the clarity of the water using their stream sample*



# Historic Water Rights Agreement Reached

**Yavapai-Apache Nation and Verde Valley Secure Water Future**



The Yavapai-Apache Nation (Nation) Tribal Council has unanimously approved the Yavapai-Apache Nation Water Rights Settlement Agreement. This landmark agreement, negotiated over decades with Verde Valley communities and various stakeholders, marks a critical milestone for both the Nation and the entire Verde Valley region.

Chairwoman Tanya Lewis stated, "This is a critical milestone in ensuring the Yavapai-Apache Nation's water future and protecting the Verde River. To settle, the Nation worked with our neighboring communities, the State of Arizona, the Salt River Project, and other stakeholders to attain agreement on a settlement that not only protects the Nation's water future but also ensures the benefits of the settlement will help support a sustainable water future for the entire Verde Valley."

This agreement secures water rights for the Yavapai-Apache Nation and promises a sustainable water future for the entire Verde Valley. The settlement's approval is a significant step toward enabling Congress to introduce and enact legislation that will permanently resolve the Nation's water rights claims in the Verde River Watershed.

Join us in celebrating this historic achievement that will benefit our communities for generations to come!



**Read the full story here**  
**[tinyurl.com/5n8njvx9](https://tinyurl.com/5n8njvx9)**



# Watch the Recordings

## Candidates on Yavapai County Water Issues

Did you miss the Candidate Forum on water management in Yavapai County? No worries! Recordings of the sessions are now available in the CWAG Video Archive.

***This forum addressed critical questions such as:***

**Should Yavapai County government enhance water management efforts?**

**Should domestic wells undergo monitoring?**

**What actions should the Board of Supervisors take to improve groundwater management in rural Arizona?**

### Yavapai County Board of Supervisors CANDIDATE FORUM ON WATER ISSUES

Hosted by the Citizens Water Advocacy Group



### Watch the recordings:

Thank you to the Citizens Water Advocacy Group for hosting this informative event!

**Prescott area  
District 1:  
Watch here**



**Verde Valley Districts  
2 & 3:  
Watch here**



**Paulden, Chino Valley,  
and Prescott Valley  
Districts 4 & 5:  
Watch here**





# Arundo Free Oak Creek

Friends of the Verde River (FVR) received funding from the Arizona Department of Fire and Forestry Management's (AZDFFM) Invasive Plant Grant program and the Forever Our Rivers 4Rivers Fund to remove riparian invasive plants along Oak Creek. Over the last few years, FVR has contracted with Arizona Conservation Corps and Verde Earth Technologies to work on this project.

This project has focused on removing giant reed (*Arundo donax*), tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), and tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) from private and public land along lower Oak Creek.

One landowner included in this project is the Oak Creek Valley Property Owners Association (OCVPOA). Since 2019, FVR and OCVPOA have partnered to remove giant reed from the riparian area of Oak Creek in the Oak Creek Valley neighborhood. Volunteers from the neighborhood worked with our crews to restore this habitat. We are very proud of this partnership!

**2023-2024  
TREATMENT SEASON**

**5,952 arundo stalks**

**2022-2023  
TREATMENT SEASON**

**3,600 arundo stalks**

**2021-2022  
TREATMENT SEASON**

**7,113 arundo stalks**





# Otter Spotters Wanted!

We are excited to continue our Otter Spotter initiative in collaboration with The River Otter Ecology Project. Whether you are already familiar with Otter Spotter or hearing about it for the first time, we invite you to join our effort to collect river otter sightings along the Verde River and its tributaries.

## ***What is Otter Spotter?***

Otter Spotter is a community-driven project aimed at tracking river otter populations to understand more about the health of the watershed. River otters are an indicator species, meaning their presence signals good environmental conditions, such as abundant prey and healthy vegetation.

## ***Why is this Project Important?***

Arizona river otters were reintroduced in the 1980s after being driven to local extinction in the late 19th century. However, little is known about their current range and population. By collecting otter sightings, we can gather crucial data to support watershed conservation and ensure a thriving ecosystem for all.

## ***How You Can Get Involved***

We need your help to reach our goal of 50 otter sightings by the State of the Verde Watershed Conference in September.



## **Participating is easy:**

### **Spot an Otter:**

Look out for river otters along the Verde River and its tributaries.

### **Report Your Sighting:**

Note the date, time, and location of your sighting. Record the number of otters and their behavior.

### **Submit Your Data:**

Upload your sightings, along with any photos or videos, to our FieldScope project.

Your participation can make a significant impact on our conservation efforts. Whether you're a seasoned Otter Spotter or just getting started, every sighting counts. Join us in this exciting endeavor and help us achieve our goal!

## **BECOME AN OTTER SPOTTER TODAY!**





# Honoring Nancy Steele

After six impactful years as Executive Director of Friends of the Verde River, Nancy Steele was honored with a commemorative bench in Rezzonico Park, Camp Verde, celebrating her leadership in transforming the organization. Her efforts in community outreach, citizen science, and promoting the importance of the Verde River have left a lasting legacy.



*We extend our deepest gratitude to Nancy for her dedication and wish her the best in her retirement.*



# Volunteer Appreciation Event

We are hosting a volunteer appreciation event on October 16, 2024, from 5-7 pm at Dead Horse Ranch State Park. The work that FVR accomplishes would not be possible without our vital volunteers. Volunteers are an integral part of each program, and help to make our events possible. Volunteers also provide the foundation to programs like Verde Water Watchers, and assist with restoration projects, just to name a few.

Please join us on October 16th to celebrate our volunteers. Whether you have volunteered or are interested in volunteering in the future you are welcome to attend the event!





# Interview About Our Children's Book

Do you have a moment? Check out this Arizona PBS interview with Phoebe Fox, the author, and Jim Fox, the illustrator, of our award winning children's book, "On the Verde River."

We are so grateful to be listed in Great Reads from Great Places this year. Only two books from each state are honored with making the list! It means our book will be in The Library of Congress and at the National Book Fair in August in Washington D.C.



## A Great Big Thank You to D.A. Ranch!



We extend a heartfelt thanks to D.A. Ranch for hosting our River Champions party! Their support and partnership are invaluable.

Make sure to visit their beautiful property to try their new Homestead Wines, including an Arizona Red Blend and an Estate Rosé of Pinot Noir. D.A. Ranch is generously donating 10% of the proceeds from these wines to support Verde River conservation as part of the River Friendly Living Business program.

You can learn more about River Friendly Living by visiting our website.

Thank you, D.A. Ranch, for your commitment to the Verde River and for promoting sustainable living!



**Book tours, buy wine (21+)  
and see more at [daranch.com](http://daranch.com)**





# River Friendly Living so far in 2024

In the heart of our communities, where nature intertwines with our daily lives, lies the lifeblood of our ecosystems – rivers. These vital waterways not only sustain our environment but also provide us with a sense of connection and vitality. Recognizing the importance of preserving these natural wonders, the River Friendly Living program has been making waves in 2024, inspiring and supporting river conservation efforts across our watershed.

At its core, River Friendly Living is a program that inspires and supports voluntary river conservation in our communities. This year, the program has seen remarkable progress, with a myriad of projects blooming throughout the watershed, thanks to the generous support of our dedicated business partners.

## Small Grants, Big Impact

One of the highlights of 2024 has been the awarding of 20 small grants to community members, igniting a spark of creativity and innovation in the pursuit of water sustainability, habitat improvement, and fostering community connections with our waterways. These grants have enabled individuals to turn their conservation visions into tangible realities.

## Among the array of projects completed this year, several standout initiatives exemplify the spirit of River Friendly Living:

### Irrigation Ditch Repair:

Addressing critical infrastructure needs, a River Friendly Living grant supported the repair of an irrigation ditch managed by the Red Rock Ditch Association. This project will reduce lost water by roughly 25 million gallons this year—a testament to the power of collaborative conservation efforts!





## Pollinator Garden at Tiny Camp Oak Creek:

Embracing biodiversity, the installation of a pollinator garden at Tiny Camp Oak Creek not only enhances the landscape but also provides crucial habitats for essential pollinators, fostering resilience in our ecosystems.



## Harnessing the Rain:

The implementation of active and passive rain harvesting systems showcase innovative approaches to water conservation, serving as a model for sustainable living practices. Eleven rainwater harvesting projects will be completed this year!





## Inspiring Future Stewards

In addition to project achievements, River Friendly Living has been instrumental in nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards. A highlight of the spring was a visit from Arizona State University tourism students, who gained firsthand insights into the importance of sustainable practices in preserving our rivers for future generations.



## Recognition and Participation

As recognition for their commitment to river conservation, River Friendly Homes across the watershed proudly displayed their 2024 participation stickers—a symbol of dedication to safeguarding our water resources.



## Join the River Friendly Living Program

Are you inspired to make a difference in your community and contribute to the conservation of our rivers? Whether you're an individual passionate about sustainability or a business looking to partner in environmental initiatives, River Friendly Living welcomes your participation. Reach out to us directly or visit our website to learn more about how you can get involved.



**[verderiver.org/get-involved/](https://verderiver.org/get-involved/)**



# Isaac Dudley and TinyCamp Featured on Arizona's Family

We are thrilled to share that Isaac Dudley, our Flows Project Manager, was recently featured by Arizona's Family local news. In the segment, Isaac talked about TinyCamp and Friends of the Verde River's partnership with River Friendly Living.

Watch the full interview and learn more about our initiatives at the links below.

Thank you, Isaac and TinyCamp, for promoting sustainable living!



[youtube.com/watch?v=f0HApwsFLRI](https://youtube.com/watch?v=f0HApwsFLRI)





**Tomcat  
Solo  
Kayak**



**Pelican-  
Poseidon  
Paddle**



**MARCHWAY Floating  
Waterproof Dry Bag**



**Purdy Verde  
Seat Cushion**



**\$250 Alpaka  
Raft Giftcard**



**L/XL Method  
PFD**

# Run the River RAFFLE

**AUG 1 - SEPT 30**

**BUY YOUR TICKETS AT  
[VERDERIVER.ORG/RAFFLE](http://VERDERIVER.ORG/RAFFLE)**



**KAYAKING PACKAGE  
WORTH OVER  
\$1,000!**

