



Summer 2024

# A Watershed Moment

A NEWSLETTER OF WATERSHED MANAGEMENT GROUP

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## Southern Arizona Wetlands Ready for the American Beaver

Wetlands have become rare in the Sonoran Desert, due to the extirpation of beavers in the 1800s, overpumping of groundwater, and poor land management practices. Fortunately, some wetlands still exist in Southern Arizona and are prime habitat for beaver reintroduction, like Mattie Canyon, a perennial tributary to Ciénega Creek. This photo of Mattie Canyon was captured by photographer Julius Schlosburg on a visit with WMG staff in April, with the goal to capture and share photos of the location where beavers will be reintroduced in 2025. The visit required navigating many unmarked dirt roads and going off-trail to drop into the rugged and remote canyon with a stunning wetland cradled by cottonwood trees.

**Writing and editing:** Lisa Shipek, Max Wingert, Valerisa Gaddy, Catlow Shipek

**Photos:** Julius Schlosburg, Martha Retallick

**Graphic Design:** Dennis Caldwell

**Front Cover:** A Mesquite tree rises on an earthen pedestal, perched where several creeks converge into Cienega Creek. Thanks to WMG's River Run Network members who have advocated for the beaver reintroduction since 2019, this wetland is the location of the planned beaver reintroduction by AZ Game and Fish in 2025.



# Release the Beavers!

## San Pedro Population Shrinks + New Survey In Glen Canyon

Since 2018, our Release the Beavers initiative has been working to restore healthy beaver populations to the San Pedro and Santa Cruz Rivers, and now this work has caught the attention of friends up north, at Glen Canyon Institute. Restoring healthy beaver populations is fundamental to the health of our desert rivers including increased flows, restored groundwater aquifers, and climate resilience. We're pleased that our community science beaver survey can now help others understand and advocate for healthy beaver populations.

### 3rd Annual San Pedro Beaver Survey: Less Beavers and Postponed Mexico Survey

This year's survey was conducted in March with the help of over 75 dedicated community science volunteers and partner organizations. Together, we hiked along 38 miles of the San Pedro River within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) in Arizona. Our team of volunteers recorded evidence of beaver activity, including dams, lodges, tracks, and tree chews, using a custom online survey developed by WMG.

After analyzing the results of the survey, we have concluded the beaver population is continuing to decline, with an estimated 11-14 beavers, down from 13-17 in 2022, and 16-20 in 2021.

The data collected can help partner agencies like the

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and AZ Game and Fish better understand beaver population trends and activity in the San Pedro River, which can inform conservation strategies to support this keystone species. As we continue to see the population decline, WMG is advocating to augment the population through beaver releases along strategic habitat areas.

WMG planned to conduct a beaver survey with our Mexico partners in April, however, the survey was canceled due to increased cartel activity in the beaver survey areas. We are strategizing with partners how we might complete this survey in the Fall, and grow support from more local community members.

Several factors may be contributing to the decline of San Pedro River, Arizona beavers:

- **Drought-Flood Fluctuations:** Variations in water presence from very dry seasons to large floods during recent monsoon seasons may reduce the beavers' ability to find stable habitat for food and lodging.
- **Predation:** The local mountain lion population has notably increased according to local biologists which increases predation of beavers.
- **Habitat Degradation:** Human activities that demand water, including agriculture, cattle ranching and new housing developments, continue

**Left:** Riparian trees get submerged with annual fluctuation of Lake Powell reservoir in Glen Canyon. Glen Canyon Institute (GCI) staff and Catlow Shipek taking a skiff to get to remote side canyons for monitoring.

**Middle:** Newly constructed beaver dam found within recently re-emerging habitat due to lower lake levels, allowing beavers to return. Photo credit Jack Stauss with GCI.

**Right:** GCI and WMG staff surveyed three side canyons with perennial streams, finding beaver evidence in all three.

to affect water available for riparian habitats. Cattle grazing whether intentionally or unintentionally in riparian areas also limits available food resources for beaver including growth of new, young trees. Understanding these challenges is crucial for creating effective conservation strategies to support and sustain beaver populations.

### Looking for Beavers Along the Colorado River

In an exciting new partnership, the Glen Canyon Institute (GCI) reached out to WMG to help them get started on surveying beavers, after noticing signs of beaver activity in the re-emerging side canyons of Glen Canyon due to lower Lake Powell levels. GCI is a non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of Glen Canyon as a free flowing river, with similar goals to our River Run Network. GCI has been conducting vegetation surveys and engaging experts to study the environmental impacts of extreme water level fluctuations caused by the management of Lake Powell. During these surveys, they discovered beaver activity and sought a monitoring tool that community members would be able to use to raise awareness and insight of this re-emerging riparian habitat.

WMG's Senior Program Director, Catlow Shipek, worked closely with GCI staff to plan an initial visit, providing opportunities for training and shared learning. Our staff

made the 10 hour road trip from Tucson to Glen Canyon in early June and got out for two days on a skiff to explore remote canyons and riparian environments.

The first beaver survey was a success, documenting fresh evidence of beavers in three canyons, including chews, beaver scat, dams, and even a beaver lodge. In fact, Catlow and Jack Stauss from GCI swam right into a beaver lodge, thinking it was a cave before seeing the beaver bedding, tracks, and chewed branches.

GCI aims to incorporate beaver conservation into their broader environmental research and restoration efforts. We were honored, and delighted, to visit Glen Canyon – a breathtaking and extensive canyon system with astonishingly rich and diverse riparian ecosystems beginning to emerge from the flooded reservoir as water levels drop in response to drought and water management decisions. This unique opportunity allowed WMG to share our experience, adaptable survey tool, and provide recommendations for future monitoring and conservation efforts.

For the full report and detailed survey results of this years' beaver survey, visit [Watershedmg.org/BeaverSurvey2024](https://Watershedmg.org/BeaverSurvey2024). If you want to take part in our upcoming Fall 2024 survey, we invite you to join the River Run Network at [WatershedMG.org/RRN](https://WatershedMG.org/RRN) – we'd love to have you.





## Living with Local Water, Native Edible Trees

The United Nations estimates that people need 50–100 liters of water per day to meet basic needs like drinking, cooking, and hygiene. For us in the U.S., that translates to 13-26 gallons a day. But we use so much more water than that! In Tucson, a water conscious city, our gallons used per person per day hovers around 80.

Could we cut our water use in half and get to 40? Or even less?

We at WMG think so. And the primary way to do that is to reduce or eliminate using municipal water and groundwater to irrigate our landscapes and gardens, saving 30-40 gallons per day of imported water and pumped groundwater. If Tucsonans could reduce to 40 gallons of water use per day, we could even forgo importing Colorado River water, an expensive, dwindling, and energy intensive water supply.

To go hydro-local, valuing and stewarding local water resources instead of depleting distant watersheds, we can expand our cultivation of native edible plants without taxing our water supplies.

The Sonoran Desert has an incredible diversity of edible plants with food production all year long. And

our native edible trees also provide great shade to cool our homes, yards, and streets.

Just imagine growing food without watering extra, just using what falls from the sky. We recommend planting and harvesting Velvet Mesquite, Desert Ironwood, and Blue Palo Verde. Foothills Palo Verde and Mexican Palo Verde also have edible pods, however, they don't provide great shade.

Desert Ironwood and Palo Verde beans are ready to harvest late Spring, and can be eaten like edamame. Once the beans are dry, they can be harvested and stored for cooking later.

Velvet Mesquite pods are the most common food source, ground into mesquite flour. While the beans are abundant, the opportunities to mill the beans are few, with just a few organizations in Southern Arizona that offer milling events. Operating a mesquite hammer mill is a growing market needing some passionate entrepreneurs!

Keep an eye out for our Native Edible Tree workshops at the Living Lab and in various neighborhoods. This fall we'll be teaching rain garden workshops and sending participants home with Native Edible Tree starter kits. Join these efforts, and you too can drastically reduce your water use, while growing more shade and tasty native foods.

Desert ironwood, Velvet mesquite, and Foothills palo verde all bloom in the spring in the Sonoran Desert. The blooms on these native trees then turn into edible beans, which can be harvested and used for a variety of culinary purposes.



**Desert ironwood**



**Velvet mesquite**

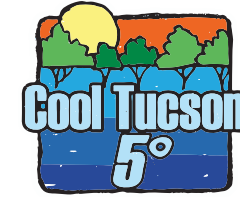


**Foothills palo verde**

A John B. Wright student actively digs a hole, preparing to plant a tree, while WMG's Luis Salgado finishes compacting soil on a newly planted desert tree in the background.



Two students from John B. Wright Elementary School push a wheelbarrow filled with mulch across a vibrantly painted playground, while others work in the background, loading more mulch to prepare the school grounds for new trees.



## Nurturing Hydro-Local at John B. Wright Elementary School

Our community conservation team collaborated with the enthusiastic students and staff of John B. Wright Elementary in midtown Tucson to help transform their school grounds with rain gardens. The project centered on constructing rainwater harvesting basins at the school, demonstrating a practical, eco-friendly approach to grow shade trees and native landscaping. The effort cools the school grounds for children, and also integrates a functional example of sustainable water management that students interact with daily.

In May, WMG's community conservation team spearheaded the project, led by Joaquin Murrieta and Luis Salgado. Alongside them were twelve 5th grade students (ages 11-12), their families, teachers, and neighborhood volunteers to transform the school grounds. Many of the students expressed that this was their first time planting trees and it is more fun doing work with friends. The youngest participant was 20 months old, and she did her share of moving mulch and watering the new planted trees.

The principal of John B. Wright, Brenda Encinas, was thrilled to have strong neighborhood support and for WMG to teach and install the rain gardens as it has been a five year process. Encinas shared, "Everyone is welcome to come by anytime to see the rain garden. We hope the whole community will love it and we know the students will love it".

The hands-on nature of the workshop allowed students and volunteers to learn about soil science, native plant species, and passive rainwater harvesting systems to foster a deeper connection to their environment. By actively participating in the construction, students gained practical experience and an understanding

of how their actions can positively impact their community's water resources.

The basins are designed to align with the principles of hydro-local, a concept WMG teaches emphasizing the use of local water sources for local needs. This approach reduces reliance on external water supplies, such as using the Colorado River and groundwater pumping and promotes resilience in the face of climate variability. Integrating hydro-local principles into the school environment helps students appreciate the value of conserving and managing water resources sustainably.

WMG's Rain Garden program, previously known as "BYOB" (Build Your Own Basin) helps people build basins and conserve water through hands-on learning. By engaging with schools, WMG's community conservation team aims to inspire the next generation to be proactive in water conservation and environmental protection. The success of the John B. Wright Elementary School project demonstrates by embracing hydro-local practices, we are not only improving our environment but also strengthening our community.

**Get involved today!**

Visit [Watershedmg.org/Event](https://Watershedmg.org/Event) to see upcoming events and

Visit [Watershedmg.org/RainGarden](https://Watershedmg.org/RainGarden) to learn from our educational resources.

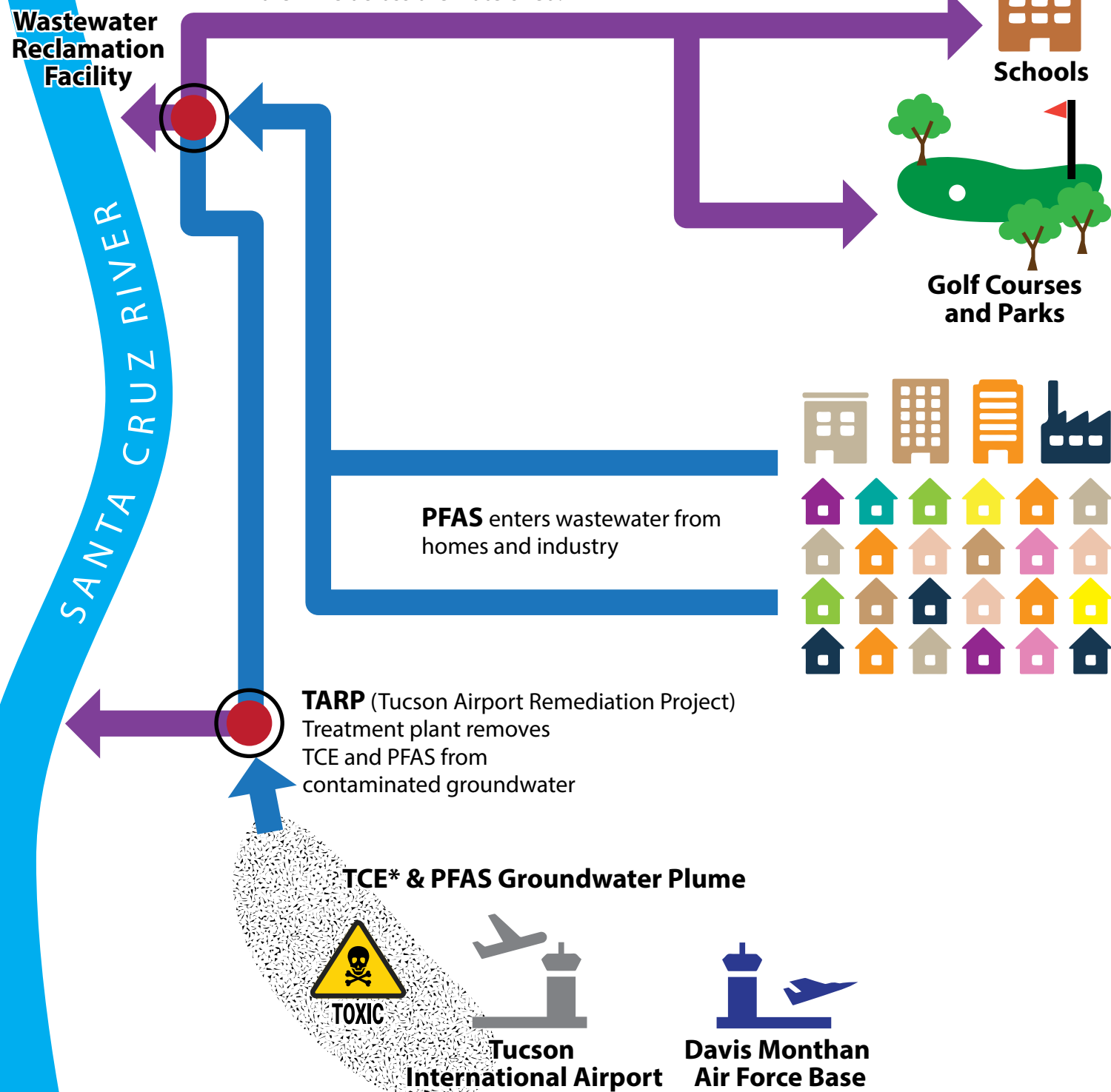


## PFAS Mobilization in the Tucson-area Watershed

PFAS is found in groundwater, wastewater, recycled water, and rainwater

### Treated wastewater recycled for irrigation

Wastewater treatment currently does not remove PFAS, so recycled water distributed throughout the city is mobilizing more PFAS across the watershed.



\* Trichloroethylene (TCE) is a common industrial pollutant persisting for decades in soil and water.

## PFAS:

## What's in YOUR Water?

### What Are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS for short, are the catch-all names of a group of literally thousands of man-made chemicals used since the 1940s for their resistance to heat, water, and oil. They were effective, durable, and cheap – and their producers claimed it was harmless!

For many decades, producers of PFAS have known they were toxic, but that information was hid from the public. Unfortunately, it took until 2024 for the EPA to regulate PFAS; they released the Maximum Contaminant Levels for PFAS in drinking water earlier this year. **The PFAS problem is of global proportion; PFAS has permeated the entire water cycle, across the globe, including in rainwater.** Researchers from a 2022 study, representing Stockholm University (Sweden) and ETH Zurich (Switzerland), suggest that PFAS contamination represents a previously unrecognized “planetary boundary” – a global, quantitative threshold which compromises humanity’s rate of development if surpassed.

PFAS have been dubbed “forever chemicals” because of their uncanny ability to persist in the environment and resist breaking down. They’re linked to a laundry list of health issues – think cancer, immune system problems, and developmental delays, to name a few.

They are found in everything from paint to pesticides, from non-stick cookware to water-resistant clothes, from dental floss to firefighting foam. Studies have found PFAS in the drinking water of millions of Americans, and they’ve even been detected in the blood of polar bears in the Arctic.

PFAS are like glitter – once they’re out there, they’re nearly impossible to get rid of completely. And both can be found in Disco Balls.

### Key Facts About PFAS

- **Environmental Persistence:** PFAS do not break down naturally, leading to their accumulation in the environment.
- **Health Risks:** Linked to liver damage, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, high cholesterol, obesity, hormone suppression, and certain cancers.
- **Sources:** Found in non-stick cookware, waterproof clothing, stain-resistant fabrics, firefighting foams, and various industrial applications.
- **Regulatory Actions:** The EPA set new drinking water standards outlining Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for six PFAS chemicals and created a comprehensive action plan to address PFAS contamination.



WMG staff get people out learning about PFAS and watershed health through the River Run Network. WMG's Joaquin Murrieta leads a bike tour, stopping at the PFAS treatment facility along the Santa Cruz River.



Groundwater treated for PFAS is released into the Santa Cruz River near Irvington road.

## The PFAS Problem:

The issue of PFAS contamination in water supplies has emerged as a pressing environmental and public health concern across the globe. In Tucson specifically, PFAS contamination in groundwater near Tucson International Airport and Davis-Monthan Air Force Base has necessitated urgent action from Tucson Water. The contamination, primarily due to PFAS-containing firefighting foam, has affected local water sources.

### PFAS, PFAS Everywhere.

PFAS contamination is found in many wells across Tucson, from water providers to private well owners. In addition, it's found in our recycled water system, which is transported all across Tucson to irrigate turf at parks and golf courses. To WMG's dismay, like elsewhere across the globe, low levels of PFAS are found in Tucson's rainwater.

### Groundwater Plume: Treated & Released into the Santa Cruz River

A large groundwater pollution plume of PFAS, TCE, and other contaminants, originated at the airports in Southern Tucson, and has grown and expanded northwest, with the direction of groundwater flows. The Tucson Airport Remediation Project (TARP) removes PFAS and TCE from the contaminated groundwater plume created by the airports. The remediated groundwater is then released into the Santa Cruz River.

Tucson Water has been releasing treated effluent into the river near downtown Tucson since 2019, so the river was seen as a convenient place to release the remediated groundwater, while they were working to connect the TARP plant to the recycled water system. Releasing the remediated water into the river or reclaimed system is favorable to putting it back in the drinking water system, since there are still trace amounts of PFAS in the treated water and due to the longstanding environmental justice concerns of southside communities with water quality.

WMG supports the release of the remediated groundwater into the Santa Cruz River, because it adds water back into the river that historically had seasonal and annual flows. In addition, it keeps more groundwater in the aquifer, since water in the river recharges the aquifer below it. Currently Tucson Water is releasing a smaller portion of the remediated groundwater into the river, and a larger portion into the recycled water system.

**WMG has led multiple field trips to the TARP site to help educate the community about PFAS, including bike rides along the loop and river clean-ups through the River Run Network.** University of Arizona chemist Leif Abrell from the Arizona Laboratory for Emerging Contaminants (ALEC) recently joined a bike ride. He does research in Pollution Dynamics, and Water Quality, Security, & Sustainability, and is currently developing methods for

analyzing trace organic contaminants, including PFAS, in complex environmental matrices like breastmilk and treated wastewater.

*“PFAS are literally everywhere – in our products, our water, our lands, and in all of our bodies. We’re making progress, but we’ve only scratched the surface,” said Leif Abrell, a University of Arizona chemist who joined the ride.*

Tucson Water took a proactive stance and started remediating PFAS before the EPA started regulating it. Of greater concern are smaller water utilities and private groundwater users, who have not yet addressed the PFAS contamination. Currently the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality is providing free PFAS testing to small drinking water systems and their customers. A map of ADEQ's PFAS testing results across the state of Arizona can be found using this QR code.



### What Can You Do?

Understanding PFAS and their effects is crucial for protecting our health and environment. Here's how you can take action:

- **Stay Informed:** Educate yourself about PFAS and their impacts by following updates from environmental agencies and organizations. Learn more at [EPA.gov/PFAS](https://www.epa.gov/pfas)



- **Reduce Exposure:** Choose PFAS-free products, such as cookware and food packaging. Avoid items with "PTFE" or "fluoro" in the ingredients list.
- **Invest in Filtration:** Use a water filtration system specifically designed to remove PFAS.
- **Activated Carbon Filters:** Affordable and widely available, these filters can reduce PFAS levels but may need frequent replacement for optimal effectiveness.
- **Reverse Osmosis Systems:** Mid-range in cost, these systems are highly effective at removing PFAS and other contaminants, suitable for home use.
- **Support Legislation:** Advocate for policies and regulations that aim to phase out PFAS use.
- **Get Involved Locally:** Stay informed about PFAS contamination in your area.

It's important to remember that while individual actions can make a difference, the real solution lies in holding manufacturers and regulators accountable. We need to demand more research into the health effects of PFAS, stricter regulations on their use, and better monitoring of our water sources.

So the next time you turn on the tap, take a moment to appreciate the power of clean, safe water – and the importance of protecting it for generations to come. Help build awareness by sharing this article and PFAS information with your friends and family.



A new mural brightens the bike path along the Rillito River, close to the floodplain that makes up the Rio Vista Natural Resource Park.

## Rio Vista Natural Resource Park The Heart of a Neighborhood in Midtown Tucson

WMG's River Run Network helps people connect to and steward their local rivers, especially in urban areas of Tucson where our rivers and floodplains have been neglected. That's why we're thrilled to help guide a restoration initiative along the floodplain of the Rillito River, in the Rio Vista Natural Resource Park, working alongside passionate neighbors in midtown Tucson.

Let's take a trip back to the early 1900s. The land that is currently Rio Vista Park, was not yet touched by Tucson's rapid expansion, offering solitude and inspiration with its expansive views of the Santa Catalina Mountains and the wide and lush Rillito River with a ribbon of riparian forest and mesquite bosque tapped into the shallow groundwater.

Fast forward to 1987, when the City of Tucson purchased the land within the RillitoBend Neighborhood. The original idea? A golf training center for the UA, and then an urban ballpark with all the lights, bells, and whistles. The reality? Years of fierce community debate to keep it natural.

Locals weren't having it. Their voices were loud, clear, and persistent: leave the area alone. Neighbors argued for an open, natural desert park consistent with the history and values of the surrounding neighborhood. Situated on an alluvial plain of the Rillito River, Rio Vista retains remnants of its original mesquite bosque, supporting a diverse array of native and migratory wildlife.

Thanks to the advocacy of the RillitoBend neighborhood, the park has been protected since 1999 as one of the few natural resource parks in the City. A natural resource park protects the health of its natural resources—including vegetation, wildlife, and landscape—while being enjoyed by visitors through passive recreation.

Recently, bond money was allocated to invest in the park by adding a splash pad. The neighbors spoke up again, loud and clear, that they were not interested in having a splash pad, but desired the funds to be used instead for restoration purposes.

**Enter Mary D. Bird, Vice President of the RillitoBend Neighborhood Association. "Neighbors here really pride themselves on being in nature," she says. "The park is kind of the heart of our neighborhood."**

Mary and her husband moved to Tucson after retiring from their work at the Smithsonian in 2016. She explains how she'd pass by the park every day on her walks, and gradually got involved in the neighborhood association and, subsequently, the natural resource park.

With the new restoration project, large rain basins have been built to capture and infiltrate rainwater and stormwater into the floodplain. The project also includes removing non-native species, like sumac. This fall a variety of native plants will be added to the rain basins through volunteer work parties, with a focus on habitat plants good for birds and other wildlife.

**"We're working closely with Parks & Rec and Ward 3. In the hands of Catlow [Shipek, of WMG], along with the strong team that he brought in, we've made real progress." Mary notes. "The park has become a beloved green space where people can connect with nature and with each other."**

Catlow Shipek, Sr. Program Director, worked with Strategic Habitat Enhancements to draft a restoration plan. He serves as an advisor to Parks and Rec working with a team of restoration professionals including Dryland Design, Tucson Audubon, and Arizona Conservation Corp.

The revitalization of Rio Vista Natural Resource Park is about more than just creating a beautiful park. It's about access to nature in the middle of the city, restoring the floodplain of the Rillito River, and the power of grassroots stewardship efforts to care for our river ecosystems for the good of all plants, animals, and people.

If you want to support the park with removing invasive species, picking up trash, and other improvements, please contact neighbor Estelle Stern-Eilers at [rbna@rillitobendna.org](mailto:rbna@rillitobendna.org).

**To support river restoration projects like this, join WMG's River Run Network at [Watershedmg.org/RRN](https://Watershedmg.org/RRN).**



Restoration efforts included creating raised earthen trails to shed water into nearby basins. In addition, rogue trails were closed to reduce wildlife habitat fragmentation.



Stormwater is captured from neighborhood streets, reducing flooding of the streets, and soaking in water across the broad floodplain supporting Velvet Mesquite and Palo Verde trees.



## Flow 365

# 2023 Annual Flow Report Highlights Record Flows on the Rillito & Drying up of Sabino

With the help of 92 Flow365 volunteers, WMG is building an impressive and insightful dataset about the flow of Tucson's creeks and rivers. Our community science volunteers are monitoring 46 sites across the Tucson basin, and we've compiled highlights and analysis of the 2023 water year.

2023 like 2024 was characterized by good winter rains and snow pack. That led to more days of flow throughout most of the city compared to 2022. However, some of the sites had decreased flow through our monsoon season, due to less than average monsoon rain.

The highlight of the year was along the Rillito River at Craycroft, where monitors recorded a new high of 107 consecutive days of flow, starting on January 4th, 2023 and ending April 15th, 2023.

107 days is significantly more flow days than anything we've recorded since monitoring began in 2016. Slower, gentle flows, that most often take place in the winter, are when most of the groundwater recharge takes place. So, with over 3 months of gentle, winter flows at this site, there was substantial groundwater recharge!

The Rillito River at Craycroft is formed from the confluence of the Tanque Verde Creek and Pantano Creek and is considered a shallow groundwater area, with water within 50 feet of the surface. The shallow groundwater still supports some cottonwood trees from a historically much larger cottonwood forest, as well as a Mexican elderberry grove upstream of the confluence. Historically, this area had year-round flow through a large ciénega (marsh) with a large mesquite bosque (forest), supporting Indigenous populations.

In September 2023, Lower Sabino Creek almost completely dried up, with just some small puddles for the fish. Our monitoring program has shown this location to have perennial flow since 2016. This unusually low water period made us concerned about additional groundwater pumping that may have re-started in the area paired with below average monsoon rains.

Flow365 data is giving us a much better understanding of the flow extents and number of flow days across creeks and rivers in the Tucson Basin, thanks to weekly and even daily monitoring, including recording low flows not caught by flow gauges. Over time, this data helps us determine the impact of collective conservation actions on creek flow, as well as threats to our creeks, as we strive towards our long-term goal of restoring Tucson's heritage of flowing creeks and rivers.

See the full report at [Watershedmg.org/2023Flow](https://watershedmg.org/2023Flow)



**Photo above:** The Tanque Verde Creek near Wentworth Road started flowing again in the winter and continues to flow into July of this year showcasing shallow groundwater connection.

## Highlights from the 2023 Water Year (October 2022 - September 2023)

### Santa Cruz River at Starr Pass Blvd

2023 Water Year Flow: **365 Days**

2022 Water Year Flow: **323 Days**

2021 Water Year Flow: **365 Days**

Flow365 Monitors: Hannah Tanquary

### Rillito River at Craycroft Rd

2023 Water Year Flow: **113 Days**

2022 Water Year Flow: **62 Days**

2021 Water Year Flow: **85 Days**

Flow365 Monitors: Catlow Shipek, Kerry Murphy, Susan Swartz, Oliver Wilson, Ken Lubinski

### Tanque Verde Creek: Wentworth Bosque

2023: **239 Days**

2022: **276 Days**

2021: **70 Days**

Flow365 Monitors: Richard Pello, Lee Pello, Heidi Shewel, Jim Washburne

### Agua Caliente Creek at Milagrosa Lane

2023: **100 Days**

2022: **82 Days**

2021: **43 Days**

Flow365 Monitors: Bethany DeRango, Andrea Martin

### Lower Sabino Creek at Wes Miller Park

2023: **365 Days**

2016 - 2022: **365 Days**

Flow365 Monitors: Wendy Beall



# Tanque Verde Flow & Feast 2024

## Connecting Community with Nature

May 4th marked a special evening at the 7th Annual Tanque Verde Flow & Feast, a beautiful blend of community, conservation, and celebration, all set against the stunning backdrop of Tanque Verde Creek. Flow & Feast holds a special significance as it symbolizes a deeper connection and reverence for the mission of the River Run Network—restoring our heritage of flowing rivers.

The ceremonial paper boat release brought everyone together in a fun and collaborative celebration of the flowing waters of Tanque Verde Creek.



## Meet Our New Staff!

We are thrilled to introduce three fantastic new additions to the Watershed Management Group family. Each of them brings unique talents, passions, and stories that enrich our community and our mission. To help you get to know them better, we've asked Maya, Valerisa, and Max to share some personal insights. From adventurous mishaps and morning motivators to dream destinations and favorite films, their answers give us a glimpse into the vibrant personalities now driving WMG's initiatives.



**Maya Horner**  
Education and Engagement Coordinator

- **Once Upon A Time:** Once Upon A Time, I completely ripped a new pair of \$100 jeans I had just bought, whilst thinking attempting a limbo competition on rollerblades was a great idea.
- **What Gets Me Up in the Morning:** My bike seems to be staring me down from the corner in my room as soon as I wake up, and I usually enjoy a ride every day.
- **My Times Square Billboard Would Say:** Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving the gifts with open eyes and open heart.
- **I Will Not Die Before:** My family is from Peru, and it has always been a bucket-list goal to backpack to the top of Machu Picchu in my lifetime.
- **My Movie Night Pick(s):** There are quite a few for this one, but I'll just go ahead and list the ones that come most immediately to my mind. Definitely Rocky Horror, The Dark Crystal, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, The Talented Mr. Ripley, Interstellar, and The Princess Bride.
- **WMG Project I'm Most Excited About:** Our Family Saturday Events have been a highlight of my experience so far working in our educational programming, and I am excited to see how these events will grow and evolve.



**Valerisa Gaddy**  
Community Conservation Director

- **Once Upon A Time:** When I was 3, I was the accidental spokesperson for "98 KUPD Arizona's Real Rock" Station in Flagstaff, AZ.
- **What Gets Me Up in the Morning:** My four-year old son, both literally and figuratively. He usually jumps on my bed saying he is hungry.
- **My Times Square Billboard Would Say:** Probably something in Navajo, like "Quit being lazy and just get it done." That quote is from my mom and it helped me get through my PhD.
- **I Will Not Die Before:** Writing a book.
- **My Movie Night Pick(s):** Wayne's World or Tommy Boy. I could watch both movies on repeat, and I've even dressed up as characters from both for past Halloweens.
- **WMG Project I'm Most Excited About:** Grow Tucson! Growing trees provides many benefits including, providing oxygen, sequestering carbon, mitigate flooding, and contribute to our overall health.



**Max Wingert**  
Communications & Outreach Manager

- **Once Upon A Time:** I performed in a production of Shakespeare's Hamlet, on a stage in the middle of Central Park, NYC, in the nude. Before you ask: Yes, we had a permit; No, it wasn't cold out; Yes, we used a little extra sunscreen and bug spray than usual. Thank you for your concern.
- **What Gets Me Up in the Morning:** My dog Dani. She's sweet about it, makes a big show of love and affection. But I know what she really wants. She wants to go for a walk. And she won't take no for an answer.
- **My Times Square Billboard Would Say:** "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten."
- **I Will Not Die Before:** Visiting every continent. That's right Antarctica. I'm coming for you, too, one of these days.
- **My Movie Night Pick:** The Princess Bride or Howl's Moving Castle.
- **WMG Project I'm Most Excited About:** Building WMG's new website and opening WMG's first ever photo gallery.

# New Paid Apprenticeship Program

## Opening Up Pathways to Environmental Jobs for Underrepresented Identities

WMG launched a new apprenticeship program this summer, starting with accepting applications for five different paid apprenticeship positions. Apprenticeships are part-time positions with WMG, lasting 4.5 - 9 months in length, and open to all adults interested in applying.

Our goal is to provide career opportunities for underrepresented identities in the environmental fields, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Latinx, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities. This new program is made possible thanks to the support of one of our Emerald Circle donors, who has committed funding to this initiative for five years.

We imagine people from all walks of life participating, including people changing careers, refugees starting a new life in the U.S., or young people not following an expensive college career path. Thanks to donor funding, we can provide hourly pay to our apprentices and cover staff, training, and administrative costs to run the program.

The apprentices are mentored by Program Directors and Project Managers at WMG and will join WMG as part-time staff during the duration of their apprenticeship, working closely with other staff, docents, and interns. All apprentices will be invited to participate in weekly onboarding training Friday afternoons with other apprentices, interns, and docents.

Positions include apprenticeships for careers related to riparian restoration, environmental education, sustainably built environments, sustainable agriculture, and non-profit fundraising.

To learn more, visit [Watershedmg.org/Jobs](https://watershedmg.org/jobs)



# Your Will, Your Power

## Create Prosperity For All

August is National Make-A-Will Month, and it's a pivotal moment to harness the power of your will to ensure the long-term prosperity of people and health of the environment.

At any stage of your adult life, you can make or update your will and include a gift to Watershed Management Group. Regardless of the size of your contribution, here are just a few ways your legacy will equip people with the knowledge, skills, and resources for sustainable livelihoods, by

- Honoring the heritage of our flowing desert creeks and rivers and the value that water holds for all people
- Offering educational services focused on designing and constructing rain gardens with schools, churches, and low-income neighborhoods
- Providing community classes, grassroots projects, and policy work helping communities cool our cities and conserve our local water resources

We partner with FreeWill to make the will-writing process easy and straightforward. More than one million people across the country have used this tool to create their plans — and you can be next.

We remain optimistic about the future and people's ability to make positive change, so we hope you choose to make the most of your willpower!

Visit [Freewill.com/WMG](https://Freewill.com/WMG) or use this QR code





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## Donate to WMG's Summer Campaign & See You at Beavers and Brews



Help us reach our goal of raising \$100,000 for our summer fundraising campaign and provide essential resources to care for our desert river and support our Release the Beavers campaign! On Tuesday, September 24th, join our 4th annual Beavers and Brews celebration, an immersive beaver experience at the Living Lab.

Make a gift today at  
[Watershedmg.org/Give](https://watershedmg.org/give)



Register for Beavers & Brews at [Watershedmg.org/BeaversandBrews](https://watershedmg.org/beaversandbrews)

