

Arizona Conservation Highlights

Since its first project in the mid-1960s, The Nature Conservancy in Arizona has helped protect more than 1.5 million acres of ecologically important land in this state. The Conservancy owns and/or manages several preserves in Arizona, six of which welcome visitors. This brief review chronicles important conservation actions we have taken in Arizona or to which our work in has contributed.

2007

♦ The protection of a key region of the San Pedro River system through four voluntary land use agreements on the Babocomari River. These agreements, purchased through the efforts of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Fort Huachuca Army Installation and the Conservancy, protect more than 1,411 acres and more than four miles of the Babocomari River, a major source of water for the San Pedro River.

♦ The donation of Cobra Ranch, which adjoins the Aravaipa Canyon Preserve to the east and represents a significant addition to the protected riparian area of Aravaipa Creek, an important tributary of the San Pedro River.

2006

♦ **April 19** - What began as a group of passionate conservationists protecting Sonoita Creek near Patagonia has grown into The Nature Conservancy's Arizona Chapter 40 years later.

♦ The U.S. Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed into law, legislation to create the Verde River Basin Partnership to coordinate science-based policies and management that ensure sustainable water in the Verde.

2005

♦ The Conservancy and a broad coalition of conservationists, educators, and business leaders craft a measure reforming outdated and inefficient state trust land practices. If approved on the 2006 ballot, the initiative called *Conserving Arizona's Future*, will help protect the Verde, San Pedro, and other rivers, as well as special places statewide.

♦ After years of negotiations, Fossil Creek was reborn with two hydroelectric dams voluntarily shut down by Arizona Public Service, and projects for restocking native fish. The Conservancy took an early role in cooperative negotiations for this historic event and belongs to the Fossil Creek restoration committee.

♦ A little more than a year after voters approved the Pima County Open Space Bond, nearly 100,000 acres had been protected. The Conservancy sits on the commission and also contributes to its science and technical advisory team.

♦ The Conservancy and U.S. Geological Survey completed software to help track and manage nonnative invasives across the Southwest and in northern Mexico. We also coordinated efforts to evaluate and rank the threat for 71 invasive plants to be included in a practical guide for land managers.

♦ The Conservancy's Mexico and Arizona programs cooperated to protect Los Fresnos Ranch in Sonora, Mexico—an important freshwater source for the San Pedro River.

♦ The Conservancy's Arizona and New Mexico programs signed a cooperative agreement with the U. S. Forest Service Region 3, to develop ecological data and tools for restoring and maintaining the health of national forest lands in both states, including the return of fire to fire-adapted systems.

2004

♦ The Conservancy's Hassayampa River Preserve doubled in size with the acquisition and donation of 330 acres of desert foothills west of the river by the late Dorothy R. Lykes.

♦ In cooperation with the Greater Huachuca Mountains Fire Learning Network, the Conservancy is poised to complete a scientific blueprint for enhancing fire management on more than a half-million acres of land along the U.S.-Mexico border.

♦ The Conservancy takes leading role in passing an unprecedented open space bond to begin protecting nearly 186,000 acres of high priority conservation Sonoran Desert lands in Pima County.

- ♦ An unprecedented agreement with the U.S. Forest Service has formed a multi-disciplinary team of Conservancy scientists based in Flagstaff and Santa Fe to assess the 11 national forests in Arizona and New Mexico. The findings will inform the USFS revision of its long-term forest plans.

- ♦ In the Verde River watershed, the Conservancy continues to collaborate with the City of Prescott and other stakeholders to protect the grassland aquifer, guaranteeing sufficient flows at the Verde headwaters.

- ♦ With Arizona Game & Fish Dept., the Conservancy publishes an eye-opening summary of the status of pronghorn populations on the grasslands of central Yavapai County.

- ♦ According to a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service status report the Conservancy's work along the San Pedro contributes directly to the recovery of the endangered southwestern willow flycatchers in Arizona.

- ♦ Conservancy science staff complete ambitious assessment of the extent and condition of grasslands in central and southern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and northern Mexico.

2003

- ♦ Conservancy staff coordinate statewide committee of federal, state and private agencies to develop criteria and categorize a list of invasive plants that threaten Arizona wildlands.

- ♦ With volunteer help, oversight of the Patagonia-Sonita Creek and Canelo Hills Preserves is transferred to staff at Ramsey Canyon Preserve.

- ♦ Conservancy staff takes active role in passage of Coconino County Parks & Open Space Initiative raising \$33 million for acquisition of conservation lands and parks improvement.

- ♦ Conservancy restores perennial surface flow along three miles of the San Pedro River by retiring groundwater pumping with the purchase of the 2,150 acre Three Links Farm.

- ♦ Conservancy takes leading role in the Upper San Pedro Partnership, a group of 20 agencies and organizations working to establish baseline science and protection of resources along the basin.

- ♦ With a private landowner, BLM, Fort Huachuca, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and others, the Conservancy's work with the Upper San Pedro Partnership establishes a conservation easement that retires groundwater pumping of the upper San Pedro River that averaged 200 million gallons annually.

- ♦ Conservancy staff helps with a prescribed burn by the Malapai Borderlands Group that is rejuvenating 46,000 acres of grassland in southeastern Arizona.

2002

- ♦ With the state legislature, Arizona cattlegrowers and others, the Conservancy secures passage of the Arizona Agricultural Protection Act, creating a statewide purchase-of-development-rights program and granting counties authority to create similar programs.

- ♦ The Conservancy completes an analysis for biodiversity management in Barry M. Goldwater Range for U.S. Air Force.

- ♦ The Conservancy opens a White Mountains program office in Lakeside, taking a lead role in multi-agency efforts to combat invasive species, restore wetlands, and improve forest health.

- ♦ Joins U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the National Sustainable Rivers Partnership to improve water flows on the Bill Williams River.

- ♦ Acquires an additional 70 acres of mesquite bosque and riparian forest on the San Pedro River near Mammoth.

2001

- ♦ Chapter secures protection for 120,000 acres of private land in Arizona and assists in protecting 662,200 acres of public lands.

- ♦ Intel and the Conservancy develop "Explore the Last Great Places," an educational web site on the San Pedro River to inspire learning about and protection of Earth's biodiversity.

- ♦ Signs a conservation easement with Babbitt Ranches on the 34,480 acre Cataract Ranch.

- ♦ Acquires a 528-acre farm on the San Pedro River, reducing groundwater pumping to improve flows in the river, and sells property with conservation easement in place.

- ♦ Garners Pentagon support for a \$700,000, three-year grant request to the Dept. of Defense through a Sonoran Desert Ecoregion Project.

- ♦ Plays a primary role in coordinating environmental groups and encouraging the Department of Interior in the designation of the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

- ♦ Signs cooperative agreement with the U.S. Dept. of the Army, Fort Huachuca, to conserve water resources and help protect species and habitat in the upper San Pedro River Basin through conservation easements.

- ♦ Establishes White Mountains Program with the purchase of Sierra Blanca Ranch.

- ♦ Conservancy opens Conservation Center in Prescott to achieve Verde Program conservation goals.

- ♦ Assists Arizona State Parks with acquisition of inholdings in the Verde Greenway.

- ♦ Secures Fossil Creek settlement agreement, with Arizona Public Services and many partners, detailing the decommissioning of the Childs-Irving Hydropower facilities to restore natural flows to this Verde River tributary.

- ♦ Partners with the Desert Foothills Land Trust to protect 115 acres of Sonoran Desert riparian habitat outside of Phoenix.

2000

- ♦ Conservancy completes the most comprehensive analysis ever of the Sonoran Desert on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. This two-year effort brought together a binational team of more than 100 experts to compile and analyze biological, ecological and demographic information on the 55 million acre region.

- ♦ In the San Rafael Valley, the Conservancy completes a cooperative project by selling the major portion of the San Rafael Ranch to a conservation buyer, with a conservation easement held by Arizona State Parks.

- ♦ New Tucson Conservation Center completed and paid for with local donations, and a large dedicated gift by an anonymous donor.

- ♦ Ramsey Canyon Preserve riparian restoration completed. The Preserve reopens with renovated visitor center and extensive new interpretive displays.

1999

- ♦ With Arizona State Parks, the Conservancy purchases the historic 22,000-acre San Rafael Ranch. This purchase staves off the threat of subdivision and secures one of the last great grasslands.

- ♦ The Conservancy purchases 44,694-acre Bellota Ranch from Riley West, Inc. and sells 41,104 acres to the City of Tucson for conservation and open space.

1998

- ♦ The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service awards grants to the Conservancy to restore significant riparian habitat in the lower San Pedro River basin.

- ♦ With an Arizona Water Protection Fund grant, the Conservancy begins restoration of 900 acres of riparian and flood terrace communities at Bingham Cienega and Buehman Canyon Preserve in the San Pedro River ecosystem.

- ♦ Conservancy staff, ranchers, environmentalists and scholars participate in The Common Ground Round Table, facilitated by the Udall Center for Public Policy in Tucson.

1997

- ♦ Conservancy's Buehman Canyon Preserve established with donation from Riley West, Inc.

- ♦ San Pedro River Preserve established with grant from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

- ♦ Norris addition doubles the size of Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve.

- ♦ Sonoran Desert Open Space and Historic Preservation Bond passes with 68% of vote in Pima County. This bond provides funds for acquisition of key Sonoran Desert lands that the Conservancy rates as high priorities.

1996

- ♦ 171,518 acres protected to date in Arizona through preserves or co-op projects.

- ♦ Arizona is recognized by The Nature Conservancy as the "most improved chapter" and the third largest chapter in terms of both land protected and total staff.

1995

- ♦ The Conservancy's first large-scale burn at Muleshoe Ranch CMA with Bureau of Land Management.

- ♦ The Conservancy acquires 160 acres on Verde River on behalf of U.S. Forest Service.

1991

- ♦ Kolbe family donates 400-acre conservation easement—largest to date.

- ♦ Lands at Cascabel are acquired on behalf of BLM.

1990

- ♦ The Nature Conservancy conceives and leads through passage, the largest and most successful public funding initiative ever passed by the conservation community in Arizona. Since passage, the Arizona Heritage Fund, derived from the Arizona Lottery, has devoted \$320 million to conservation, \$10 million annually each to Arizona Game and Fish Department and State Parks.

1989

- ♦ Pima County Flood Control buys Bingham Cienega, signs agreement with the Conservancy to manage preserve.
- ♦ The Conservancy signs first private property registry agreements in Arizona with Ray Harm.
- ♦ Arivaca Cienega purchased for transfer to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Buenos Aires Wildlife Refuge.
- ♦ The Conservancy acquires Kartchner Caverns on behalf of Arizona State Parks.
- ♦ Sunflower Flats is acquired by Conservancy on behalf of Arizona Game & Fish Department.

1988

- ♦ Defenders of Wildlife transfers Aravaipa deeded land and south rim grazing lease back to the Conservancy.
- ♦ Cooperative Management Agreement between the Conservancy, BLM, and U.S. Forest Service is signed for Muleshoe Ranch's 55,000 acres.

1987

- ♦ Hartwell Canyon, life estate, donated to Conservancy by Kittredge family.

1986

- ♦ Escondido Falls is given to the Conservancy by Oscar Clarke.
- ♦ 1st three tracts acquired for transfer to Arizona State Parks to become Verde River Greenway.
- ♦ The Conservancy acquires the Hassayampa River Preserve from Norman & Dorothy Lykes.

1985

- ♦ The Conservancy signs matching funds agreement with the U.S. Forest Service establishing fourteen Research Natural Areas, bringing total to twenty-four in Arizona.
- ♦ The Conservancy nominates eight BLM land sites for designation as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

1984

- ♦ Navajo Heritage Program launched in Window Rock with Conservancy support.

1983

- ♦ Conservancy's Heritage Program moved to Arizona Game & Fish Dept., non game branch.

1981

- ♦ Conservancy establishes first conservation easement in Arizona, at Thomas Canyon.

1979

- ♦ Conservancy conducts first prescribed burn at Canelo Hills Ciénaga.
- ♦ Conservancy acquires John Slaughter Ranch on behalf of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for San Bernardino Wildlife Refuge.

- ♦ First year of the Conservancy's Natural Heritage Program.

1978

- ♦ Department of Water Resources grants 1st in stream-flow water rights permits in state to the Conservancy at Ramsey & O'Donnell Creeks.

1976

- ♦ Chapter acquires grazing allotments near Bill Williams River on behalf of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for Lake Havasu Wildlife Refuge.

1974

- ♦ Dr. Nelson Bledsoe gifts Ramsey Canyon property to Conservancy.

1972

- ♦ Conservancy acquires first tract in Phoenix Mountain Park system on Squaw Peak.

1970

- ♦ Panorama Ranch is purchased from the Woods Family at the west end of Aravaipa Canyon.

1969

- ♦ Canelo Hills Cienega purchased from Knipes Family.

1966

- ♦ Conservancy purchases 1st property in Arizona protecting Sonoita Creek near Patagonia in conjunction with the Audubon Society.

1960s

- ♦ Volunteers for the fledging Conservancy in Arizona are active in the Conservancy Project Committee in southeast Arizona.

The Very Beginning

1954

- ♦ The Nature Conservancy acquires its first preserve in the Mianus River Gorge near Rye, New York.

1951

- ♦ The Conservancy is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in Washington, D.C.

1950

- ♦ The Ecologists Union changes name to The Nature Conservancy.

1917

- ♦ Ecological Society of America establishes Committee for Preservation of Natural Conditions, which becomes independent Ecologists Union.