



# ARIZONA WILDERNESS COALITION

2015–2016 Annual Report





ARIZONA  
WILDERNESS  
COALITION  
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# Tangible Results to Protect Arizona's Wild Beauty

The events of the past year give Arizona Wilderness Coalition hope. While this may be unexpected in a year of political tumult, we've seen that the actions of volunteers, partners and local communities demonstrate beyond a doubt that people care about their public lands. We've watched local volunteers tirelessly complete wilderness surveys, volunteers from around the state hoist rocks and repair trails, and community advocates confront agencies with pressing needs to improve conditions on public lands.

We're hopeful as well because we see more diverse individuals engaging in stewardship of our forests, rivers and deserts. This year AWC worked with middle-school students from rural Arizona to explore the meaning of wild nature, and what is involved in public lands stewardship. We're delighted to see our Wilderness Stewardship projects encompass U.S. Veterans and students representing the rich multicultural traditions of our state.



Beyond volunteerism and advocacy, we're heartened by the response of forward-thinking legislators and agency staff who've cooperated to identify wilderness preservation needs, and reached out to nonprofit partners to help restore public lands. While enormous threats remain to wild places and vulnerable landscapes, we fully expect progress in preserving more wilderness and raising conservation standards in select areas of the state.

As you read through this Annual Report, please join me in celebrating the good that comes from diverse interests working together for our shared public lands. Hope and tangible results can strengthen our resolve to preserve the wild beauty of our irreplaceable public lands.

Yours in wilderness advocacy,

*Barbara Hawke*  
*Executive Director*

**"The Wilderness holds answers to questions man has not yet learned to ask." Nancy Newhall**



# President's Message

I can remember my first trip to the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona. It was 1974, and I was an undergrad at University of California–Riverside. We were on a biology field trip to the fabled Chiricahuas to experience the phenomenal diversity of plants and animals found there. Our graduate student group leaders spoke of the Chiricahuas in reverential terms, and they explained how a unique combination of geography and topography had created and sustained the incredible biodiversity of these mountains.

I have been back to the Chiricahuas many times since that original trip. My appreciation of the wondrous diversity of birds, reptiles, mammals and insects (my specialty) grows with each visit. I have lived in Arizona on and off since 1978, and I've come to realize that the entire state is a biodiversity "hotspot". Of course, Arizona is mostly arid, and rainfall usually occurs in patterns that are unpredictable in time and place. But when the rain does fall, life appears with almost magical speed and in many forms. Dispersal of these organisms is often limited by the fleeting nature of desert precipitation and the long expanses of xeric landscapes which may isolate populations. Speciation and greater diversity is a natural result of this isolation.

What role does wilderness play in the creation and maintenance of biodiversity? Many native plants and animals of Arizona have become uniquely adapted to the myriad natural habitats scattered across our state. Activities that degrade wilderness invariably reduce biodiversity. Roads provide easier access for invasive species, and soil disturbances will impact the plants and animals that exist in the thin layer of topsoil. Habitat fragmentation disrupts natural travel corridors for mammals and reptiles. Extractive industries may eliminate some habitats altogether.


Arizona landscapes are rugged and refractory, but they can't withstand the endless demands of humans without help. With your support we can continue the good work of Arizona Wilderness Coalition and help protect wild lands and the many plants and animals that depend on intact habitats. In a single election day, the prospects for land protection in the southwest may have diminished dramatically. Or not — it is too early to tell. What is clear is that we need to recommit ourselves to our organization, and to our wild lands.

— Mike Quinlan, PhD, Board President

**"And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet**



# The True Potential of Wilderness



The U.S. Forest Service has shown admirable leadership through its “Wilderness Stewardship Performance” initiative, or WSP. WSP builds on earlier wilderness improvement programs like the 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge, and the multi-agency Vision 2020. The latest program establishes a framework by which National Forests will measure current wilderness conditions and track improvement through concrete actions and benchmarks.

AWC is leading efforts to coordinate conservation partners to help the agency make real progress in our wilderness areas, particularly in the Tonto National Forest (TNF). Together with dedicated agency staff like TNF Partnership Liaison Greg Schuster, AWC has crafted plans by which we and key partners — including the active Friends of Tonto National Forest (FOTNF) and capable Arizona Trail Association — can collaborate to remedy wilderness deficiencies.

Our on-the-ground WSP work began on the Kaibab National Forest (KNF) and Coronado National Forest, with help from a grant through

the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance. We joined with Professor Doug Hulmes and fourteen students from Prescott College, along with KNF’s Recreation Specialist Joseph “Dutch” Maatman, to survey and treat invasive vegetation in the Kendrick Mountain Wilderness northwest of Flagstaff. In the Miller Peak Wilderness in southern Arizona’s Huachuca Mountains, AWC’s volunteer crew restored trails, removing 15 downed logs! And in the Sierra Ancha and Salome Wilderness areas, Friends of Tonto National Forest installed and replaced signage for improved visitor experience and safety in these beautiful backcountry settings.

We anticipate considerable progress in WSP as Arizona’s National Forests complete initial assessments and specific restoration projects advance. Beginning in 2017, AWC will work intensively with the Tonto National Forest and partners to survey conditions in the Superstition and Four Peaks Wilderness areas, supported in part by a generous grant through the Forest Service’s Southern Arizona Resource Advisory Council.

**and the winds long to play with your hair.” *Kahlil Gibran***



# Wilderness Stewardship

Wild Stew, our signature wilderness stewardship program, completed another stellar year. We conducted 21 total trips this year, while engaging 181 volunteers—all in support of the wild lands we treasure. That's quite an achievement, and one we're proud to have shared with you. Not only did we accomplish more on the ground than we ever have, we also sought to diversify our stewardship program in three important ways.

First, we completed a wider range of projects across a broader range of habitats, serving lands in northern Arizona, southern Arizona, and many places in between. In addition to trail maintenance, treatment of invasive species and resource monitoring, we tackled more extensive riparian restoration efforts, and incorporated more explicit ecological goals—most notably in our Hassayampa River and Arnett Creek projects.

We actively enriched our base of volunteers, engaging more diverse communities, including students, veterans and ethnically diverse participants. And we're helping expand our state's overall capacity for stewardship through partnerships with Friends of the Tonto National Forest, Arizona Trail Association and the Climbing Association of Southern Arizona, along with other groups.

Wilderness Stewardship projects are an excellent way to engage new supporters, connect them with a highly personal and rewarding experience in our wild lands, and to help develop lifelong wilderness advocates—all while getting good work done for our public lands.

**"We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves such as**





## Middle schoolers in the Galiuro Wilderness

Not all middle schoolers have had an opportunity to experience our wildlands, especially those from traditionally under-served communities. We sought to change that for a group of 6th to 8th grade students from the Hayden-Winkelman Unified School District in the small mining community of Hayden in rural Gila County.

Students were selected through essays that expressed their thoughts on the meaning of wilderness. Seven students then participated in a special 3-day stewardship project in the Galiuro Wilderness. Environmental education activities helped the students actively connect with the outdoor setting, and students then learned trail restoration and safe tool use techniques. It wasn't all about trail work or giving back to their public lands, however. The students also enjoyed plenty of time to explore and bond with the area—an experience they won't soon forget.

## Planting trees in the Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness

Our biggest stewardship project this year brought together Wild Stew volunteers, students from Prescott College, the Youth Conservation Corps at Phoenix College, and even local ranchers to improve a two-mile riparian stretch of the Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness. The project aimed to increase viable habitat for sensitive species including the Long-fin dace and Lowland leopard frog, and the Threatened Yellow-billed cuckoo. With support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, AWC also secured a small yet enthusiastic paid field crew for two weeks of the project. The project was a tremendous success, resulting in the planting of 364 new native trees and 87 native reeds and rushes, substantially improving habitat for these imperiled native species.



**the birds, animals, fish and trees.”** *Qwatsinas, Nuxalk Nation*

# Stew by the Numbers:

**\$107,114.01 of volunteer labor invested in public lands!**

Our Wilderness Stewardship program engaged more diverse communities and improved more diverse habitats through an astounding effort by 181 volunteers. Together with our stellar funding supporters, we expanded our impact on public lands with the help of community partners including the Arizona Trail Association, Friends of Tonto National Forest, Prescott College, Backcountry Horsemen of Central Arizona, Climbing Association of Southern Arizona, Hayden-Winkelman Unified School District, Tucson Audubon Society, and US Vets Prescott. This success is founded on great investment from our stalwart agency partners, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.



**65 miles**  
of trail improved, maintained, or repaired.



**364**  
native trees planted.



**45**  
fallen trees removed from trail.



**22 miles**  
of potential Wild and Scenic River surveyed.

**"Trees are Earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven." Rabindranath Tagore**





**175 acres**

restored or maintained.



**21 stewardship projects**

completed in 13 Wilderness and Backcountry Areas.



**3759 hours**

contributed by volunteers.



**250 feet**

of social trail closed and naturalized.

PLUS 4 miles of riparian ecosystem treated for invasive plants, 42 water mitigation structures built and repaired, and more than 150 pounds of trash removed.



# Conservation through Agency Action

Preserving wilderness through agency decisions remains vitally important to Arizona. While legislation to achieve permanent protection may be currently challenging, wilderness can be preserved for ten, twenty or more years through decisions of agencies like the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Tapping a diverse array of land protection approaches is consequently necessary to a long-term protection strategy.

AWC's "administrative protections" work this past year focused on regions where major agency planning is underway, providing the best opportunity for conservation gains. For the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, AWC continued to work with conservation partners and local volunteers to elevate awareness of the irreplaceable features of the San Pedro, and to elucidate the real threats to the San Pedro's ecological health. In the Tonto National Forest, we've joined coalitions to advance full consideration of wilderness and wild and scenic rivers in the revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan. And we are continuing outreach to citizens and volunteers to bring focus to the wild places we revere and enjoy, promoting citizen participation that is so critical to furthering conservation goals in agency decisions.







## Idyllic settings for quiet exploration

In the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, local volunteers organized an interpretive hike to highlight the many native and imperiled species that depend on the verdant corridors of the San Pedro. Tributaries like the Babocomari offer idyllic settings for quiet exploration. Volunteer leader Darrell Thompson later identified the Threatened Yellow-billed cuckoo along the San Pedro, underscoring the need to protect the sensitive natural function of this river.

**"The frog does not drink up the pond on which it lives." *Native American***



# The Wild Glory of Our National Parks

A tall saguaro cactus stands prominently in the center of a vast desert landscape. The cactus is green and ribbed, with several smaller arms at its base. The ground is rocky and covered with sparse, dry vegetation. In the distance, there are low mountains under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a classic representation of the Arizona desert.

2016 marks the centennial of “our nation’s best idea,” the National Park System. Here in Arizona, we are blessed with 22 National Park units, ranging from the world-renowned Grand Canyon to lesser-known monuments, historic trails and heritage sites like Fort Bowie. Wilderness is contained in four of these National Park units — Chiricahua National Monument, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Petrified Forest National Park, and Saguaro National Park.

**“Man’s heart, away from nature, becomes hard.” *Luther Standing Bear***





Saguaro National Park exemplifies the major role wilderness plays in national parks, as this park with nearly 80% wilderness draws over 600,000 visitors each year, bringing Arizona an estimated \$21.9 million in economic benefit.

As part of the NPS centennial, AWC celebrated in Saguaro National Park with a series of events highlighting wilderness and creative writing. We were joined by Sean Prentiss, author of *Finding Abbey*, a National Outdoor Book Award winner in 2015. Sean led an evocative writing workshop in Saguaro National Park's wilderness area, and shared his heartfelt love of the American West through book talks and signings.

We look forward to continuing to raise awareness of our National Parks' needs and tremendous resources, and the value of wilderness encompassed by our National Parks.



Writing workshop participant Diana Rhoades shared the following after the workshop:

*Sean Prentiss taught me that place affects tone. That place reveals the character of a person. And that place enhances dramatic moments. When you are standing amongst giant Saguaros in a federally-protected Wilderness area during the 100 year anniversary of national parks for all, with a group of advocates who work tirelessly in conservation year after year, battling foes big and small, you are filled with joy. And love. And happiness. Thank you, Arizona Wilderness Coalition.*

# The Future of the Sky Islands

The Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona are irreplaceable gems, biodiversity hotspots and natural sanctuaries for quiet reflection or exploration. This year yielded important breakthroughs in efforts to achieve both near-term and long-term protection of currently vulnerable mountain ranges through the Land of Legends for our Future initiative.

Local businesses in Cochise County and Tucson stepped up with an impressive demonstration of support, as **139 businesses** signed on to preserve the Whetstone Mountains, Cochise Stronghold (Dragoon Mountains) and Cochise Head (Ku Chish, or northern Chiricahuas). AWC is deeply grateful to these businesses who recognize the critical linkage between protecting landscapes and investing in our economic future — as we depend more greatly on recreation and quality of life to draw new business, new residents and tourism to southeastern Arizona.

With this strong expression of local support, AWC and conservation partners engaged Arizona legislators to explore how permanent land protection might preserve water, wild places and the rural heritage of southeastern Arizona. As a result, 2017 promises significant progress toward securing the Land of Legends for our Future.



**"I wonder if we have enough reverence for life**





The Sky Islands we seek to protect through Land of Legends for our Future are currently not protected by any special designations. Through the Coronado National Forest, we expect several areas to receive greater protection under a new Land and Resource Management Plan. Yet areas like the Whetstones, Cochise Stronghold and northern Chiricahuas need the certainty brought only by permanent protection like legislation.

Myriad endangered, threatened and sensitive species call these mountain ranges home. The Cochise Stronghold is one of few areas where the Threatened Chiricahua leopard frog is doing well in secluded pools hidden among the Stronghold's crags and crevices.

**to concede to Wilderness the right to live on?" Mardy Murie**



# Finding the Wild in New Places

Expansive vistas, wild burros, abandoned machinery, magnificent rock arches — all these and more have been discovered by our intrepid wilderness inventory team, Joe Trudeau and Amber Fields. Using criteria of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to identify lands that possess wilderness qualities, the team scoured northwestern Arizona, and expanded the search this past year to southeastern Arizona.

We're excited to report that to date, nearly 600,00 acres of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) have been located, representing new areas deserving of higher levels of protection in agency planning. In the BLM Kingman Field Office, 15 LWCs were documented, and in the BLM Safford Field Office, 9 LWCs were documented. As these BLM offices begin major revision of their "Resource Management Plans" in the next few years, it will be important for conservation supporters to advocate for preservation of these new wilderness-worthy areas.



**"We all understand that compromise is part of the legislative process, yet at the same time,**





The northern Peloncillo Mountains contain three wilderness-worthy areas adjacent to the existing Peloncillo wilderness area. The Whitehorse, Antelope Canyon and Engine Mountain areas collectively encompass over 16,000 acres of rolling high-desert grassland, scenic mountain ridgelines, and secluded canyons. The Peloncillo Mountains provide important wildlife movement corridors, as migratory birds travel between Mexico, and further south, into the United States and Canada. Monarch butterflies and nectar-feeding bats likewise avail themselves of the Peloncillos to move between the tropical south and temperate north.



**I would submit that wilderness is not for sale." Nick Rahall**





# Key Partners and Business Supporters

AmazonSmile Foundation  
Arizona Conservation Partners  
Arizona Trail Association  
Arizona Wilderness Brewing  
Mary Ellen Arndorfer  
Arthur Carhart National Wilderness  
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Arizona  
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Center for Biological Diversity  
Climbing Association of Southern  
Arizona  
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Friends of the Tonto National Forest  
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
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District  
Hopi High School  
Local First Arizona  
Nick Mancini  
Northern Arizona University, Native  
American Student Services  
Sean Prentiss  
Prescott College  
Raven Café  
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian  
Community

Doug Scott  
Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter  
Sky Island Alliance  
Sonoran Institute  
Strategies 360  
The Wilderness Society  
The Yoga Connection  
Tucson Audubon Society  
US Vets Prescott  
USDA Forest Service  
USDI Bureau of Land Management  
USDI National Park Service  
Williams Family Ranch

**"Wilderness is harder and harder to find these days on this beautiful planet,**



# Our Volunteers Make Us *Unstoppable!*

## In the field, at events, being the Voice for Arizona Wilderness

Brandon Arents  
Matt Barnard  
Brian Barnes  
Joshua Bodrie  
Amanda Bonesteel  
Brandon Bozant  
Bob Bruce  
Christina Burden  
Shelby Cave  
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Sonia Mehren  
Lizann Michaud  
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Howard Olien  
Tim Ormond  
Dacho Pak  
Jonathan Patt

Julie Polovitch  
Sean Prentiss  
Ann Ranalli  
Rafael Reyna  
Sharon Rock  
Jim Rorabaugh  
Megan Smedley  
Tedd Smith  
Mike Snodgrass  
Tom Taylor  
Darrell Thompson  
Felicia Uranga  
Linda Williamson

**Hassayampa Crew:** Brian Andersen, Andrew Gosnell, Anna Faith Jorgenson, and Tom Miller



## Celebrating Wilderness Heroes

AWC salutes long-time volunteer Julie Polovitch, who has also served AWC as an educational consultant, restoration crew member, and college intern. Julie contributed to our Stewardship and Outreach programs by leading a group of middle school students on a backcountry adventure in the Galiuro Wilderness, as a member of our highly motivated Hassayampa River Canyon restoration crew, and giving multiple presentations about wilderness stewardship at REI. In the past year, Julie has contributed countless hours of her time to the Stew program as an active field participant, as well as contributing to the less glamorous behind-the-scenes organizational work, which is key to our success.

*“Wilderness has enriched my life; and through sharing my ecological knowledge and experiences in wilderness, I aim to enrich the lives of others. I hope that everyone can get outside to see the beauty, feel revitalized, and connect with community and themselves. Ultimately, I believe the connections we make with nature and the love that we foster for its inhabitants are the foundations of stewardship, an absolute necessity for the future of wilderness.”*

We wish Julie all the best as she explores new eastern horizons!

and we're abusing our planet to the point of almost no return.” *Betty White*





## Multi-Faceted Support

We appreciate supporters like Brandon Arents, who help AWC with time, talent and financial contributions. Brandon has invested in the future of wilderness preservation through monthly giving to AWC, and his contributions extend into diverse program areas. Brandon authored an article for our website, volunteered on Stewardship trips, and documented the legal history of several Arizona wilderness areas. Thank you to Brandon and all our sustaining donors and volunteers!

*Brandon Arents is an attorney and Associate at Squire Patton Boggs in Phoenix.*

# Our Heartfelt Thanks to

### to \$3,500

Laurie Back  
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Mark Briggs

**We appreciate all the gifts you bring to the Arizona Wilderness Coalition!**



# Our Amazing Donors

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Bryan Wyberg  
Daniela Yellan

## Another Way to Protect Wild Places

There are many ways to help preserve wilderness — by volunteering, engaging with agency decisions, and becoming a financial supporter of AWC — yet one avenue is often overlooked. Legacy giving is a wonderful way to support wilderness preservation in the long run, a very special way to leave your mark in the wild world.

Contact us for further information on how you can help to preserve wilderness by including Arizona Wilderness Coalition in your will or as a beneficiary of your retirement funds. The process is simple, and can be accomplished while still providing for family and loved ones. Call Barbara Hawke at 520.326.4300 for more information.



# Foundations and Agency Grants

Arizona Community Foundation of Cochise

Arizona Community Foundation

Arizona Community Foundation of Yavapai County

MET Foundation, Inc.

National Environmental Education Foundation

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

National Forest Foundation

National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance

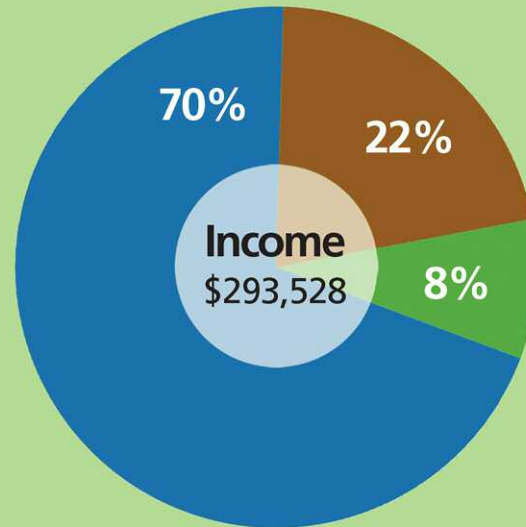
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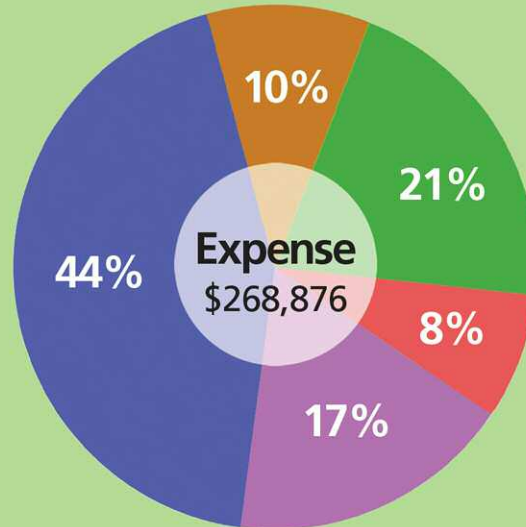
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All America lies at the end of the wilderness road, ...



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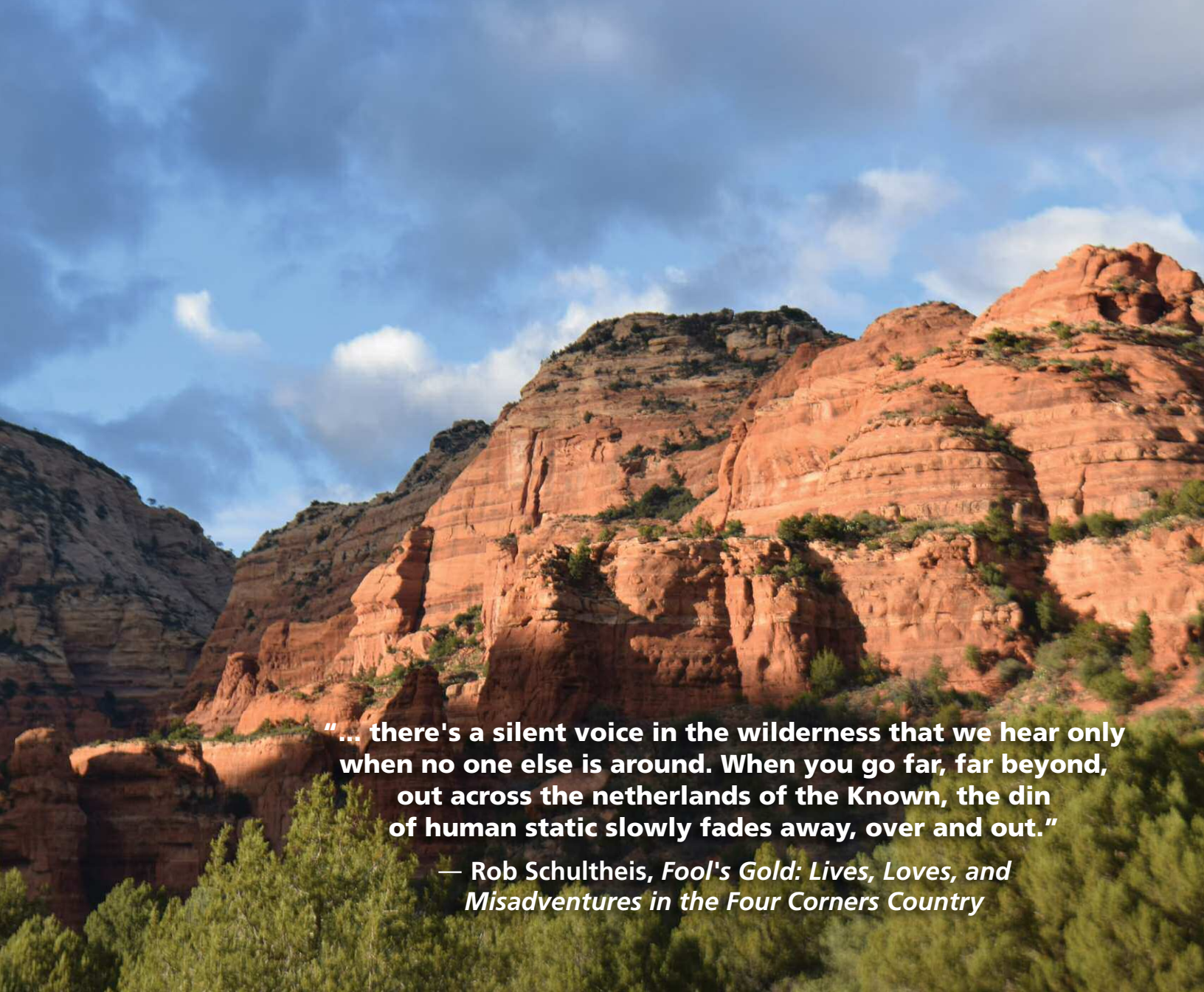
**Stephanie Landers**  
*Stewardship Project Assistant*

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**within us the wilderness still lingers." T.K. Whipple**





**"... there's a silent voice in the wilderness that we hear only when no one else is around. When you go far, far beyond, out across the netherlands of the Known, the din of human static slowly fades away, over and out."**

**— Rob Schultheis, *Fool's Gold: Lives, Loves, and Misadventures in the Four Corners Country***