

Wilderness 2010-2011



ARIZONA
WILDERNESS
COALITION

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Cedar Bench Wilderness
Protected 1984
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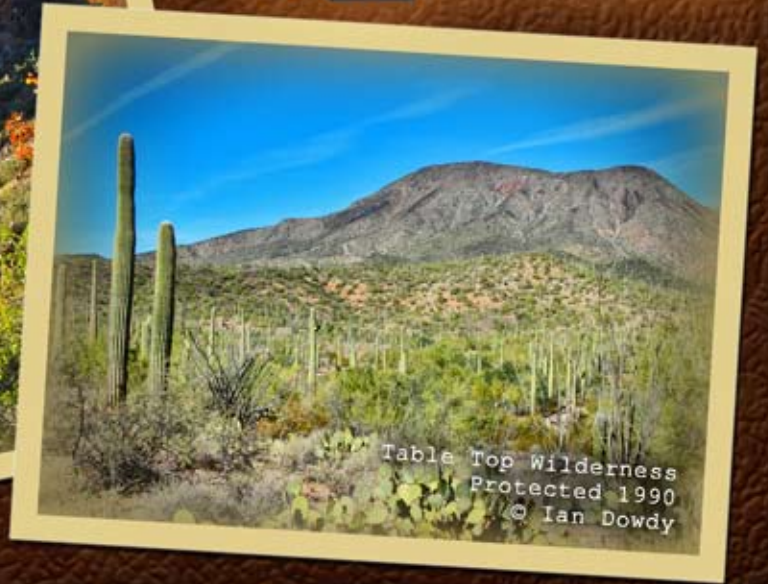


Table Top Wilderness
Protected 1990
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Protecting Arizona's Wild Lands and Waters Since 1979.



Don Hoffman and Matt Skroch.
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Wilderness was once an idea. It was an idea born from the observation that our civilization demands much from its environment, and in the last 200 years, we have marred the natural beauty and integrity of ecosystems that we ultimately depend upon to give us clean air and water, backcountry recreation opportunities, and places to find solitude and meaning, inspiration, well-being, and ultimately life. The wilderness idea was one that demanded our humbleness in the face of nature and prodded a reflection of our own, imperfect humanness. As the concept of wilderness took hold, it stimulated an American interest in ensuring that, as we accepted industry and the many changes it wrought on our environment, we also ensured that some places remain unaltered by the hands of man. In 1964, this idea leapt from the minds of American scholars, artists, writers, philosophers, naturalists, and philanthropists and landed in our nation's law books as the Wilderness Act. Today, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition proudly carries both the idea and policy of wilderness into the future, seeking to add to our rich legacy of protecting wild lands and teaching others how to be careful stewards of the wild places that remain.

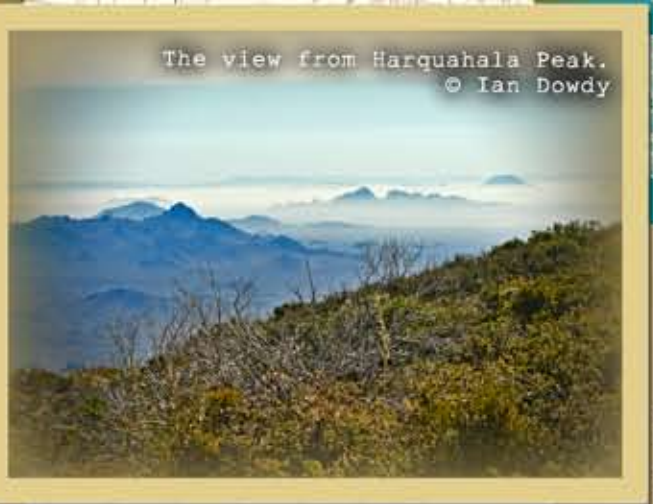
Our approach is straightforward. We build public support and political momentum for protecting Arizona's crown jewels, while embracing the value of volunteerism in restoring the protected areas we already enjoy. AWC is proud to report that in our 2010-2011 Fiscal Year, our restoration and wilderness volunteers dedicated 2,554 hours while removing invasive species, restoring degraded areas, and monitoring dozens of our state's wilderness areas. We owe these wonderful volunteers a debt of gratitude for their tireless dedication to the conservation of Arizona's backcountry beauty. Our newly minted endeavor, the Wilderness Stewardship Program (see page 7), gives Arizonans a powerful opportunity to contribute directly to the stewardship of our lands and rivers.

AWC's campaigns, particularly in the Sonoran Desert, have bounded forward. In May, we stood before 70 elected leaders and regional stakeholders as we and our partners publicly unveiled the Sonoran Desert Heritage initiative, a visionary proposal that will provide conservation-based management for a landscape larger than the state of Rhode Island, located in south-central Arizona (see page 3). Home to the iconic desert bighorn sheep, Sonoran desert tortoise, and Gila monster - along with an amazing density of archeological sites - this landscape represents the best that the North American deserts have to offer. A special component of our work in the Sonoran desert and other programs has been our focus on building connections with stakeholders who may not traditionally engage in conservation advocacy. We've built important bridges with the business community, the faith-based community, and even military interests over the last year, seeking to diversify and strengthen protection efforts in Arizona.

The Arizona Wilderness Coalition's success over the last year could not have been possible without the generous support of our members, donors, and partner institutions that share our commitment and drive to protecting Arizona's wild places. While economic times have provided challenges to our community, we are grateful and honored to work with such a diverse mix of conservationists that carry the bright torch of wilderness protection into the future. Thank you.

Matt Skroch, Executive Director

Don Hoffman, Board President



The view from Harquahala Peak.
© Ian Dowdy



ABOUT THE ARIZONA WILDERNESS COALITION

Wild to the Core

The Arizona Wilderness Coalition (AWC) formed in 1979 to permanently protect and restore wild lands and waters in Arizona for the enjoyment of all citizens while ensuring that Arizona's native plants and animals have a lasting home in wild nature. The organization has facilitated the designation of more than 3.5 million acres of wilderness across the state, including the 2009 triumph of Fossil Creek's Wild & Scenic River designation.

By building grassroots support and political momentum for wilderness conservation, AWC operates its programs on a campaign format, strategically assessing opportunities for conservation investment, then running goal-driven, time-defined legislative campaigns to achieve results through acts of Congress.

Our organization manages three core areas of operations focused on: protecting wild lands and water through special designations, cultivating land stewardship through volunteerism, and advocating for sound natural resource policy. Our work ultimately succeeds by empowering people to speak up for and act on behalf of conservation efforts. Highlights of our work over the last year include:

- Enlisting the support of 68 locally-owned businesses in western Maricopa County for the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal.
- Knocking on more than 10,000 doors in Maricopa and Yavapai counties, building support from hundreds of residents for protection of the Upper Verde River and the Sonoran Desert.
- Enlisting 128 volunteers for field projects ranging from restoration of the Butterfield Trail to riparian regeneration in Granite Creek on the Prescott National Forest.
- Gathering support from 228 Arizona sportsmen and women - a key public lands constituency - for wilderness protection across the state.
- Raising the visibility of climate change, border-environment impacts, wildlife, and wilderness through dozens of front-page stories, editorials, opinions, TV programs, and radio segments.



Lady bug on Harquahala Peak.
© Ian Dowdy

Message from Executive Director Matt Skroch and Board President Don Hoffman



Evaluating wilderness character on La Posa Plain.
© Ian Dowdy



Sonoran Desert Heritage

www.sonoranheritage.org

A Visionary Initiative for Extraordinary Lands

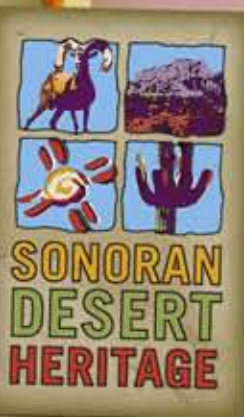
The Sonoran Desert Heritage Campaign is AWC's flagship initiative in central Arizona, focused on conserving a vast swath of intact Sonoran Desert stretching from the outskirts of Wickenburg to the remote wilderness of the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Rugged mountains and valleys sprawl across this unbroken landscape, providing one of the last and most significant opportunities to protect Arizona's natural heritage on an ecosystem scale. Filled with an unprecedented number of cultural and archaeological resources, the lands of the Sonoran Desert Heritage Campaign also showcase an awe-inspiring historical record of American Indians, settlers, prospectors, missionaries, and others who passed through this harsh land in previous centuries.

The West Valley of Maricopa County, which encompasses the majority of lands of the campaign, currently hosts 21% of Phoenix's population, which is anticipated to increase to 34% by 2030; it is one of the nation's fastest growing regions. This surge, which is occurring even during a recession, has enormous implications for the scenic, biological, and cultural integrity of the public lands at its fringe.

After several years of preparation, AWC and its partners publicly released the Sonoran Desert Heritage Campaign on May 25th, 2011 in front of scores of reporters, elected officials, and other stakeholders. Building up to its release, AWC's organizing efforts resulted in one of the most widely supported conservation initiatives in Arizona's history. Eighty-five local businesses, 225 sportsmen and women, and elected officials from Maricopa County, Buckeye, and other jurisdictions have pledged their support. Most notably, the initiative has garnered the strong support of Fighter Country Partnership, the non-profit organization supporting the mission of Luke Air Force Base, due to its complimentary benefit in protecting overflight routes from the base and the Barry M. Goldwater Range.

In addition to stakeholder outreach, AWC knocked on more than 7,000 doors in the spring of 2011 to speak with residents about the benefits of the Sonoran Desert Heritage proposal, building grassroots support to add the momentum necessary to facilitate future legislation for this bold initiative. With a dozen new wilderness units and two new National Conservation Areas, the Sonoran Desert Heritage Campaign stands as one of Arizona's best opportunities to protect our natural and cultural heritage on a landscape scale. In the coming year, we look forward to seeing the initiative land on desks of lawmakers in Washington, D.C.

Program contact: Ian Dowdy, ian@azwild.org



Horseback riders near Saddle Mountain.
© Ian Dowdy



A child enjoying spring wildflowers.
© Scott Hulbert



Sun setting over the Sonoran Desert National Monument. © Mark Skalny



Roy and Ella Pierpoint

Sentries in the Desert: Roy and Ella Pierpoint

"My wife Ella and I raised our son in the Gila Bend Mountains and have been farming here since 1970. As Arizona Site Stewards, we value the added protection that a wilderness designation will bring to the irreplaceable archaeological sites here at Red Rock Canyon. There's an amazing record that the Patayan people carved into the canyon sandstone thousands of years ago. We feel it's important to leave for the next generation what was left for us, so they can enjoy and learn from it just as we have; the only record we have of these native peoples are the rock images and archaeological ruins they have left behind."

Roy and Ella accompanied the Sonoran Desert Heritage team, with AWC staff Kate Mackay and Ian Dowdy, to Washington, D.C., to visit the Arizona delegation in September. They brought along a photo album of various native wildlife crossing through their property, which abuts the proposed Red Rock Canyon wilderness area and serves as a linkage with the Sonoran Desert National Monument to the east.

Conserving the Artery of Life: The Upper Verde Wild & Scenic River Campaign

Bubbling to the surface in springs of the Big Chino aquifer north of Prescott, the Verde River headwaters meander through the pinyon-juniper grasslands and pine forests of the Prescott National Forest, offering increasingly rare refuge for numerous native fish and endangered mammals and birds. The Upper Verde River offers outstanding opportunities for exploration on foot, horseback, or simply floating the cool waters through sinuous canyons made of pink limestone and dark grey basalt.

Impacts from groundwater pumping, off-road vehicles, and suburbanization are reaching a critical tipping point for the health of the Upper Verde. In response, AWC and our partners have begun efforts to protect 50 miles of the river using the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, ratified by Congress and similar to the process designating new wilderness. This designation will provide a federal reserved in-stream water right while safeguarding the river's unique cultural, economic and environmental values. AWC is also committed to on-the-ground restoration of the river and its banks through our robust volunteer field program.

In 2011, AWC and partners released a comprehensive proposal and executive summary for Wild & Scenic designation. Working through partnerships with the Yavapai Apache Nation, Sierra Club, Arizona Rivers and others, our coalition reached out to landowners, elected officials, businesses and government agencies to build support for the initiative.

As part of the Upper Verde Wild & Scenic River campaign, AWC also hosted a series of field excursions to the river's banks, teaching students from Prescott College about riparian ecology and the conservation value of the river.

Presentations, outreach, and stakeholder cultivation continues into 2012 as we seek to build on the momentum generated in the last year. We look forward to seeing the Upper Verde River protected as Arizona's next Wild & Scenic River!

Program contact: Sam Frank, sfrank@azwild.org

Protecting the Integrity of the Sky Islands: The Land of Legends Campaign

The Sky Island region of southeastern Arizona hosts more species of mammals, birds, reptiles, bees, and ants than any other place in the country. The ecological richness of these mountainous "island" habitats is equally matched by the cultural splendor found throughout Cochise County. Within the heart of the Chiricahua Apache territory in the 1800's, visitors can still sense and see the history that unfolded in these venerable mountains.

The Dragoon, Chiricahua, and Whetstone sky island mountains of the Coronado National Forest are a veritable "land of legends." AWC and regional partners are moving forward with a vision to designate wilderness in each of these ranges through our Land of Legends Wilderness Campaign.

As part of the campaign, AWC engaged in the Coronado National Forest Planning Process over the last year, successfully expanding the Forest Service's inventory of potential wilderness areas and helping secure a "Wilderness Alternative" in the upcoming draft plan. Over the summer, we also met with the Cochise County Board of Supervisors to discuss the value of wilderness while fending off a proposed anti-wilderness policy that threatened to hamstring the initiative. As we look forward to 2012, we seek to facilitate wilderness legislation for these three mountains in order to permanently protect their incredible natural and cultural history.

Program contact: Kate Mackay, kate@azwild.org



Whetstone Mountains. © Sky Island Alliance



Cochise Head. © Mark Miller



Hiking in the Dragoons.
© Matt Skroch



Hiker enjoys the Verde's cool water. © Sam Frank



Upper Verde Canyon. © Zack Curcija

Wilderness Stewardship Program



AWC volunteers work on a trail in Sycamore Canyon Wilderness. © AWC



The riparian corridor of Apache Creek gets some TLC from wilderness stewards. © AWC

Stewards in Training: Protecting Wilderness on the Ground

Launched in the spring of 2011, AWC's Wilderness Stewardship Program empowers Arizona's communities and volunteers with in-depth training, resources, and logistical support in order to monitor and restore wilderness areas across the public domain.

AWC teams up with federal agencies and local organizations to address pressing issues that face our wilderness areas in light of increased visitation, decreased federal resources, and magnified ecological impacts such as invasive species. The program trains dedicated volunteers as long-term "stewards" of wilderness areas while also engaging members of rural and urban communities on weekend or extended restoration field events. Introduced on the Prescott National Forest, the program will expand into other regions beginning in 2012.

Over the course of the year, AWC's volunteers worked in nine wilderness areas covering three national forests and two BLM field offices. Volunteer crews donated the equivalent of \$52,229 in labor while restoring degraded areas, mapping and removing invasive species, and recording wilderness impacts. Teaming up with the Backcountry Horsemen of Central Arizona, AWC has also adopted a portion of the Arizona Trail in the Mazatzal Wilderness on the Tonto National Forest, taking responsibility for managing impacts, trail conditions, and wilderness monitoring efforts.

Program Contact: Sam Frank, sfrank@azwild.org

Solar Development Evaluation



In 2011, the Bureau of Land Management began identifying millions of acres of public lands potentially available for solar energy generation facilities in Arizona. Under the agency's preferred alternative, nearly 500,000 acres of lands suitable for wilderness protection could be opened up for development, putting at risk the places AWC has worked years to protect. We jumped into action, organizing our members to attend agency meetings while advocating for smaller "solar energy zones" where development may occur. Through site visits, meetings with the solar industry, and our own policy analysis, AWC stands firm in requesting that citizen-proposed wilderness areas are removed from consideration for future development. One bright spot is the Restoration Design Energy Project, which focuses alternative energy development on previously disturbed or low quality land. Under the auspices of this project, AWC has begun to engage solar developers in a collaboration called the Arizona Solar Working Group, which seeks to find common ground between land conservation and solar industry interests. We are hopeful that in 2012, we can ensure that wilderness-quality lands remain intact while directing solar development to places where future options for wilderness designation are not impinged upon.

Program Contact: Ian Dowdy, ian@azwild.org

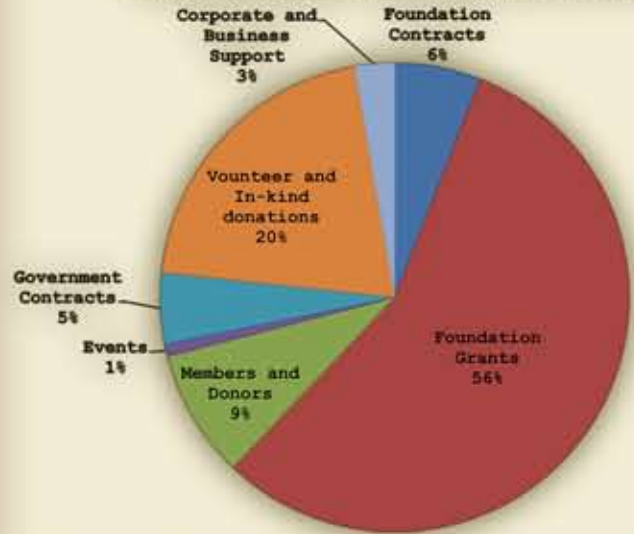
The La Posa Plain which may become the site of a utility scale solar energy project. © Ian Dowdy



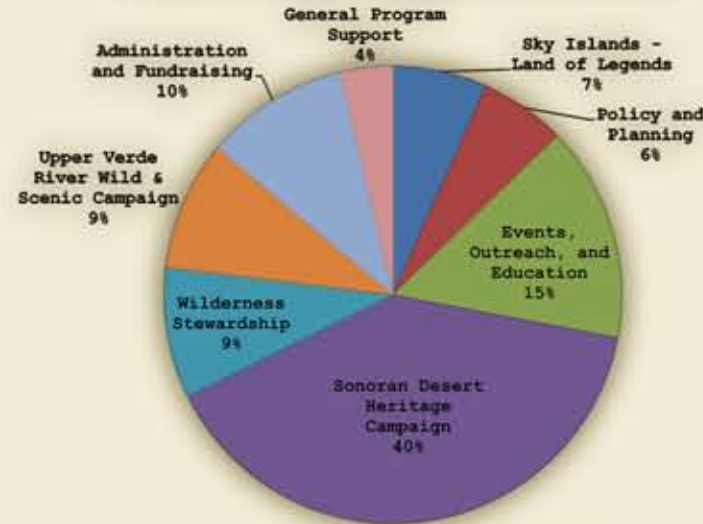
Financial Summary

Many thanks to our supporters! (\$25 or more)

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Organizational Expense Allocation



AWC would not be able to succeed at protecting and restoring Arizona's wild lands and waters without the support of our sponsors. Donations from foundations, businesses, and individuals are greatly appreciated!

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AWC staff on a recent wilderness hike.



AWC staff Ian Dowdy and Kate Mackay with Bill O'Brien and AWC member John Watkins.



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Ian Dowdy and Kate Mackay with AWC supporter and events coordinator Carla Olson.

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Our great volunteers at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival in August. © AWC



A revegetation crew working to remove an illegal road. © AWC



Volunteers hiking into the Bear Wallow Wilderness to evaluate fire damage and trail conditions. © AWC



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AWC staff at a recent event. © AWC

Whether you helped organize an event, inventory a proposal area, or even work a trail crew, we sincerely appreciate all that our volunteers accomplished over the last year!



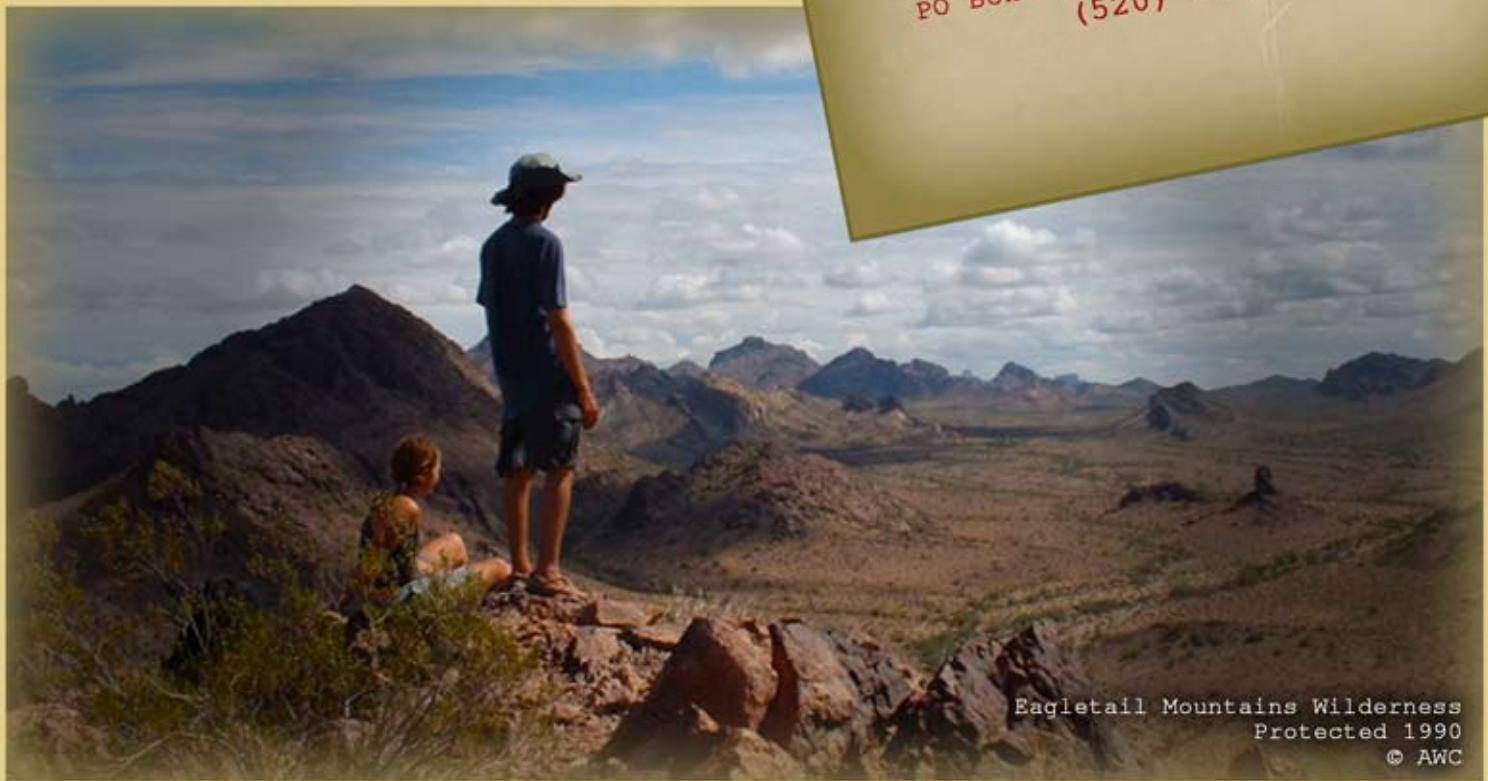
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