



# The Preserver

October 2012

*The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy champions the sustainability of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve for the benefit of this and future generations. As stewards, we connect the community to the Preserve through education, research, advocacy, partnerships and safe, respectful access.*

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## From the Office of the Executive Director



Mike Nolan

I spent a few hours this morning at the Tom's Thumb trailhead helping direct the installation of interpretive signs that explain the geology of the McDowells to visitors. A series of signs along the Marcus Landslide trail will explain the geological setting and possible causes of this massive landslide 500,000 years ago.

The signs were conceived and written by Master Steward Dan Gruber and staff with expert review and input from the Arizona Geologic Survey and geologists familiar with the area. In addition to creating the content, the Conservancy funded the design, construction, and installation of the signs through a contribution from a generous donor.

The interpretive signs at the Tom's Thumb trailhead and along the Marcus Landslide trail are the second set that the Conservancy has been responsible for, the first being the popular interpretive signs along the Bajada Trail at the Gateway. With the success of these interpreted trails at Gateway and Tom's Thumb, we have committed to creating interpretive signs at Lost Dog Wash and Brown's Ranch.

At Lost Dog Wash, the City of Scottsdale will be creating a new, accessible trail a short walk from the trailhead building -- not unlike the distance from the Gateway trailhead to the Bajada Trail. The Conservancy will conceive, write, and design the interpretive signs for the trail.

The Brown's Ranch trailhead includes space for interpretive exhibits as well as signs on the building itself. A committee led by Conservancy Board members called the Sonoran Desert Women is leading an effort to work with our Pathfinder stewards to develop interpretation of the historical aspects of Brown's Ranch and the northern region of the Preserve. Interpretation is expected to include signs at the trailhead and at the site of the ranch. Video and historical objects will be displayed when the exhibit room is open and when Pathfinders are present.

When completed, each major trailhead will offer an interpretive experience for those who want one. Interpretation will include ecological, geological, and historical aspects of the landscape, depending on the trailhead. These signs will enhance visitors' understanding of the Preserve and hopefully increase their passion for protecting it. They can also serve as the basis for future education programs that we lead at each of the major trailheads. The interpretive signs at each trailhead represent a significant enhancement to the enjoyment of a visit to the Preserve.

# A Message from the Hike Program

by Franco Farina, Hike Program Chair

A new and exciting hiking season is just started, with 73 public hikes scheduled for the 2012-2013 season. The September 30 pre-hike on the new Marcus Landslide trail was a great opportunity for stewards from the Hike and Pathfinder programs to see the new Tom's Thumb trailhead and to discover the wonders of this amazing trail. That day was unseasonably warm, and several hikers showed signs of discomfort and dehydration. One severe case required 911 emergency intervention. All ended well for everyone; but as we lead or assist, public hikes, let's remind ourselves and our guests that the Sonoran desert is a dry environment with a lack of precipitation and very strong evaporation. These conditions affect the plants and all the creatures living here, including us! Plants and animals of the desert developed ingenious ways to cope, and we humans need to do the same.

Let's make this the message of this hike season. During your hikes explain to our guests, who so often come from other parts of the country, that drinking plenty of water before and during the hike is the best adaptation for humans to cope with the conditions of the desert and to fully enjoy its beauty.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who offered your time to make the Hike program successful. The schedule still has some openings, but your response has been phenomenal and I know I can count on you as we all try to make a strong effort to recruit more stewards for the growing needs of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.



*Steward Hikers on Marcus Landslide Hike*



*Hikers at New Tom's Thumb Trailhead*

# Calling All Mountain Bikers!

*by Carole Burton, Steward and Mountain Bike Patrol Lead*

As fall approaches and cooler weather has arrived, I am so glad I don't need to load up my bike and head out of the valley for cooler temperatures elsewhere. There is much excitement for planning bike rides in our own backyard for the next eight months of awesome Arizona weather! As an avid mountain biker and steward with the Mountain Bike Patrol, I am equally excited about the developments here in Scottsdale that will make the already excellent mountain biking even better.

Since 2009, the City of Scottsdale has had the opportunity to purchase 6,800 acres of land to add to the Preserve, to be utilized by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. In 2012, there is a plan to purchase an additional 6,400 acres in the areas north of the McDowell Mountains and large parcels around Brown's Ranch. These areas are treasures, and are now, or soon, will be part of the Preserve.

These areas are beautiful - full of granite boulders, prickly pear, teddy bear cholla, mesquite trees, fascinating wildlife, and a whole lot of peace and quiet. The vistas are beautiful as far as the eye can see, and include Cone, Slant, Cholla and Granite Mountains. From parts of the preserve, there are views of the McDowells, Four Peaks, and the Tonto National Forest.

When construction is completed, there will be 140 miles of multi-use groomed trails, many of these miles will be appropriate for mountain bikers of all skill levels. In addition to the renovation of the Brown's Ranch trails, there will be a trail connector to the Tom's Thumb trailhead where you can easily make an entire day of riding in some of the most beautiful desert landscapes.

The future is happening quickly - the Brown's Ranch trailhead parking is well underway; the contractors are waiting for work orders to start working on the trails and before you know it, the area will be transformed as beautifully as Lost Dog Wash, Gateway, and Tom's Thumb.



*Carole Burton, Mountain Bike Patrol Lead*

As the Preserve area increases, so does the need to expand the Conservancy Patrol program. The trail system will be patrolled by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, but given the expansiveness of the trails, mountain bikes will be able cover the distances that the hikers and equestrians will not be able to reach.

So I am calling on all mountain bikers to consider joining the mountain bike patrol. For those of us who ride on a regular basis, being on patrol is a great way to enjoy your ride and make a valuable contribution to the Conservancy at the same time. The commitment is minimal, and the rewards are great! Please contact Carole Burton, Mountain Bike Patrol Lead at [bikepatrol@mcdowellsonoran.org](mailto:bikepatrol@mcdowellsonoran.org) for more information.



# Pathfinder Program Has New Leaders

by Bill Parker, Pathfinder Program Chair

I'm Bill Parker, your new Pathfinder Chair. I didn't want to be—but my buddies Phil Hartley and Sue Handke, twisted my arm. It was only when Sue agreed to be my Assistant Chair that I came on board. It has been even more work than I thought, but I love it (the old "you get out of it, what you put in" idea). It helps that Sue is there, and, quite honestly, I have never met so many friendly and passionate people in such a short time.

The Preserve is witness to many *old* and *new* things, so I am going to go with that theme for my new missive. First, I want to thank BJ Tatro and Tom Heideman, the two *old* Pathfinder chairs, for putting together and carrying forward such a great concept.

I'm *new*. The Assistant Chair position is *new*. Pat Catalano has stepped into her *new* role as Sunrise Team Leader; Monika Hahues moved up from Assistant Gateway Leader to take on *new* challenges as Gateway Leader; and, Rick Cooper and Paul Staker have agreed to co-lead the *new* Tom's Thumb team.

Thankfully, a number of oldies-but-goodies stayed on, so a big "thank you" to Sherrill Sigmen (Lost Dog Wash Team Leader), Barb Zeller (Scheduling Coordinator), Materials Managers Bill Thomas (Gateway), Stuart Wolkoff (Lost Dog) and John Metzger (SR), and to Rita Kay Ryan—our Ambassador of Good Will.

Speaking of the *new* Tom's Thumb trailhead, 26 Pathfinders have volunteered to support this *new* trailhead. The area has some amazing *new* scenery and wonders for our visitors. Not only is it a *new*, shorter way to get up to good *old* Tom's Thumb, it also will showcase a 500,000-year *old* geological wonder in the Marcus Landslide.

Pathfinders recently had the chance to meet with Erik Filsinger (Board member and avid rock climber) and Robbin Schweitzer, to learn about *new* challenges and opportunities presented by the Tom's Thumb trailhead. On the serious side, BE AWARE—there is NO potable water at this new trailhead. On the funny side, at least according to everyone in attendance, BE AWARE—there is an "it's-too-full" alarm on the



Pathfinder Program Chair Bill Parker and Assistant Chair Sue Handke

waterless toilets...We all agreed that we did NOT want to be the one to trip it.

Moving on from that thought...another new activity for Pathfinders will be interacting with our young visitors to hand out the new "Family Passports." Sue has seen them and tells me "they are pretty cool! They are packed full of desert information and great pictures." The idea is to encourage children and their families to visit each trailhead to get that trailhead's unique, beautiful stamp. Once they have all four stamps, they get a prize. Thanks to Conservancy staffer Jill Feinstein for leading the effort to produce these "cool," kid-friendly passports.

Thanks for your time and interest. See you out on the trails!!

# Season Kicks Off at Steward Retreat

by Peggy McNamara, Steward

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy stewards gathered at Homestead Community Center on September 19th for the annual steward kick-off retreat. Rich Cochran, acting as Master of Ceremonies, introduced the speakers and thanked the Volunteer Support members who worked on the event.

Mike Nolan welcomed the group and thanked everyone for their hard work. He then asked for help with two events: the Tour de Scottsdale in October 2012 and the American Trails International Trails Symposium in April 2013.

Kroy Ekblaw, Scottsdale's Preserve Director, announced that the City of Scottsdale will bid on the final three parcels in the north section this December. "The money is there," he said, "to buy everything up to the Tonto National Forest."

Melanie Tluczek, Field Institute Research Coordinator, explained the flora and fauna baseline inventory and the human impact study. She noted that recent rains will allow for a flora study this fall.

John McEnroe, Vice Chair of the Conservancy Board of Directors, thanked the stewards for their work. He said the board is "trying to figure out where we want to be in two to three years" and will accomplish this through strategic planning.

Steve Dodd of the Core Leadership Team said the City reported 400,000 visitors to the Preserve in 2011. He emphasized that the Conservancy will need more stewards to handle increasing visits and the expansion of the Preserve. He wants everyone to "ask ten people you know between now and the end of the year" to become stewards.

Lastly, Phil Hartley, Conservancy Web Guru, talked about our new website. He said some parts are still under construction. He cautioned people against launching it with Explorer 9 and recommended using Firefox. He also explained how to find the page to report hours. Call the office if you have problems with the website.



Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.

~John Muir

# Meet Stewards Ray and Lorraine Houle

by Peggy McNamara, Steward

Ray and Lorraine both grew up in large families on farms only 16 miles apart. Ray lived in Wisconsin and Lorraine lived nearby in Minnesota. But they didn't meet until after Ray graduated high school. Soon after that, Ray enlisted in the Army and was gone for three years. But when he returned home, Ray and Lorraine resumed dating and they married in 1969. They made their home outside the Twin Cities where they raised two sons and a daughter.

Ray attended St. Paul Vocational/Technical Institute and became a Journeyman Sprinkler Fitter in the fire sprinkler industry. He spent 38 years working the five-county area of St. Paul/Minneapolis. Meanwhile, Lorraine took time off from employment to raise the children.

When the kids were all in school, Lorraine returned to work, first at the Federal Land Bank, then at Deluxe Corporation, a top provider of checks and services to small businesses in North America. While working, she obtained an Associate Degree from Century College in Minnesota and worked toward a Bachelors Degree at Metropolitan State University. Lorraine remained at Deluxe for 22 years as executive assistant to the CEO.

In 2000, Deluxe spun-off its eFunds subsidiary and the Houles moved to Scottsdale so Lorraine could help its CEO launch the new company here. Meanwhile, Ray started working part-time in the maintenance department at Sun Orchard, a citrus juice facility in Tempe.

When they lived in Minnesota, Ray liked to deer hunt, and they both gardened. But after arriving in Scottsdale, Ray and Lorraine discovered hiking. Now they hike in the Preserve several times a week. They also like hiking at higher altitudes. They've enjoyed trekking in Alaska, Machu Picchu, the mountains of France, and Zermatt, Switzerland where, tethered to their team, they hiked a glacier. They also recently enjoyed a vacation in Vietnam and Cambodia. This October, they will do their annual Grand Canyon rim-to-rim hike for the seventh consecutive year.



*Stewards Lorraine and Ray Houle at Gateway Saddle*

Most of all, they love spending time with their eight grandchildren who range in age from eight to twelve.

In 2005, when Lorraine retired, the Houles joined the Conservancy. They graduated with Class 12, the One-Two-Punch class. Now they hike together on trail patrol, and help with the McDowell Sonoran Challenge each year. They also had a great time several years ago helping Dan Gruber on a geology project. Ray works a lot in Construction & Maintenance where he is one of the heavy lifters. Lorraine occasionally works in the office on mailing projects.

In addition to Conservancy work, Lorraine has organized work projects with Preserve coordinators. The projects involved the Grayhawk Hiking Club where she and Ray are part of the leadership team. They both also volunteer at Habitat for Humanity, St. Mary's Food Bank, and Paz de Cristo which ministers to the poor. Lorraine delivers meals to the elderly in their homes in North Scottsdale for the Area Agency on Aging organization. Ray participates in charitable activities in the Men's Club at his church. He and Lorraine also work the concession stands at the Giant's spring training games for the Men's Club.

Lorraine says her participation in the Conservancy is important because "the Preserve is a treasure located right in our own back yards, important as a wildlife

# Meet Stewards Ray and Lorraine Houle, contd.

corridor, valuable as a tourist attraction, and an inspirational place for seeking solitude."

For Ray, working with the volunteers in the Construction and Maintenance is the most fun. He finds working on a crew with Jane Rau an inspiration. Besides that, he says, "Claire and Robbin make digging in the dirt fun for all of us!"



*Avid Hikers Ray and Lorraine Houle*