

The Otter

SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF VERDE RIVER GREENWAY



VOLUME TWO
FALL ISSUE

CROSS WATERSHED NETWORK (XWN)

The Cross Watershed Network (XWN) is a newly formed network of watershed partnerships and practitioners across the Southwest. XWN is helping to link the Verde with similar collaborative efforts in the Escalante (UT), Dolores (CO), Virgin (NV), Gila (AZ), as well as numerous other watersheds throughout the southwest. VWRC has been very involved in this first year of its development, serving on the Core Team, and hosting the first annual workshop.

Recognizing that peer-to-peer sharing is often the most effective and efficient way to learn, not to mention it helps mitigate reinventing the wheel, the purpose of the XWN is to link those people hard at work and getting things done on the ground in their respective watersheds to each other. This "matchmaking" function of sorts

helps field-based folks step away from on-the-ground projects and learn techniques and strategies from others watershed practitioners.

Based on feedback from watershed practitioners across the Southwest, and the acknowledged need for peer-to-peer sharing opportunities, the XWN decided on a two-pronged approach to best serve practitioners: 1) convene in-person events and 2) develop a dynamic and useful online resource.

See **Cross Watershed Network (XWN) Page 3**

PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S LOG

Hi,

I hope you all are enjoying the crispness that autumn brings. Giving and thanks are two words that I associate with autumn.

VWRC Partners, staff and field crews can be thankful for the fact that we are successfully controlling the invasion of woody invasive plants. At the same time, we are giving local veterans and young adults jobs where they are learning new job skills while making a living wage or earning educational awards in the community in which they live.

Even though our funders and VWRC partners have been generous in their giving, more is needed to fulfill our goals for the season.

I ask you to join with me, during this time of giving and thanks, by giving to our end of the year Verde Watershed Restoration Campaign. Your gift will enable us to keep our treatment crews working on this important habitat improvement project for the entire season.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna".

News you otter know about VWRC

- ♦ **Meander Land: Man vs. Arundo Page 2**
- ♦ **VWRC Annual Stakeholder Meeting Page 4**
- ♦ **Long Term Maintenance at Dead Horse Ranch State Park Page 5**
- ♦ **Treatment Season off to good start Page 6**
- ♦ **AmeriCorps Volunteer for VWRC Page 7**
- ♦ **AlterNative Plants Page 10**

MEANDER LAND: A MAN VS. ARUNDO!

Arundo donax grows with no enemy along the banks of Oak Creek, it's like it was born to be there. Many locals say it was after the 1993 flood that first saw it spread down the creek. Elsie, who has lived in her lower Cornville home for more than 20 years says, "I remember the 1993 flood. Before that there was none of it. But after



the flood you could look up the creek and see it along the sides." Now, as many people know, *Arundo* or Giant Reed as it is commonly called, has continued to invade the creek with clumps growing as big as houses. Private property owners have used various methods to remove it from their property. Some have cut it back, only to watch it resprout and grow a foot or two in several weeks time. Others have used backhoes to remove the root ball and others have simply watched it grow fretting, that they would never be able to tackle this giant invader.

And then there is Philip Zum Mullen. Philip's family has owned their small farm on

Oak Creek in Cornville for more than 40 years. It's a simple place with a duck pond, some happy sheep and an enthusiastic dog named Darby. It doesn't boast a fancy house, but instead it has big shade trees and a small stretch of Oak Creek to dip into when the moment is right.

Like others along Oak Creek, Philip had seen the *Arundo* take over, growing from small patches to a large monoculture that completely covered the bank, blocking the view and access to Oak Creek.

As a man of action, Philip finally decided to do something about the *Arundo* on his property. He wanted to be able to see the creek again and he knew that the *Arundo* was going to soon compromise his healthy Cottonwood trees. But what to do? "I tried cutting it in a few places, and it just grew back. I didn't want to use herbicide, there was too much of it and it was so close to the creek," so he did what any resourceful farmer does, with a bit of ingenuity and his brush hog he attacked the invading *Arundo*.

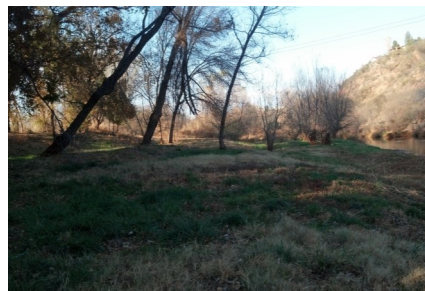
First a bit tentative, and then with more gusto he drove the



brush hog into and over the patch of *Arundo*. He went back and forth, up and down the banks cutting the 30 foot tall reeds until it was all gone. Again and again, he mowed it, over and over until there were only a few small stalks resprouting.

The creek now flows by in full view, while the Cottonwood trees stand majestically back from the banks giving shade to the birds and other animals

that make Oak Creek their home. Now grasses are beginning to sprout, bringing this little patch of Oak



Creek back to a healthier system.

By Laura Jones
Community Outreach Coordinator,
FVRG

CROSS WATERSHED NETWORK from page 1



Anna Schrenk and Chip Norton of FVRG show area along Verde River and Diamond S Ditch, where habitat restoration is begin planned.

The Verde Watershed and VWRC were selected as an ideal watershed and host for the first annual XWN workshop. This year's workshop, held September 10-11 in Cottonwood, focused on the watershed issue of greatest interest to participants – riparian restoration. Over 65 practitioners from watersheds throughout the Southwest came together to focus on topics they prioritized:

- Geomorphological aspects of riparian restoration (e.g., how the stream channel and flooding patterns affect invasive species removal and re-vegetation)
- Wildlife and fish habitat restoration (discussion topics included: beavers/aquatic habitat, bird habitat, vegetation and garter snakes)
- Long-term maintenance strategies (e.g., how to keep the invasive plant species out of the river for the long term)

As part of the workshop, VWRC hosted a “collective problem solving” field trip to the Diamond S Ditch in Camp Verde – a site with a variety of restoration challenges and needs. This field trip helped demonstrate how VWRC and

other partners might benefit from insights and suggestions from other watershed practitioners.

Future workshops will move around the Southwest, rotating hosts and topics, again using peer to peer sharing as an effective way to learn and share methods, lessons and insights, as well as to identify and work together on common challenges.

If you would like more information or to get involved, please visit crosswatershed.net.



“The Cross Watershed Network conference was an exceptional event that brought a number of disciplines together. It will be a very useful tool for folks that are on the ground trying to make a difference in their local watersheds.”

VWRC 2ND ANNUAL STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Over 45 VWRC Stakeholders attended this year's meeting to share with each other their accomplishments. This year's event, held at the Cottonwood Recreation Center, included a field trip to see three sites that VWRC crews worked on during the 2012-2013 treatment season.

The first stop took participants to the Verde Village Property Owners Association (VVPOA) greenway property on the Verde River. Before we embarked on this project, the property was infested with invasive species and abused as a riverside dumping grounds for old appliances, mattresses and garbage. Stakeholders toured the transformed nature preserve, where residents and the visiting public walk amongst the towering Cottonwood-Willow gallery forests that are trash-free with considerably less invasive plants.

Next the group stopped at Oak Creek Valley Estates (OCVE). Stakeholders were able to see the evidence of the large *Arundo* patches that had been removed from this challenging site.



VWRC Partners including private landowners visit the Nature Preserve at VVPOA.

These *Arundo* patches made seeing the fast flowing Oak Creek almost impossible. "Having them cleared away has given the residents of the community a much greater appreciation for the riparian area that is shared by us all," Stephanie Kreunen, the President of the Home Owners Association shared. OCVE has also committed funding for treatment crews to maintain treatments. Long term maintenance is essential to ensure that the habitat improvements are maintained.

The final stop on the tour was Dead Horse Ranch State Park. CREC crews spent over six weeks during



Tim Carlson of the Walton Family Foundation and Jan Holder of the Gila Watershed Partnership look at treated *Arundo* patches.

the previous season attacking various invasive species throughout the park.

One particular area that was treated was the ever present Tree of Heaven infestation just below the 10th street bridge on river right that includes state parks and City of Cottonwood's Riverfront Park.

This particular patch had been worked on for years by FVRG volunteers, the CREC Verde crews efforts made the difference in clearing the site. Stakeholders were able to see these efforts and just how difficult this particular invasive plant is to eradicate. Stakeholders took action by pulling out a few resprouts, which initiated several volunteer events to clear the site, yet another example of the need for long-term maintenance and how it can get done with volunteers. (see **Volunteers** on page 5)

The afternoon included lunch, volunteer awards, presentations by VWRC Partners and an opportunity for small group discussions.

Laura Jones FVRG Community Outreach Coordinator



Lynda Zanoli with the Verde NRCD Ed Center and Daniel Oppenheimer with the Tamarisk Coalition enjoy the perch above Spring Creek on our field outing.

VOLUNTEERS TACKLE LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE AT DEAD HORSE RANCH STATE PARK

Ailanthus, commonly known as Tree of Heaven or Paradise Tree, has been in the Verde Valley for who knows how long. It could have been brought with the Chinese that came to work in Jerome during the mining days. *Ailanthus* is, after all, native to China and this is how many invasive plants make their way across oceans. The explosion of this plant we know, from historical records, happened in the 1950's to help shore up the hillsides of Jerome. The smelter in Clarkdale had been processing



tons of copper and belching out toxic smoke that killed all but the hardiest of trees, *Ailanthus* was a survivor!

At the time there was a concern that the precarious homes perched along the fragile hillsides of Jerome would tumble down if they were not able to get something to grow and stabilize the hillside, plus some thought the hillside needed some greening up.

At the time it may have seemed an ingenious idea, the mine company collected 65 pounds of *Ai-*

lanthus seed, loaded them into an airplane and flew over Jerome, dropping the load over the town and the surrounding mine tailings. The seeding was a success, the seeds germinated and shored up the hillside and potentially saved Jerome from joining Clarkdale in the Valley, but they also left a legacy of one of the most aggressive invasive trees around.

Soon the *Ailanthus* trees were not only on the disturbed slopes around Jerome but were part of the landscape as shade trees on city street and parks and in resident's yards in the Verde Valley.

Today, not only does it keep the hillside in place and give shade to historic homes in Jerome, Clarkdale and Cottonwood, it has invaded washes and the riparian areas and has become a threat to our healthy watershed.

Friends of Verde River Greenway (FVRG) volunteers have spent innumerable hours removing *Ailanthus* by hand at Dead Horse Ranch State Park (DHRSP) only to have them grow back, thicker and thicker.

During the 2012–2013 treatment season, CREC's Verde

Crew was able to remove all of the *Ailanthus* trees from the area below the 10th Street bridge. When they were done, there wasn't an *Ailanthus* tree in sight. But fast forward six months and there they were, poking their heads up through the litter.



FVRG's Marsha Foutz was almost ready to give up on the site, until VWRC Stakeholders on a field trip to the site held a spontaneous seedling pulling event. Emboldened by the discovery that the recent rains had loosened the soil, Marsha organized volunteers to come to Dead Horse and pull plants. In three hours ten volunteers pulled approximately 1,500 seedlings. The next week our new treatment crews pulled another 1,000 trees in an hour.



And a week later, a group from Yavapai County Adult Probation came to pull even more. In all, over 3,000 sprouts, seedlings and saplings were removed from the riparian corridor, making us one patch closer to a healthy Verde watershed.

By Laura Jones

**FVRG Community Outreach
Coordinator**

TREATMENT SEASON OFF TO GOOD START

This year's treatment season kicked off in September with a combined field crew training at Dead Horse Ranch State Park. With the assistance of the Coconino Rural Environment Corps (CREC) staff, Friends and VWRC Partners provided a two-week intensive training for Verde Field Crews hired for the 2013-14-treatment season. Training included a week of chainsaw training where crewmembers learned the basics of



Alex Hreha's CREC Crew coming in at the end of a day in the field

chainsaw safety, operation and maintenance as well as two days of practicing on the four target species. The second week of training included a Wilderness First Aid course, a pesticide class and licensing exams, VWRC orientation, Leave No Trace, Botany 101, equipment maintenance and most importantly data collection training using tablets. Throughout the training, several VWRC Partners came over to the park to give educational presentations on subjects ranging from cultural resources to native fish. The combined training was a success and crewmembers enjoyed the time getting to know each other.

After two long weeks of training, 25 individuals hit the ground removing invasives and chipping biomass from the watershed.



The Vetraplex crew tackling a patch of Giant Reed

This year, Friends has contracted with CREC to provide two eight-person Verde CREC crews dedicated to VWRC projects, one seven person Vetraplex

crew and one three-person chipper crew. Funding for treatment and biomass reduction for the season has been provided by the Walton Family Foundation, Arizona State Forestry, USFWS Partners for Wildlife, USFS-Coconino, Prescott and Tonto NF, National Park Service and AZGFD.

Priorities for this season's work include treatment near the headwaters of the Verde River, Demonstration Area 1 which includes Dead Horse Ranch State Park and adjacent private lands, private and public land in Oak Creek and Beaver Creek, Demonstration Area 2 which includes Shields Ranch (TNC), Rockin' River Ranch (ASP), private land and Prescott and Coconino National Forests and finally work in the Wild and Scenic section of the Verde River between Beasley Flats and Childs.

Our goal is to treat 700 acres in the watershed during the season, this includes work that VWRC partners plan to accomplish as well as our Verde CREC and Vetraplex crews. You might think this is an ambitious goal, but based on last year's accomplishments and the progress we have made in the first quarter of this season, we are on track to meet and most likely exceed that goal!

As the crews have been chipping away at this goal, they have met several unique challenges along the way, varying from a surprise bee hive in the middle of a very large patch of Giant Reed to tricky access issues, all of which were overcome by the crews working together to find solutions.

By Phil Hall, Chipper Foreman



The Vetraplex crew felling *Ailanthus* trees

WELCOME HANNAH AND CHRIS, VWRC's NEW AMERICORPS MEMEBERS!

Hannah Farrell

Hannah is an AmeriCorps Member working for FVRG as the Field Data Coordinator. She graduated in 2012 from Humboldt State University in Northern California with a Bachelor of Science degree in Restoration Ecology. She is excited and appreciative to have a job that will utilize the



knowledge and skills gained in school! Hannah is a native of Flagstaff, and is thrilled to be back in the Southwest and working on such a meaningful project.

Apart from work, Hannah enjoys going on outdoor adventures such as hiking, biking, and backpacking. She also spends time practicing yoga, dance, and cooking/eating experimental recipes. She has found the Verde Valley to be an exquisite setting for these activities.

Chris Bertrand

Chris is currently an AmeriCorps volunteer with The Nature Conservancy's Verde program, serving as Verde River Riparian Restoration Coordinator. He has a Bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona and a post-baccalaureate certification in GIS also from the U of A. In between and since,



Chris has worked as a biological technician for the USGS, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and WEST Inc. for whom he has identified road-kill, wrangled chipmunks (repeatedly), and conducted all sorts of various surveys. Chris is brand new to The Nature Conservancy and AmeriCorp and is pleased to live in the Verde Valley and work as a part of the collaborative watershed restoration effort. Chris enjoys gardening, camping/hiking, travel, reading, wildlife-watching, and is working on creating a field guide to Arizona flora (eventually).

Good Luck and Farewell

AmeriCorps Members

Veda Gobrecht

&

Amy Zimmermann

We wish you both the best of luck in all of your future adventures in life and in your careers.

Thanks to you both for sharing your knowledge and for your hard work. Your service to the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition, Friends of Verde River Greenway, The Nature Conservancy and the communities of the Verde watershed are greatly appreciated.

Farewell Friends!

Special thanks to the private landowners and organization that joined FVRG and VWRC Partners in improving habitat in the Verde watershed this quarter

- ♦ Freeport McMoRan
- ♦ Paul and Laurie Bustamante
- ♦ La Barranca II Homeowners Association
- ♦ La Barranca Homeowners Association
- ♦ Town of Camp Verde
- ♦ Las Piedras Property Owners Association
- ♦ Deborah Williams
- ♦ Jonathan Robinson
- ♦ Marjorie Funk
- ♦ Curtis and Cristy Christy
- ♦ Rancho Tres Brisas
- ♦ Cari Wells
- ♦ The Nature Conservancy
- ♦ Verde Basin Partnership

Thanks for
improving wild-
life habitat in the
Verde!!



**Join us by giving towards
Friends of Verde River Greenway's**

Year-End Verde Watershed Restoration Campaign

We are trying to raise \$15,000 by January 15, 2014 to fund our treatment crews for the last six weeks of the treatment season. We're off to a good start, but we need your help! Funds will go directly toward on the ground work to improve habitat in the riparian areas in the Verde Watershed. Click on GIVE NOW and you will be directed to our secure Razoo donation portal.

GIVE NOW

Thanks for your Support!

Special Thanks to VWRC & FVRG Volunteers!!!

Marsha Foutz

George Reeve

Chip Norton

Chris Jensen

Mal Otterman

Duane Edwards

Martin Ball

Hank Dingemann

Jim Quinn

Joan Otterson

Jesse Miller

Earl Poucher

Becky Brassfield

Kimberly Poucher

Kipian Horcos

Jim Kreunen

Jodi Allen

Theresa Hughes

Bruce Maurer

Shannon Shaw

Sarah Sonrenbery

Mick Emerson

Lo Modric

Devin James

**Prescott College Ecology
Class**

Krystina Karczewski

Martin Yassi

Hugh Taylor

Jeremy Mc Murtry

VWRC Steering Committee Members

Friends of Verde River Greenway-**Chip Norton**

The Nature Conservancy- **Kim Schonek**

Coconino National Forest- **Laura Moser**

Arizona State Parks-**Steven “Max” Castillo**

Arizona Game and Fish Department-**Wade Albrecht**

Salt River Project-**Ruth Valencia**

National Park Service-**Tina Greenwalt**

Natural Resource Conservation District-**Chris Jensen**

USFWS (Partners for Fish & Wildlife)-**Kris Randall**

Tamarisk Coalition-**Jamie Nielson**

Yavapai-Apache Nation-**Fred Sanchez**

Prescott National Forest-**Albert Sillas and Nancy Walls**

Staff: Anna Schrenk, Laurie Parker, Laura Jones, Phil Hall and AmeriCorps Member Hannah Farrell

VWRC Sub-Committees

Outreach, Education and Engagement

Co-coordinators: Steve Estes and Laura Jones

Members: Max Castillo, Chip Norton, Anna Schrenk, Jaime Nielsen, Tahnee Robertson, Lynda Zanolli, Laurie Parker, Chris Bertrand

Research and Monitoring

Co-coordinators: Kim Schonek and Ruth Valencia

Members: Laura Moser, Chip Norton, Jaime Nielsen, Max Castillo, Anna Schrenk, Kris Randall, Hannah Farrell, Chris Bertrand

Planning and Implementation

Co-coordinators: Anna Schrenk and Laura Moser

Members: Chris Jensen, Kim Schonek, Chip Norton, Ruth Valencia, Laura Jones, Chris Bertrand and Hannah Farrell

Sustainable Funding

Co-coordinators: Jamie Nielson and Chip Norton

Members: Anna Schrenk, Wade Albrecht, Laura Jones, Kristin Jespersen, Nancy Walls, Jenise Nyquist

Facilitators: Tahnee Robertson and Larry Fisher

Volunteer with VWRC!

Please contact Laurie Parker from FVRG at
admin@verderivergreenway.org

VWRC Map & Monitor property for invasive plants.

No experience necessary!

ALTERNATIVE PLANT OF THE QUARTER

Native Plants of the Verde Valley

Get to Know: tulip pricklypear (*Opuntia phaeacantha* Engelm.)

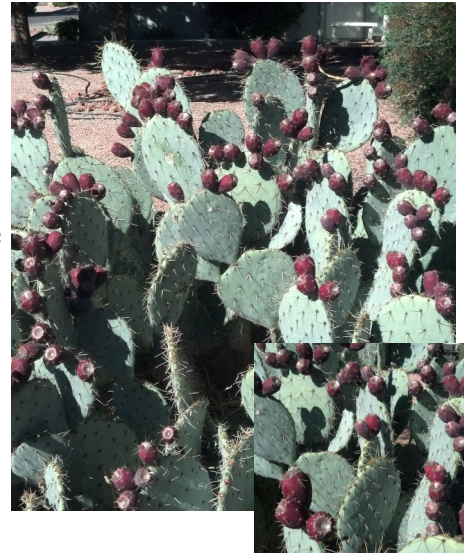
The tulip pricklypear, also known as “nopal”, is uniquely adapted to growing conditions in the Verde Valley. This cactus has a dense lateral root system that helps it take advantage of any rain that falls, several adaptations to prevent moisture loss, and spines to discourage animals from feeding on it. Despite the formidable spines, javelina have been known to make a meal out of the pricklypear cactus.

What it looks like

- Forms dense patches of flat green “pads”, some tinged reddish purple in winter.
- Pads are covered in two kinds of spines: one kind 1/2 to 2 inches long and gray to brown or yellowish, sometimes pointing downward, and the other kind much smaller, growing in dense oval clusters around the base of the larger spines.
- Flowers showy, yellow, often with a red center, up to 3 inches wide, opening in spring.

Fleshy red-purple fruits grow up to 2 ¼ inches long, purplish, flattened at the apex, tapering to the base.

For information on native plant alternative for landscaping visit our web site at www.verdewrc.org



VWRC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

Wednesday, December 11, 2013 2-4 PM

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

JANUARY

Tuesday, December 21, 2013 10 AM-12 PM

Sustainable Funding Subcommittee Meeting

Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building

VWRC Steering Committee Mtg. 1:00 —3 PM

Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building

Wednesday, December 22, 2013 9-11 AM

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

FEBRUARY

Tuesday, February 25, 2013 10 AM-12 PM

Sustainable Funding Subcommittee Meeting

Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building

VWRC Steering Committee Mtg. 1:00 —3 PM

Where: County Supervisors Room, Yavapai County Building

Wednesday, December 22, 2013 9-11 AM

Outreach, Education & Engagement Sub-Committee Mtg.

Where: Cottonwood Middle School

FVRG Governing Council

Chip Norton — President

Tony Gioia — Vice President

Position Vacant— Treasurer

Marsha Foutz — Co-Secretary

Peggy Chaikin— Co-Secretary

Councilors

Jane Moore, Bob Rothrock, Steven “Max” Castillo-
Kim Schonek, Denise Lerett

FVRG and VWRC

P.O. Box 2535

Cottonwood, AZ 86326

Visit our office in “Old Town” at:

903 N. Main Street. Suite B

Cottonwood, AZ 86326

(upstairs above the Red Rooster Mercado)

Call us: 928-301-4934