



Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

November 2011

In This Issue: Vice-President's Message... Membership Volunteer Needed... Brown Canyon Open House... Riparian Workshops... Miller Canyon Post-Fire... "Wondrous Deed"... Poem... National Landscape Conservation System... Cottonwoods... Education... Calendar... Contacts

Vice-President's Message

By Chris Long

[Since Ron is out of town, I am filling in for him.]

First, since I'm sure it is on everyone's mind, here is an update on the lawsuit. We are still trying to get the BLM (i.e., the federal government) to live up to its promise in our Group Volunteer Services Agreement that states "...while acting within the scope of this Agreement, they [volunteers] will be deemed to be as if they were Federal employees for purposes of the: (1) Federal Tort Claims Act, which protects Federal employees from liability for injury or damage to others while the employees are acting within the scope of their duties...."

So far, we are being rebuffed. On Friday, October 14, we received a "review and recommendation" opinion from a federal magistrate in Tucson. I have a hard time understanding the "legal-ese" in these court documents, but the bottom line appears to be that since FSPR was not under the "direct and detailed control" of a BLM person, we are on our own.

The magistrate recommended that the suit be remanded (sent back) to the superior court in Tucson. Since, under the federal system, a magistrate (or "junior judge") can only make a recommendation, this opinion now goes to the district judge assigned to the case, David Bury. Judge Bury must do an independent review of the record before deciding whether to accept the magistrate's recommendation. FSPR has

until October 28 to submit our objections to the magistrate's opinion.

I want to assure all of our members and volunteers, that FSPR has obtained its own liability insurance. So volunteers and docents will be covered for any future event that might occur on an FSPR-led activity.

Now for better news. Last year (other than the lawsuit) was a good one for Friends activities.

Activities: We held 173 different events (e.g., walks, hikes, Fairbank Days, Spring Fest, special group walks), with participation from around 1700 people. Attendance is down from the previous year. The Board would like your input. Are we offering too many events? Should we concentrate on a few specific things? What are your feelings about implementing a fee for events? Currently, almost everything we offer is free. What do you think about "free for members, small fee for others?"

Membership: As of the end of September, we had 179 members. Mary Beth Sutor is currently our membership coordinator. We thank her for doing a great job.

Board of Directors: We had two resignations this year. Tom Arnold, our treasurer for the last 2 years, moved away. The Board appointed Renell Stewart, a long-time volunteer, to complete Tom's term. Renell also agreed to be FSPR Treasurer. Gary Noonan, FSPR Historian, resigned for personal reasons. The Board has not found a replacement, so if you are interested, contact Ron Serviss.

Volunteer Hours: Did you know that the “Independent Sector,” a leadership network for charities, foundations, and corporate giving programs, estimates the value of volunteer labor at \$21.36 per hour? FSPR contributed 12,129 volunteer hours this year. That is the equivalent of 6.6 full-time employees or \$247,706.58! Our volunteers are a wonderful, dedicated group of individuals. It is almost unbelievable that a small organization the size of FSPR can offer this many hours to protect the San Pedro River and introduce the public to this great place.

Bequest: We received the second installment of a very generous bequest from Constant Hopkins. This bequest has been a real lifesaver, as we are using it to pay our legal fees. Without it, we would probably be bankrupt. Constant was a wonderful and generous volunteer during the early years of the Friends and she never forgot about FSPR and its environment.

Conservation Lands Foundation: Through a grant from the CLF, your Board has been working a Strategic Plan for the future of the organization. As a result of this planning, we are in the running for another grant from the CLF called “Constituency Development.” If we get that grant, we will be able to execute the strategy we have laid out in the plan. In the future, we will put more emphasis on children and families, become a more-active advocate for the river, improve our internal organization and procedures, and work closely on our conservation goals, especially coordinating them with BLM conservation goals.

There are about a million more things that I could talk about, but this should do it for now. Don’t forget, autumn is a GREAT time “at the river,” so stop by and take a stroll.

Big Need for Membership Volunteer

The Friends need a volunteer to handle our membership functions. This administrative work can be done in your home on your own computer. It takes about 10 hours per month. The membership roster is kept in Microsoft Excel format. The volunteer would need to stop by the FSPR office (in the BLM building at 1763 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista) several times a month to pick up the membership forms that have been sent in, send out renewal reminders via e-mail, send

out “thank-you” notes to new and renewing members, and report each month via e-mail to the Board of Directors about the total number of members, new memberships and renewals, and nonrenewals. The Excel spreadsheet is large (it contains quite a bit of information) but it is not especially complex. So, if you would like to help the Friends keep membership records up to date, please contact Renell Stewart at stewartr3@cox.net.



B Troop performs at Brown Canyon festivities. Photo credit: Tommy Neyhart.

Brown Canyon Open House

By Dutch Nagle

On October 15, the Friends of Brown Canyon held an open house and invited Friends of the San Pedro River and Huachuca Audubon Society to display their bone box. We were allocated a large section of the covered porch for set-up. It was ideal because it was protected from wind and sun. The display was quite popular; we gave out many brochures and answered a lot of questions.

The parking lots were jammed, causing Ramsey Canyon Road to hold the overflow. Visitors poured in all day, some hiking, others on bikes, but most came to enjoy the festivities. Many exhibitions of interest to the public were appreciated by the crowd, estimated at over 325 people.

There were exhibitions on quilting, wool spinning, lassoing (where people could try their hand), wood-carving, pottery making, painting

(Huachuca Art Association), farm animals, information booths by the US Forest Service, and the very popular “B” Troop. Bird and nature walks and history talks were also offered. There was even a visit by Smokey the Bear, who it turns out, is pretty good with a lasso!

There was a real feel for what living in this area was like 100 years ago. Even the weather was unbelievably cooperative. The day was fun and informative. If you missed it, mark your calendar for October 2012.

Riparian Community Workshops Held

By Sally Rosén

Fairbank Schoolhouse was the recent venue for a community-based riparian workshop. This was the second workshop in as many days, both part of the Creeks and Communities Project in SPRNCA.

The workshops were put on by the National Riparian Service Team (NRST), made up of experts from the BLM and US Forest Service. They are just one part of a multi-stage project that began last March with a situation assessment, followed by a technical riparian workshop attended by BLM technical specialists and partner agencies and organizations in July. At the July workshop, participants reviewed existing information on our river and gained an understanding of the current riparian condition and trend.

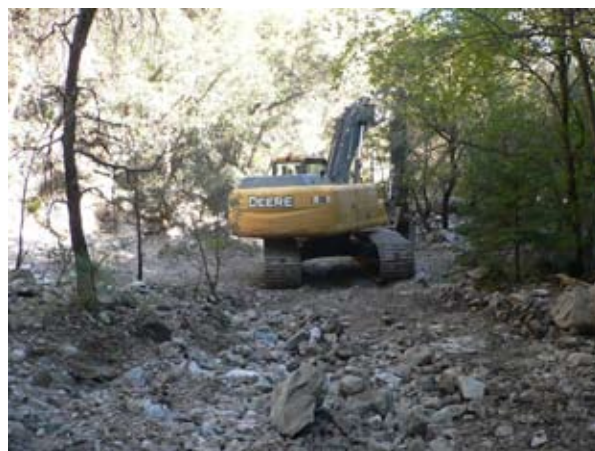
The two community workshops took place on the river. On the first day, participants met all morning, then took a field trip to the cienega near St David. The second workshop was held all morning at the schoolhouse, followed by a field trip to the river at Fairbank.

Next April, there will be another community workshop, followed by a 10-day field activity during which the entire 40-mile length of the San Pedro within SPRNCA will be walked. The goal of this activity is to evaluate the potential and capability of our riparian area.

Community members will be allowed to participate in these April activities, as well as the final community workshop in September 2012. At this workshop, the NRST will explain the results of the assessments and explore

next steps toward the final goal of a healthy landscape on SPRNCA.

Complete information on the Creeks and Communities project is available in the information center at the Fairbank Schoolhouse and at the BLM office in Sierra Vista.



Tracked front loader (bucket shovel/dozer) contracted to clear and fill gullies near old and new water intakes in Miller Canyon. Photo by Robert Weissler.

Miller Canyon After Monument Fire of June 2011

By Robert Weissler

On Sunday, October 23, I chose to visit Miller Canyon for the first time since the Monument Fire in early summer consumed portions of the southern Huachuca Mountains. I wasn't certain what to expect. On one hand, I'd read reports from Tom Beatty, Sr. that the slopes above his guest ranch on one side were a moonscape. On the other hand, I'd seen how patchy the fire burned in many places, including around my home in the canyon outlet near Stump Canyon. Of course, there was more than just immediate damage from the fire itself. There was also flood damage, as summer monsoon rains rushed down streams and gullies. For the homes in lower Miller Canyon that were spared by the fire, the flood damage was worse than the fire might have been, for it happened not once, but repeatedly and flood waters carried huge boulders.

The drive up Miller Canyon Road was relatively smooth. Despite many gullies cutting the roadbed, repair work managed to smooth them over. The lower canyon had been spared, but as

I drove higher up canyon, the landscape showed the effects of the fire more and more.

Nevertheless, when I reached the trailhead parking lot across from Beatty's Guest Ranch, I found a mostly intact canopy of madrean evergreen woodland. However, as I ascended the trail, I was soon greeted by a zone of devastation. Not 100 yards from the parking area, I heard the busy tapping of woodpeckers among the charred trees. In this small area, I encountered a pair of Arizona Woodpeckers, a Ladder-backed Woodpecker, a Northern Flicker, and a Red-naped Sapsucker.

The trail repair was impressive, with the going quite easy around the half-mile to the rear of Beatty's property. There, however, I was presented with a significant obstacle: a 10-foot deep gully with sheer walls. Fortunately, I found a way down and back up out of the gully to cross it. Shortly thereafter, I found evidence of earth-moving equipment, likely part of the City of Tombstone effort to reestablish its water intake in Miller Canyon. That road passes through Beatty's gate and across his property (not necessarily with his blessing)!

Nevertheless, as I hiked further up canyon, I found myself walking mostly in the shade... all the way past the split rock to the second stream crossing. To my astonishment and pleasant surprise, the conifers in the deepest part of the canyon are still there, despite the anger of the fire, which looked so unlikely given the intensity the day the fire surged up and over the reef and into Carr Canyon. I heard Steller's Jay, Canyon Wren, and White-breasted Nuthatch, familiar voices in this stretch of the canyon. To be sure, the canyon bottom had been scoured clean in places; the trail was obliterated where it lay near the canyon bottom, replaced by a boulder-strewn, alluvial field; and the fire on the south-facing slope to the north had burned down almost to the bottom here and there. But this invaluable natural resource, this section of the canyon so familiar to birders, largely survived the fire and flooding.

As an epilogue, while I didn't have trouble hiking through the canyon and across its sometimes deep gullies, it might be wise to direct visitors to other canyons of the Huachucas that were spared by the fire and whose trails are otherwise intact. For people who have difficulty on uneven terrain, boulders, and for whom

scrambling is not an option, I don't recommend visiting Miller Canyon in the near term. However, for me, my favorite canyon is back and I plan to visit often once again!



A Wondrous Deed that Took More than 1000 Hours of Work

By Gerald R Noonan, PhD

In 1988, a large group of FSPR volunteers did something wonderful. They renovated a decrepit ranch house that was surrounded by brush and piles of trash that made it difficult to approach. After more than 1000 hours of work, the volunteers transformed the derelict into the well-maintained San Pedro House.

A special newsletter supplement includes color photographs showing the many things done to clean the grounds and renovate the building. You can obtain a free copy at my Science Quest website, <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/noonan%20san%20pedro%20river%20papers.html>.

The Science Quest website has a section devoted to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (easily accessed from <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/Arizona%20Home.html>). I will be adding additional information to the site almost every week. Some of the information will be papers designed for the layperson, while others will be highly technical scientific works provided for use by other scientists. Please visit the site and download items of interest.

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The San Pedro

By Ron Stewart

"Why that's not a river," I heard him
speak.

"Back home in Ohio, it's not even a
creek."

"But these cottonwoods do make nice
shade.

It's cool even on a hot, sunny day."

"And look at that bird, bright, little, and
red.

There are plenty of bugs here to keep him
fed."

Walking along further, we came to a pond,
where trees had been chewed, near to the
ground.

"I know these," he said, now eager.

"I've never seen it, but was this done by a
beaver?"

"Are these animal tracks in the mud here?
Is it a coyote? A fox? I guess they all live
near."

Stooping, he picked up a rock, shiny
black obsidian.

"This looks like a knife. Was this made by
an Indian?"

The sun was now low, the heat starting to
ease.

Green leaves sang rustling in the breeze.

"You know, how you view this place; it
depends.

I like it: let's hike on, around that next
bend."



National Landscape Conservation System

By Chris Long

I suspect that most of you don't know that the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, our SPRNCA, is part of the National Landscape Conservation System. The NLCS, usually referred to as the National Conservation Lands, is part of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Each of the over 800 areas designated as part of the National Conservation Lands is an area of special cultural, ecological, scientific, educational, wildlife, or aesthetic value. The National Conservation Lands officially began in June 2000, but the San Pedro became the first Riparian National Conservation Area (NCA) many years before that in 1988.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said about the National Conservation Lands in 2010: "The BLM plays a special role in protecting America's great outdoors for the benefit of all Americans – for it is the national conservation lands that contain the forests and canyons that families love to explore, the backcountry where children learn to hunt and fish, and the places that tell the story of our history and cultures."

"Unlike the BLM's overall multiple use mission, the purpose of National Conservation Lands is to conserve, protect, and restore these nationally significant landscapes, ensuring that future generations will benefit from their outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values. These areas allow access to wild landscapes and a range of ways to enjoy them, including hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife watching, and more." (Quoted from *Western Landscapes in the Crossfire*, Sonoran Institute, 2008.)

Right here in our neighborhood, besides SPRNCA, we have the Las Cienegas NCA (near Sonoita), the Ironwood Forest National Monument (west of Tucson), the Sonoran Desert NCA (farther west of Tucson), and the Agua Fria National Monument (between Phoenix and Flagstaff).

Here is a factoid to mull over: In 2008 (the latest year for which I could find information), the National Park Service received \$32.89 per acre managed from the federal budget. The National Wildlife Refuge System received \$4.57 per acre managed. The National Conservation

Lands received \$2.13 per acre managed. There was an effort during last year's budget standoff to completely de-fund ALL of the National Conservation Lands (figures from the Sonoran Institute paper cited above).

To learn more about National Conservation Lands, visit <http://conservationlands.org/the-foundation/general-info>. This group works with Friends groups all over the country, assisting them in their work on National Conservation Lands. You can also check out BLM's website at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/NLCS.html.

Cottonwoods

By Dutch Nagle

Many people wonder why we don't cut down the cottonwoods because they use so much water. Many also do not believe that they are native to the area. I would like to present the following case in favor of the trees.

Fremont cottonwoods are native

Fossils of cottonwood trees, found in the San Pedro River area, have been dated from 10,000 years ago. Cottonwood trees were described by the Coronado expedition, which went through this area in the 1540s.

Advantages to humans and animals

Cottonwoods provide a comfortable area in the desert for human activities: picnicking, camping, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, hunting, bird and butterfly watching, and educational field studies.

Ecotourism brings in millions of dollars a year to our economy

The trees also provide an area for *millions* of birds annually by offering abundant food, protection, and nesting opportunities. Many hawks and owls that nest in the cottonwoods help control rodent populations, while other birds take care of insects. The "forest" also offers a reasonable degree of safety for other animals passing through this corridor.

Cottonwoods provide food for beneficial bugs (e.g., caterpillars eat the leaves, become moths and butterflies, and go on to pollinate our native plants and food crops). The leaves are also eaten by porcupine, deer, beaver, and other animals.



Erosion control

These trees hold the soil together, preventing erosion. They also hold back flood debris, thereby slowing water velocity and reducing its channeling effect, while building the soil around it. This slowing action also allows more water to penetrate the earth and recharge our aquifer.

It is estimated that the San Pedro channeled down 35 feet between 1850 and 1950, probably because in the 1880s, almost all the trees along the river had been cut to provide building material and fuel for Tombstone (i.e., residential building and heating, operating mines, and powering eight stamp mills along the river) and cattle grazing, which removed new growth and wore down the banks. This was compounded by an earthquake in the late 1800s and major flooding in the mid-1920s.

Natural recharge

The trees provide a food source and building material for beavers, which build dams on the river. These dams back up the water, allowing it to seep back into the ground and recharge our aquifer rather than flow downstream to eventually evaporate.

Evaporation

Trees evapotranspire only when in leaf and only in the daytime (at night and when leafless, the trees use practically no water.) This evapotranspiration takes in water and carbon dioxide (bad stuff) and releases water vapor and oxygen (good stuff) that we need to survive.

According to a paper in 2000 on the water use of cottonwoods along the San Pedro River in southern Arizona, large, mature trees with easy access to groundwater (depths less than 5 feet),

during the peak of summer, could use anywhere from 200-500 liters of water per day (53-132 gallons). Another study done in 2003, which monitored a site with less access to groundwater (the stream goes dry seasonally at this site), found water use to be about half that of the site with easy access to groundwater. (These rates are for large, well-watered trees during the peak of summer. Water use would be less during days that are cloudier, cooler, more humid, etc.)

However, cottonwoods shade the land and nearby water, which cools the area, providing relief for many plants, insects, and animals — including fish, birds, and humans — and last but not least, reduces evaporation within the shaded area.

To simplify, I will assume that the cottonwood is shading the river channel. Typical unsheltered open water evaporation rates are about 70% more than cottonwood water usage (90-224 gallons/day) or a net water saving of 37-92 gallons/day. This is the best-case scenario because at least half of the shaded area is land that does not evaporate as rapidly as the water surface. However, even under these conditions, the water loss/gain is negligible.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the water used by cottonwoods is more than offset by:

- ☛ Aquifer recharge due to reduced floodwater velocity and the beaver dams
- ☛ Reduced evaporation due to shading
- ☛ Additional benefits of aesthetics, air purification, rodent control, plant pollination, educational opportunities, recreational opportunities, eco-dollars, etc.
- ☛ Acting as a “corridor of life” for birds and other animals.

Education

By John Rose

On October 21, we hosted 44 Palominas first-grade students for a river walk. A few bullfrogs and one turtle were seen, but there was very little activity at mid-morning. We have three more walks scheduled, for a total of 120 Fort Huachuca first-graders in November and December.

FSPR Events Calendar

Understanding the River Interpretive Walks

Every Saturday at San Pedro House
9 AM — October thru March

FSPR Bird Walks

At San Pedro House
November 26 — 8 AM
December 14 & 24 — 8 AM

FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park
8 AM — October thru March

Points of Contact

- President — Ron Serviss
- Vice-President — Chris Long
- Directors — Tom Clancy, Dutch Nagle, John Rose, Sally Rosén, Renell Stewart, Robert Weissler, Vacant
- Treasurer — Renell Stewart
- Docent Activities — Tom Clancy, Ron Stewart
- Education Program — John Rose, Ron Serviss
- Bookstore Manager — Laura Mackin
- Bookkeeper — Pam Collins
- Program Manager — Kathryn Ojerio
- Newsletter Editor — Sue Leskiw

To contact any of the above individuals, please call the office at 520-459-2555 or send us e-mail at fspr@sanpedroriver.org or sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org.
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Friends of the San Pedro River is a volunteer, nonprofit, nonpolitical organization providing support to the Bureau of Land Management in its stewardship of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA).