



# Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

Spring 2012

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## President's Report

*By Ron Serviss*

In April, I had the opportunity to walk most of the San Pedro River, from the Mexican border to St. David, with the National Riparian Service Team (*see photo, p. 4*). The team is a group of scientists from several related disciplines that basically studies the health of our national rivers and makes recommendations on how preserve or improve their natural states. For me personally, this was a wonderful experience and a real eye-opener on how complex our river is.

It is difficult to make general statements about the San Pedro River that apply equally to all its stretches. There are sections along the southern portion of SPRNCA that are in relatively good condition due to a number of factors, including successful reintroduction of beaver and discontinued pumping by large agricultural wells. The riparian species are diverse, of multiple ages, and healthy in appearance. Unfortunately, the northern sections above Fairbank are not nearly as healthy. There is a lot less water coming from the tributaries to feed into the river. Illegal grazing is preventing the cottonwoods from growing into the adult trees that are needed to produce shade, which in turn reduces evaporation. They also provide resistance to flood waters and dissipate the river's energy during monsoon floods.

Please keep in mind that these are only a few comments from a non-scientific observer, though an accurate reflection of what I heard and saw. The Service Team's Draft Report will

be out this fall. This report will provide all the information collected by the scientists from the walks and their review of available data. It will make recommendations on steps needed to be taken to preserve and enhance the river's viability. Unfortunately, it will not look at the social and political issues that have such a large impact.

We will let you know when the draft is available and when public hearings will be held.



## Welcome to Executive Director

The Board of Directors of FSPR, with great pleasure, welcomes Robert Weissler as our first-ever Executive Director. Robert brings a host of skills and experience to the position, which has allowed him to take the reins of our organization with little time needed to understand who we are and where we want to go. Robert assumed his duties on May 20.

Robert has been active in the local conservation movement for over 10 years. He has served on the Board of Directors for Huachuca Audubon Society (HAS) from June 2004 until the present, where he has been actively involved with several

annual bird counts. He chairs the Field Trip Committee, maintains the chapter newsletter, and leads bird walks and field trips for HAS.

He has served on the Board of FSPR for over 10 years, where he has been the “go-to” person for our website and software issues. He participated in the development of the first FSPR Strategic Plan and now has the challenge of guiding the organization in implementing the goals laid out in the plan. Robert has already attended training sessions on behalf of FSPR in fundraising, membership management, and volunteer networking.

We ask you to join us in welcoming Robert into his new position and ask for your continued support as we work to move our organization forward.

## Executive Director’s Report

*By Robert Weissler*

It is a privilege for me to serve the members and volunteers of the Friends of the San Pedro River as your new Executive Director. My charter is to implement the recently adopted Strategic Plan with particular focus on advocacy and fundraising. After having served many years on the Board of Directors, I am very familiar with the organization and the challenges it faces. To take this position, I resigned from the Board, as I will now report to the members of the Board. This change in roles will not be difficult for me, as I know everyone so well. I am also confident in the support I will receive from the membership at large to carry out the tasks and activities that lie ahead. I am excited by the new direction the organization is taking to build its capacity and to address advocacy for the river head on. This is a very crucial time for the San Pedro River, as water issues have made headlines recently and as the BLM embarks on its Resource Management Plan (RMP) process, a process in which FSPR will have an important role to play. We will need members and volunteers to step up to help us in making a difference for the river!



*Getting up close and personal with a snake.  
Photo by Ted White. (More pix on page 6).*

## Spring Festival at San Pedro House

*By Laura Mackin*

Spring was celebrated on the river with our annual festival on Saturday, May 5. The day began with two bird walks, a river walk, and a hike to a beaver dam. The Gray Hawk Nature Center exhibit featuring snakes and reptiles was busy the entire day. This year, they also brought a Peregrine Falcon. The Native Plant Sale has turned into a popular feature of the festival, with most of the plants selling in the first 2 hours. The Kids Ramada saw a steady stream of children all day, getting tattoos, face-painting, and coloring books. We distributed over 60 goody bags to the kids. The nest box building workshop continued until all 30 kits were built. There were a dozen exhibits from local nature-based organizations and agencies.

Overall, it was a great event, with great weather and great participation. We got a nice front-page article in the Herald the next morning:

<http://www.svherald.com/content/news/2012/05/06/262797>

We would like to thank everyone who came out to participate and all the volunteers who helped make this event possible. The event was sponsored by the Friends of the San Pedro River, Sonoran Joint Venture, and the Bureau of Land Management. We received grant funding from the Ft. Huachuca Thrift Store and the Ft. Huachuca Community Spouses Club. The entire event was free to the public and all expenses were covered by the grants and sponsors.

## **I-10 Overpass Artwork: A Project of FSPR & ADOT**

In June 2011, then FSPR president Chris Long received a call from Caryl Clement of Wheat Scharf Associates, a contractor for the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). Caryl said that she had seen nature photographs on the FSPR website and asked if it would be alright for her to contact the photographers. ADOT was interested in using some of the website pictures for its new I-10/SR 90 Traffic Interchange Project near Benson. Chris e-mailed the FSPR contributing photographers relaying a message about contacting Caryl.

*All overpass project photos by Bob Herrmann.*

Soon after, ADOT selected Bob Herrmann to provide nature photographs for the project. After Bob donated 84 pictures for consideration, following a several month-long selection process, eight of his shots were approved by ADOT for display on the I-10 overpass.

Each of Bob's eight photographs will be reproduced by photo tile imagery using 6 inch by 6 inch squares to create a 5 foot by 5 foot black-and-white mural. The display will state "Courtesy of the Friends of the San Pedro River." The tiles will be placed on the east wall (San Pedro River side) of the overpass near Benson. On the west wall will be historic photographs of the Benson area donated through the City of Benson. The interchange project is scheduled to be finished in early 2013.



## Film Festival

*By Ron Serviss*

FSPR has been invited to participate in the 11th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival. The festival is a series of award-winning short films about nature, community activism, adventure, conservation, water, energy, wildlife, and so much more of the things important to our membership. They will not only take you to some of the more remote and beautiful places on the planet, but also introduce you to the magnificent animals that inhabit these places and the courageous individuals who are working to protect and preserve them.

It is a privilege to be invited to participate in this national film festival. We have been awarded a \$2000 grant to help us with the costs of putting on this event. We thank the sponsors, which include Patagonia, CLIF Bars, Sierra Nevada Brewery, Osprey, and Mother Jones.

It will require a lot of work to put this program together. To help, please contact Ron Serviss at [serviss.ron@gmail.com](mailto:serviss.ron@gmail.com) or at 432-6773. We will find you something fun to do. Thanks!



*Some participants in National Riparian Service Team river walk (see story, page 1). Photo by Ron Serviss.*

## San Pedro Hydrology Video

*By Ron Serviss*

After many months of hard work, countless meetings, and more e-mails than you could imagine, our Education Committee has produced its first educational package on key issues concerning the San Pedro River. The intent of this program is to educate students of all ages about issues impacting the health of our river.

The first video explains how the hydrology of the San Pedro River functions. This is not a canned, generic presentation, but is specific to our river's watershed. All the video was shot locally and produced by our volunteers. We thank Sandy Kunzer for taking over leadership of the committee and spurring the project to completion. Virginia Bealer, Hank Huskings, and Tess Jurek shared their knowledge on education in general and water issues in particular. And what can we say about Mike Foster? Mike's commitment and devotion to the river cannot be overstated. He has practically lived out in the field (just ask his wife!) to capture his amazing footage of nature in movement that makes this video so special. The Board of Directors thanks this group for its outstanding efforts.

Sally Rosen, Gary Noonan, and Ben Lomeli took on the important task of reviewing the final product. We also thank our two sponsors, The Walton Family Foundation and the Cochise Community Foundation.

If you would like to see the video at home, go to <https://vimeo.com/39567422>. If you know of any educators or community groups that would like a presentation, have them contact Mike Foster at [sarjuesos@gmail.com](mailto:sarjuesos@gmail.com).

## River Clean-Up

*By Ron Serviss*

On March 24, a distinguished group of hearty volunteers met to do the last clean-up of the river prior to the onset of hot weather and the eventual monsoons. This clean-up focused on a rarely visited section north of the Contention City town site. Though it gets much fewer visitors, it still finds a way to accumulate trash, from the ubiquitous plastic water bottle to used car tires from who knows where. But none of this was any match for our dedicated crew: in the end, two pick-up truck loads of trash, plus a dozen or so tires, were unburdened from the San Pedro.

Unfortunately, we had some logistical problems that delayed the extraction of our team from the end point. For this Ranger Bob and I offer our sincere apologies. We have changed our procedures, so this won't happen again.

On behalf of the Friends, the Water Sentinels, and Ranger Bob, we thank all of you who have participated in this or previous clean-ups. We hope to see you again after the monsoon season.



*Load of garbage from March 24 river clean-up.  
Photo by Ron Serviss.*

## Random Thoughts on Water

*By Dutch Nagle*

**[Reprinted from the May 11, 2012 Sierra Vista Herald]**

When the San Pedro River dries up and the last cottonwood dies; when the eco-tourists no longer visit; when the fort has closed and all the support businesses have too; when your home values have plummeted, the hospital is reduced to a clinic, the mall has closed, the big grocery markets have left, and the “dollars-of-destruction,” made by the growth proponents have moved away; What will be left for us?

I wish someone would explain to me how we can add more houses, businesses and people while not using more water.

One main way to conserve our water is to pass regulations that many people do not like or want; however, though somewhat Draconian in nature, they would benefit us all. The county and city have written words such as “may,” “should” or “suggest” in their regulations. It would be very simple to change these words to “must,” “will” or “require.” I am talking about rules that pertain to building and zoning codes that would have an impact on water usage. Sure, it would cost the buyer of the new home a couple hundred dollars more but the savings in the long run would far offset the initial cost while at the same time conserving our resources. What is the

big deal when you add a few hundred dollars to the cost of a house selling for \$170,000 or more?

Average water usage in Sierra Vista is between 70 and 150 gallons per person per day. The 70 gallon figure is for household use, while the 150 gallon figure includes outdoor usage.

Another potential water-saving measure would be for Sierra Vista to buy up water companies serving their citizens as the voters gave them authority to do before the turn of the last century. This would allow the city to set conservation rates for water which have been shown to promote wise use.

The county gives incentives to developers that allow them to place more houses on their land, if they set aside a portion of that land for open space. Since it is more economical for the developer to provide roads and utilities to clustered houses than to have them scattered all over the place, why give an incentive to put additional houses on the tract?

Sierra Vista decided to reduce the impact fee on new homes in the city. Instead of the buyers paying for the city services that will be required by them, we have to subsidize the new homebuyer. It appears to me that the rules and regulations have been written by and for the developers without regard to the taxpayer.

A local golf course pumps approximately 400,000 gallons of drinking water per day to keep their area looking lush for their private members. The city sprays thousands of gallons of drinking water per day for dust control on Buffalo Soldier Trail east of SR92 even though I have sent letters and complained about it for 6 years. Meanwhile the rest of us are asked to conserve water????



*Spraying water on Buffalo Soldier Trail.  
Photo by Dutch Nagle.*

The USPP has spent millions over the years and has very little to show for it except a bunch of scholarly reports that all indicate that the river is in serious trouble. They were charged with meeting sustainable yield by 2011; however, they were not given any authority to make it happen. We are running about a 5,000 acre feet per year deficit, yet the voters of San Pedro River sub-watershed turned down the proposal to set up a water district that might have had authority to actually do something and would have given us local control with no additional taxes and no control over existing local wells.

*More scenes from the Spring Festival (see story, page 2). Top: Face painting. Middle: Native plant sale. Bottom: Kids' ramada. Photos by Ted White.*



## Growth at Whose Cost?

*By Dutch Nagle*

**[Letter to the Editor published in Sierra Vista Herald, April 2012]**

If the Tribute development goes through it will mean well over 10,000 new citizens, more than 5,000 additional automobiles creating more pollution and more traffic (and more traffic signals), more school buses, more schools, more teachers, more administrators, more government services, etc, etc, etc.

The new schools, school personnel, road maintenance, government services, including police and fire protection, all need to be paid for. Guess who pays? You better believe it will be us.

On top of all this, the city decided to reduce the "impact fee" for new development because it would raise the price of the houses. In effect, we are subsidizing the new home buyers by paying for the services that they will require.

Who benefits from all this growth? It is the land developers, builders, and a fatter, better paid, more powerful government.

It would be nice if the city politicians could list all the benefits that we, the current citizens, would receive from this growth.

I have yet to hear of a town or city that grew and also reduced taxes.

On top of everything else, this development will suck precious water from our aquifer. This could result in the closure or reduction in force of our economic engine, Fort Huachuca. If that happens what do you think will happen to our property values?

Do we really want to be another smog-enshrouded, over-populated, traffic-congested, expensive-to-live-in big city? If that was what we wanted, we would not have moved here.

## Dedication Walkway Update

The following new bricks have been installed since our last newsletter: The Kelly Family; Judah M Maccabee; Jim Rutledge; Bill Stocku; EL "Susie" Walker



*Southwest Wings  
Birding and  
Nature Festival  
August 1-4, 2012  
Cochise College,  
Sierra Vista*

Southwest Wings, in its 21st year, is Arizona's longest-running nature festival. FSPR will be among the vendors and exhibitors in the Library/Student Union area. In addition to paid field trips, the festival offers over 50 free programs, including a special children's day on Saturday, August 4. Visit [www.swwings.org](http://www.swwings.org).

**New & Renewing Members, March-May 2012**

Eric Andersen, Leslie Baird, Marilyn & Ardeth Barnhart, Perri & Michael Barnes, John Barthelme, Kelton & Hedy Burbank, Tom & Lin Clancy, Charles Cummings & Michael Hecht, David & Sherry Cunningham, Lewis DeForest, Mary Peace Douglas, Elise Foladare, Leah Frankel, Gladys Gillespie & Diane Phillips, James Godshalk & Marjorie Lundy, Mary Haynes, Vance & Lisa Haynes, Ken & Sandy Heusman, Wes Jensen, Loisanne Keller & James Collins, Lori & James Kovash, DeForest Lewis, Robert & Karen Richardson, Scott & Joan Robinson, Regina Rutledge, Mary Beth Sutor, Wayne & Donna Viitanen, Lynne Zaninelli

**Events Calendar, June-August 2012**

*[SPH = San Pedro House; FSH = Fairbank School House; HAS = Huachuca Audubon Society; SABO = Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory*

SPH Open as Visitor Center (Daily) 9:30 AM-4:30 PM

FSH Open as Visitor Center (Friday-Sunday) 9:30 AM-4:30 PM

**Understanding the River Interpretive Walks**

Every Saturday at SPH

- ☛ 8 AM — June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
- ☛ 8 AM — July 7, 14, 21, 28
- ☛ 8 AM — August 4, 11, 18, 25

**FSPR Bird Walks**

Second Wednesday & Last Saturday at SPH

- ☛ 7 AM — June 13 (Wed); June 23 (Sat)
- ☛ 7 AM — July 11 (Wed); July 28 (Sat)
- ☛ 7 AM — August 15 (Wed); Aug 25 (Sat)

**FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks**

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park

- ☛ 7 AM — June 3, 10, 17, 24
- ☛ 7 AM — July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
- ☛ 7 AM — August 5, 12, 19, 26

**Special Events**

- ☛ June 16 (Sat), 8 AM — Murray Springs History Walk
- ☛ August 18 (Sat), 8 AM — Millville History Walk

**Contact List**

- President — Ron Serviss
- Directors — Tom Clancy, John Rose, Sally Rosén, Renell Stewart
- Treasurer — Renell Stewart
- Docent Activities — Tom Clancy, Ron Stewart
- Education Program — John Rose
- Education Committee — Sandy Kunzer
- Membership — Bonnie Bosworth
- Newsletter Editor — Sue Leskiw
- Executive Director — Robert Weissler
- Bookstore Manager — Laura Mackin
- Bookkeeper — Pam Collins
- Program Manager — Kathryn Ojerio

To contact any of the above individuals, please call the office at 520-459-2555 or send us e-mail at [fspr@sanpedroriver.org](mailto:fspr@sanpedroriver.org) or [sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org](mailto:sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org) or [fsprdiretor@sanpedroriver.org](mailto:fsprdiretor@sanpedroriver.org).

Mailing address: 1763 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635; Fax: 520-459-7334  
Website: [www.sanpedroriver.org](http://www.sanpedroriver.org)

**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 (SPRNC).**