

Riparian Restoration



Photo Courtesy of Justin Johnson.

The Gila Watershed Partnership has been involved in restoration projects in Graham and Greenlee Counties for over 23 years. Our current project, on the Gila River began in 2013. With funding from the Walton Family Foundation, we have increased our capacity and are able to take on this large, long-term project. The goal of this project is to restore 200 acres along the river, by removing invasive tamarisk and replacing them with native vegetation. This effort is all in preparation for the arrival of the tamarisk leaf beetle. Once the beetle arrives, the remaining tamarisk will be defoliated and eventually die.

By restoring native vegetation in advance of the beetle arrival, we hope to create islands of native vegetation that can serve as a seed source for more vegetation to grow. These islands also provide habitat for the diverse wildlife found along the Gila River.

The GWP may not be doing any on-the-ground work currently, but the effort is still ongoing. We stop ground

work during the migratory bird season, and will continue this fall. During this 'off-season' we are continuing to work on permitting and implementation plans for the work in the fall, as well as monitor the work that was completed last spring. As we make plans for the next field season, we are reaching out to scientific partners, in and around our community for guidance and input. One of these experts is Matt Grabau, from GeoSystems Analysis, out of Tucson, Arizona.



At our August monthly meeting, he will discuss the limitations of standard cottonwood and willow revegetation techniques and provide an overview of research he completed on seedling production and direct seeding methods to improve diversity of restoration projects and reduce costs.



The GWP will be partnering with Matt to start a pilot project incorporating these techniques in restoration projects in the Safford area.



This is one of the many examples of our collaboration with the scientific community. As the project progresses, the GWP will be continually adapting to improve restoration practices and looking at ways to increase innovative techniques for restoration. The ultimate goal is to leave the Gila River as a resilient ecosystem that supports the community and wildlife that depend on it.

Desert Water Harvesting

This past spring, Gila Watershed Partnership staff attended a week-long certification course in water harvesting. Justin Johnson, GWP's Plant Propagation Coordinator, and Rachel More-Hla, GWP's Project Coordinator are now certified in Water Harvesting from The Watershed Management Group. This rigorous course covered earthworks – creating rain catchments on the land, greywater installation, and large cistern installation.

Most people don't realize the possibilities of rain water harvesting in the desert southwest. Here in Southeastern Arizona, we have two rainy seasons, one in the winter and one in the summer. Our monsoons usually account for half the annual rainfall which averages 11 inches per year. This might sound low for rainfall, but landscaping with low water-use vegetation and utilizing rain water harvesting techniques can provide a lush and beautiful garden.



The GWP will be hosting a workshop on installing rain water cisterns and best practices. More information coming soon!

Current Project Updates

FOR MORE INFO SEE WWW.GWPAZ.ORG

Upper Gila Watershed Riparian Restoration

...funded by The Walton Family Foundation, US Fish & Wildlife Partners Program, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and United Way of Graham County

- Will replace invasive tamarisk with native species to restore natural habitats
- Planning for next phase of project – looking into new sites and permitting.



Clifton Restroom

...funded by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)

- Installing restroom facilities in a recreational area just outside of Clifton.
- Final installation being completed.
- Water quality testing being done near site.
- Post-install re-vegetation planning has begun.

San Francisco River Restroom

... funded by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)

- Will install a second restroom for recreation on the San Francisco River Greenlee County and reduce the E.coli levels on the river and make river recreation safer for our community.
- Work can begin now that we received SHPO cultural clearance.

Developing Greenlee County as a Bird Watching Destination

... funded by Freeport McMoRan Inc., Town of Clifton, and United Way

- Contracts in place to line out the trails, work-up signage, and print brochures.
- New website is being developed.

Hydro-geomorphology study of the San Simon Basin

...funded by the US Bureau of Land Management

- Working with Natural Channel Design to complete study and report management recommendations.

Discovery Park Pollinator Garden

... funded by Eastern Arizona College, US Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service Partners Program

- Installing pollinator garden at EAC Discovery Park campus, benefiting monarch butterflies and other pollinators.
- EAC landowner agreement finalized.
- Our next volunteer event coming soon!



WRRC Water Needs Assessment and Planning

... funded by the US Bureau Of Reclamation & Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative

- Water Supply & Demand meeting Sept 9th, 2-4PM, 921 Thatcher Blvd. Main Conf. Rm.
- Contact Dr. Kelly Mott-Lacroix for more information, klacroix@email.arizona.edu.

Botanical Etymology for Dummies

This month's species is *Opuntia chlorotica*, or **pancake pricklypear**, a common cactus found throughout the Southwest. Differentiated from other prickly pear or nopal, by the combination of oval and green pads, distinct trunk, and yellow glochids. Most prickly pears are fruiting this time of year. Fruits are enjoyed by wildlife and can be a tasty treat for humans too!

Opuntia: a name coined by Tournefort (a French botanist credited with defining genus in the modern sense) for succulent plants from Opus, Greece

Chlorotica: Greek chloros, green or greenish yellow, and -otica, possession of; greenish.

To translate: a succulent possessing a greenish color.



Prickly pear
Opuntia spp.

EVENTS



GWP

ON FACEBOOK TO KEEP UP WITH
ALL OUR EVENTS!!

August 17th - Eastern Arizona
College Fall Classes Begin.

Sept 9th – Steering Committee
Meeting: Water Supply & Demand
Mtg. 2-4PM, 921 Thatcher Blvd

Sept 16th – STEM Trivia at JD's Grill
House, 7-9PM.

Every Thursday – Open Volunteer
Hours with GWP, 8-11AM @
Discovery Park Greenhouse

Every 4th Wednesday –
Sustainable Funding Working
Group Meeting 11AM @ BLM
Office

Thank you to our partners:

AZ Department of Agriculture
AZ Department of
Environmental Quality
AZ Department of Transportation
AZ Game and Fish Department
AZ Geological Survey
AZ State Land Department
City of Safford
Eastern Arizona College
Farm Bureau
Freeport McMoRan Inc.
Gila Valley Irrigation District
Gila Valley NRC
Graham County
Graham County Chamber
of Commerce
Greenlee County

Natural Resource
Conservation Service
Southwest Decision Resources
Tamarisk Coalition
Town of Clifton
Town of Duncan
Town of Pima
Town of Thatcher
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service –
Apache-Sitgreaves and Coronado
U of A Cooperative Extension
U of A Water Resource
Research Center

Get involved in your watershed

For more information, contact Steve Eady
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www.gwpaz.org