



The State of the Watershed

By Jan Holder, Executive Director, the Gila Watershed Partnership

At the start of the New Year, I like to look back and see how we are doing. We were blessed with a great year, with some interesting new projects and wonderful new staff members. We have continually grown as an organization, taking on many new and invigorating challenges.

It has been over 23 years since our organization started. We were founded in response to a series of contentious meetings that were held in Silver City and Safford to discuss the health of the Gila River. Three of our founding members, George Lemen, Pete Brawley, and Bill Brandau were at those meetings, which were attended by numerous state and federal agencies, as well as a generous assortment of special-interest groups. The



George Lemen

courageous founders getting together with a representative from the Environmental Protection Agency, who suggested that they form a citizen's based watershed

meeting was bursting with heated arguments about whose fault the river issues were, but not a lot of progress was made. However, this meeting led to our

group to determine what may be wrong with the watershed.

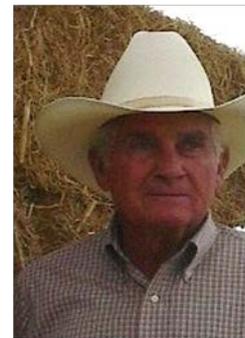
He promised to provide the wisdom of the EPA



Bill Brandau

to guide the group's efforts, and provide guidance to determine what would be necessary to fix the problems the group identified.

Out of those discussions, the Gila Watershed Partnership (originally named the San Carlos/Safford/Duncan (SSD) Watershed Advisory Group) was born. The organization was made up of lots of local folks, with representation from many state and federal agencies. They also met quarterly with representatives from the New Mexico side of the watershed up until about 1999, naming the joint group the "Gila Monster".



Pete Brawley



The Syfert Wildlife Watering Facility

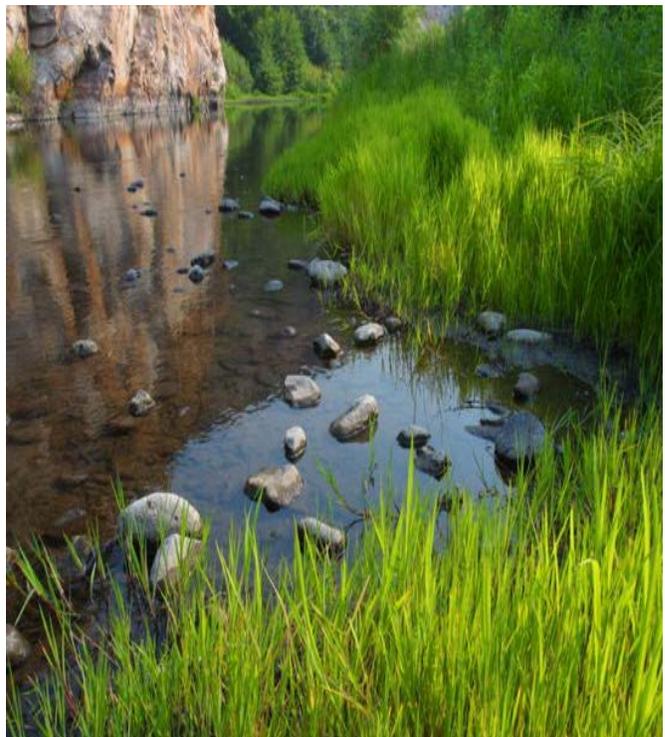
The organization developed goals and objectives, and some initial projects were identified and implemented, with the assistance of the Gila Valley NRCDC, who acted as our fiscal agent until 2003.

We've made a lot of progress since those early years. We have developed valuable partnerships with numerous state and federal agencies, other organizations, local government, businesses and many committed citizens. We have met together at over 250 monthly meetings, and together we have identified and implemented over 50 projects and programs costing over 7 million dollars. We have implemented many projects to improve our water quality, decrease water use to increase available water quantity, riparian improvement projects, projects that benefitted fish and wildlife, and even one project that improved the function of the river. All of these projects improved the condition of the Upper Gila Watershed.

To evaluate our progress, every few years we try to take some time to look at where we started, what we have accomplished, where we are today, and

what we need to focus on in the future. At the January 8th monthly meeting, we will have an informal assessment of the watershed's current health and develop a roadmap to guide us in our work for the next few years. We will look at our past efforts in the following areas: water quality, water quantity, river function, riparian vegetation, upland and forest vegetation, invasive species, and wildlife. We will determine objectives, targets and decide on appropriate indicators for current conditions. Although we have never completed a formal assessment to quantify the effectiveness of our projects to achieving our goals, we are working on future methods to gather data and information to measure our success, this informal assessment will give us an idea of how we are doing, and what we need to focus on in the upcoming years.

Input from our community will help us make the important decisions on how we allocate our future resources. We need your help. Please join us on Wednesday, and help guide the Gila Watershed Partnership towards an even more productive and exciting year!



San Francisco River

Current Project Updates

FOR MORE INFO, SEE WWW.GILAWATERSHEDPARTNERSHIP.COM

ONGOING GRANTS:

Apache Grove Project

...funded by the Arizona Water Protection Fund (AWPF) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW)

- removed levies in order to restore optimal river flow, control erosion, and manage invasive species, while preserving agricultural land
- the new pipeline to a deeper well is complete
- in continuous monitoring, need to replace regrowing invasives

Clifton Restroom Project

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

- will install restroom facilities in a recreational area along the San Francisco River where there are none

Eagle Creek Riparian Restoration at Filleman Crossing Project

...funded by the Arizona Water Protection Fund (AWPF) and the U.S. Fish and the USFW Partners program

- will construct a river crossing to stop frequent wash-outs, benefiting both residents and wildlife
- we are waiting for approval on the cultural clearance from the State Historic Preservation Office

Upper Gila Watershed Riparian Restoration Project

...funded by The Walton Family Foundation (WFF)

- will replace invasive tamarisk with native species to restore natural habitats
- Alex Dragotakes, our plant propagation manager, is cutting cottonwood poles to root out in the greenhouse in a hydroponic solution to ready them for planting in the coppice fields in a few weeks
- A germination chamber is being installed in the greenhouse to allow us to propagate plants year-round

Youth Pathway Project

...from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Great American Outdoors Grant, and USFW Partners program

- to encourage careers in conservation and land management on public lands, through on-the-ground activities for school age kids high school through college
- the local youth crews will be starting soon and will be working in the native plant nursery

Water Conservation Project

... funded by Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc.

- this project is performing home and business water evaluations to help us all save water and money

Upper Gila Water Appraisal Study

... funded by the US Bureau of Reclamation

- this project will help us to better understand the water supplies and demands in the watershed

Greenlee County Watershed Steward Program

... funded by Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc.

- Classes are ongoing through December at the Greenlee County Board of Supervisors meeting room

Developing Greenlee County as a Bird Watching Destination

... funded by Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc.

- A coordinator for the project will be hired soon

NEW GRANT APPLICATIONS:

Menges Ranch Water System Maintenance

... applications pending with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the Arizona Water Protection Fund (AWPF)

- a project that will replace diesel pumps with solar pumps and add a telemetry system that will send a message to the landowner when the water system has a problem

San Francisco River Restroom Project

... *applications pending with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the Arizona Water Protection Fund*

- a project that will install a restroom at a heavily-used recreation site on the San Francisco River road in Greenlee County to reduce the *E.coli* levels on the river.
- The Greenlee County Engineer, Philip Ronnerud, is working on engineering plans prior to implementation

Water Conservation Project

... *funded by Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc.,*

- this project will perform home and business water evaluations to help the community save water and money



Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365 page book. Write a good one.— Brad Paisley

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, February 12, 7 p.m. –

The Gila Watershed Partnership's regular monthly meeting features Jeff McCormick, Pima Town Manager on Low Impact Development.

Wednesday, March 12, 7 p.m. –

The Gila Watershed Partnership's regular monthly meeting will be all about Rainwater Harvesting, with a talk by Cado Daily, Water Wise Coordinator from Arizona Cooperative Extension.



Our partners include:

Arizona Department of Agriculture
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Arizona Department of Transportation
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Arizona Geological Survey
Arizona State Land Department
Bureau of Land Management
Chamber of Commerce
City of Safford
Town of Thatcher
Town of Pima
Town of Clifton

Town of Duncan
Eastern Arizona College
Farm Bureau
Gila Valley NRCD
Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold Inc.
Graham County
Greenlee County
Gila Valley Irrigation District
Natural Resource Conservation Service
University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
University of Arizona NEMO Project
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service – Apache-Sitgreaves and Coronado Forests
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
And many community members

Get involved in your watershed

For more information, contact Jan Holder at the Gila Watershed Partnership, 711 S. 14th Avenue, 85546, or email gilawatershed@gmail.com
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