

Our Treasured Rivers

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Natalie Brassill teaches monitoring techniques to GWP Staff – Photo courtesy of J. Johnson

The San Francisco-Blue watershed is one of Arizona’s most remote and significant. This particular watershed contains the Gila, Blue and San Francisco Rivers, which feed a beautiful wilderness containing wildlife and abundant recreational opportunities. People that live and visit this watershed enjoy the rugged topography and spend time outdoors with family and friends. The Gila Watershed Partnership (GWP) has been a tireless advocate for the protection of this pristine wild land. Since 2006, the GWP has worked with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to

secure projects that help to reduce erosion, bacteria, and trash within the San Francisco-Blue watershed. ADEQ has placed certain river reaches of the Gila, San Francisco and Blue Rivers on the Clean Water Act 303(d) Impaired Waters list as impaired for the bacterium *Escherichia Coli* (E.coli) based on water quality testing results. E.coli is used as an “indicator bacteria” to indicate if other pathogens could be present in a water source. If E.coli levels are found to be higher than designated standards over monitored time then that water

source is dubbed impaired. In monitoring the waters of the San Francisco and Blue Rivers over the years, ADEQ has repeatedly found levels of E.coli that exceeded safety standards for swimming. This caused the area to be listed and now it's time to help clean it up!



View of the San Francisco River- Photo courtesy of J. Johnson

The GWP started to make change with erosion control projects to reduce erosion during periods of heavy rainfall. By planting native plants and rehabilitating infrastructure along the watershed, citizen scientists have help reduce the amount of sediment that makes it into the rivers within the watershed. E.coli bacteria from wildlife and human recreation hitch a ride on eroded sediment during rain events and contribute to the impairment of the rivers. The GWP has worked to educate the public about these types of situations and motivated landowners and non-profits to write for funding from agencies like EPA and ADEQ to install watershed improvement projects in the San Francisco-Blue watershed. Through these successful projects, like the recent 2014-2016 Clifton and San Francisco Restroom Installation Project, pollution is being reduced. During the Restroom Installation Projects, two bathrooms were installed in known heavy recreation areas to help reduce the amount of fecal contamination in the wilderness and therefore reducing E.coli bacteria found in the river. It is projects like this that will help to get each river closer to becoming de listed and remaining pristine for recreational visitors who love coming to the Gila, Blue and San Francisco Rivers.

ADEQ has partnered with the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension to help develop and implement watershed group projects that will help significantly reduce E.coli in the watershed and educate citizens about environmental issues so that the watershed can remain healthy for future generations. To find out more come to the next GWP meeting on February 10th.

Cleaning up the San Francisco River, One Toilet at a Time



Restroom on San Francisco River Rd - Photo courtesy of J. Johnson

Swimming and fishing in the San Francisco River just got a little nicer. GWP has installed two restrooms along the San Francisco River in Greenlee County, and they are now open and ready for public use. The restrooms are located in high-use recreation areas where people camp, fish, and do other outdoor activities. This project was started to address the *E. coli* levels in the river and was funded by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. The San Francisco River is currently declared an impaired waterway, which means it could be unsafe to swim in during certain times of the year. Our next step is encouraging the public to use the new restrooms because using them will help make the Frisco a safer, cleaner place to play!

Discovery Park Gardens



Garden volunteers are all ages because gardening is for everyone - Photo courtesy of J. Johnson

The Gila Watershed Partnership, Graham County Cooperative Extension, and the Boy's and Girl's Club of the Gila Valley made this past Martin Luther King Jr. Day a great day of service. Together a group of seven adults and eight children worked to install a garden to support butterflies, bees and other pollinating

insects. The garden features plants grown in the Native Plant Nursery at Discovery Park, including native milkweeds, roses, and penstemons. These beautiful plants will attract monarch butterflies, which need our help because their population has plummeted by about 90%. Gardens like these can help support the recovery of this iconic butterfly.

This garden is being watered from a rainwater catchment tank that was previously installed by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. All the water being used for these plants comes from rain off of the Discovery Park Ranch House. We may be seeing plenty of rain this year, but for the past 15 years, Graham County has been in a drought. Harvesting rainwater, planting low water-use plants, and designing your yard to retain water can make big strides in beautifying your landscaping while also saving water.

The GWP will continuing work on a larger Pollinator Garden at EAC Discovery Park this spring. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for gardening and volunteer events!

Other Good News

FOR MORE INFO, SEE WWW.GWPAZ.ORG

Developing Greenlee County as a Birding Destination

Funded by Freeport-McMoRan Inc., Town of Clifton, and United Way of Greenlee County.

- Work being done to complete trails this spring.
- Bids are coming in for Kiosks.
- Maps have gone to printing.
- Stairways are constructed. Walkways are next.
- Logo and brochures are drafted.



Hummingbird - Photo Courtesy of R. More-Hla

Saving Butterflies at Discovery Park

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



Queen butterfly - Photo courtesy of J. Johnson

- Work continues on the pollinator garden at EAC Discovery Park, benefiting butterflies and other pollinators.
- Native plants that help pollinating insects such as butterflies are growing in the Nursery at Discovery Park.

Restoring the Upper Gila River

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

- This project is well underway and will replace invasive tamarisk with native species to restore natural habitats.
- AZCC youth crews will be starting the 2016 season February 1st.



AZCC Crew cutting tamarisk - Photo Courtesy of S. Stone

- Native vegetation is coming in naturally in areas that have been cleared for restoration.

Botanical Etymology for Dummies

Tecoma stans, or **yellow bells** is a lower-elevation perennial shrub of the Bignoniaceae family. Its yellow tubular flowers are a hit with hummingbirds and gardeners alike.

Tecoma, Nahuatl (Aztec) *tecomaxochitl*, from *tecomatl*, an earthen vessel, and *xochitl*, a flower, vase-shaped flower, a name used by the native people for other plants of southern Mexico, some of which (*Solandra guttata*) are narcotic; de Jussieu erroneously applied the name to plants in the Bignoniaceae, and shortened it to *Tecoma*.

stans, Latin *stare*, to stand, and *-ans*, present participle ending; standing, erect, upright.



Tecoma stans
Yellow Bells

EVENTS

- Come have fun & volunteer at GWP's Native Plant Nursery! **Thursdays 8AM-12PM** @ Discovery Park. For more information email justin@gwpaz.org.
- **Feb 9-11th** - Tamarisk Coalition Annual Conference, in Grand Junction, CO. For more information see tamariskcoalition.org
- **February 18th 9AM-4PM** - SW New Mexico/SE Arizona Prescribed Burning Workshop, Geronimo Event Center at Chiricahua Desert Museum north of Rodeo, NM. For more information visit nmxfire.nmsu.edu
- **February 20th** Bird Walk in Duncan, AZ. Meet at the Simpson Hotel @ 7AM.
- **February 25-27th** - Gila Valley Health & Science Festival @ Eastern Arizona College. For more information see www.eac.edu/scitechfestival
- **February 25-27th** - Gila River Natural History Symposium in Silver City, NM. For more information go to gilasymposium.org

Thank you to our partners:

AZ Department of Agriculture	Natural Resource
AZ Department of Environmental Quality	Conservation Service
AZ Department of Transportation	Southwest Decision Resources
AZ Department of Water Resources	Tamarisk Coalition
AZ Game and Fish Department	Town of Clifton
AZ State Land Department	Town of Duncan
City of Safford	Town of Pima
Eastern Arizona College	Town of Thatcher
Farm Bureau	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Freeport-McMoRan Inc.	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Gila Valley Irrigation District	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Gila Valley NRC	U.S. Forest Service –
Graham County	Apache-Sitgreaves and Coronado
Graham County Chamber of Commerce	U of A Cooperative Extension
Greenlee County	U of A Water Resource
Greenlee Co Cattle Growers	Research Center
	And many community members.

Get involved in your watershed

For more information, contact us at
Gila Watershed Partnership
P.O. Box 1614, Thatcher, Arizona 85552

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Instagram or email us at info@gwpaz.org
www.gwpaz.org