

Canyon Echo



Baaj Nwaavjo l'tah Kukveni Photo by Jim Dublinski

“One touch of nature
 makes the whole world
 kin. John Muir

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ENJOYING AND PROTECTING THE IRONWOOD FOREST!

by Ana Gorla



Ironwood Forest National Monument. Photo by Ana Gorla



Ironwood Forest. Photo by Sandy Bahr

Everytime I step into an Arizona national monument I am reminded of how vibrant our public lands in Arizona can be. The desert in protected areas feels more verdant, with saguaros, shrubs, cacti of all shapes and sizes, and, if I am lucky, I can even spot blooms on them. With so many miles of this landscape come all sorts of wildlife. Birds like woodpeckers, thrashers, and quail can be heard from all directions. You can also see different lizards running from rock to rock trying to find the perfect rock to sunbathe on. There's nothing like our precious deserts.



Photo by Ana Gorla

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Ironwood Forest National Monument with a group of fellow Arizona organizers that dedicate so much of their work to ensuring these lands stay protected and thriving. With the help of wildlife experts we got a chance to spot some desert bighorn sheep in their natural habitat roaming trails on the peaks of the Silverbell Mountains, one of the most iconic areas in the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

If you ever get a chance to see these mountains and follow the range you'll spot one of this area's big threats, an eyesore of a copper mine. Asarco, the current owners of the mine, have been pushing along with the Trump administration to reduce the size of this monument to expand their operations. Not only would this eat into these Tohono O'Odham lands and home to many species but it would also continue to increase light pollution, consume our water resources, and reduce recreation areas that hundreds of thousands of people enjoy each year.



Ironwood Forest National Monument. *Photo by Ana Gorla*

It's hard to enjoy what feels like untouched desert and relate to humans who see this beauty and think it's okay and even beneficial to take away these protections. To let foreign mines sprawl into the lands that make our state so beautiful and unique. I know it can send so many of us "nature lovers" into a spiral, but I want to remind you all that there are ways to help and use our passion for these places and turn it into action. Use your stories, experiences, knowledge and enjoyment of these lands to stand for them.

And [sign our petition](#) to protect Ironwood Forest National Monument and other national monuments.



Ironwood Forest National Monument.
Photo by Ana Gorla

Community Rally in Flagstaff Pushes Back Against Polluters.



Portion of the Crowd at People v Polluters. Photo by Sandy Bahr

by Sabrina Mathues Manygoats

On Saturday, February 28, community members, organizers, and environmental advocates gathered on Flagstaff's City Hall lawn for the People Against Polluters Rally and Walk, a highly visible demonstration calling attention to uranium hauling, environmental contamination, and the ongoing protection of sacred lands across Arizona.



Dianna Sue Uqualla at People v Polluters. Photo by Sandy Bahr



Carletta Tilousi & Sybil Hanna with the Havasupai Tribe. Photo by Sandy Bahr

The rally brought together a coalition of grassroots organizations and community leaders, including the Sierra Club, Tó Nizhóní Ání, Indigenous Circle of Flagstaff, Wingbeat 88, Center for Biological Diversity, Sacred Lands Alliance, Bídíí Roots, Haul No, the Arizona Trail Association, and local artist and activist Sabrina Manygoats. With around 100 attendees, the gathering demonstrated growing public concern about uranium extraction, transport, and the long legacy of nuclear colonialism across Indigenous lands. Participants marched along historic U.S. Route 66, shared information, and encouraged one another to take direct action to protect water, land, and community health.

The People Against Polluters Rally and Walk remained peaceful, but it was far more than a gathering. It was a clear show of collective power. Community members came together to stand against polluters and the systems that continue to place profit over land, water, and life. The rally demonstrated what is possible when people organize around shared values of protection, responsibility, and care for the Colorado Plateau. Participants carried signs, raised their voices, and connected with one another in solidarity. Conversations spread throughout the crowd as community members learned how policy decisions directly impact the lands, waters, and people of the Colorado Plateau. The event served as both a protest and a reminder that when communities stand together, they become a powerful force capable of challenging environmental harm and demanding accountability.

A key focus of the rally was protecting the Baaj Nwaavjo l'tah Kukveni Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument. This national monument safeguards nearly one million acres of land surrounding the Grand Canyon. Organizers emphasized that continued vigilance is necessary to ensure these protections remain strong in the face of uranium mining interests, transport pressures, and ongoing nuclear colonialism. Mattea from the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon Chapter helped explain the environmental and cultural significance of the monument while offering participants pathways for civic engagement. Attendees were encouraged to remain involved by submitting public comments, staying informed, and supporting grassroots efforts working to protect the region. Art and education also played a powerful role in the gathering. Sabrina Manygoats hosted a uranium beading workshop that doubled as a radiation awareness session. The workshop taught participants how to safely protest in areas where contamination is a concern while also using art as a tool for resistance and community learning. Organizers from Bídíí Roots also encouraged participants to submit public comments regarding recent changes to uranium hauling transportation guidelines on the Navajo Nation.



Baaj Nwaavjo l'tah Kukveni. Photo by Jim Dublinski

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Prickly Pear on Red Butte. *Photo by Jim Dublinski*



Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni. *Photo by Sandy Bahr*


Manygoats hosted a uranium beading workshop that doubled as a radiation awareness session. The workshop taught participants how to safely protest in areas where contamination is a concern while also using art as a tool for resistance and community learning. Organizers from Bidií Roots also encouraged participants to submit public comments regarding recent changes to uranium hauling transportation guidelines on the Navajo Nation. These decisions carry significant consequences for communities located along the haul route. Indigenous voices were a strong and vital presence throughout the gathering. Indigenous community members were given space to share personal experiences, concerns, and cultural values connected to the land and water. Through drumming, singing, and dancing, indigenous and non-indigenous participants came together to express both resistance and solidarity. These cultural expressions grounded the rally in a shared responsibility to protect the land. They also reminded participants that this struggle is not only political or environmental. It is cultural, spiritual, and deeply connected to protecting life for future generations.

Events like the People Against Polluters Rally and Walk demonstrate how grassroots leadership continues to drive environmental justice movements across the Southwest. By combining education, cultural expression, and direct action, organizers are building a broad coalition committed to protecting sacred lands, water, and future generations. As uranium interests push forward, communities across the region are making one thing clear: the people most impacted by these decisions will not remain silent. Through collective action, they are insisting that land, water, and life come before profit.

Sabrina Mathues Manygoats is an Artist Activist

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

PUBLIC LANDS UNDER ATTACK, BUT THE PUBLIC STEPS UP TO PROTECT THEM

by Sandy Bahr 



Ever since President Trump took the oath of office in January 2025, we have seen a flurry of intensified attacks on public lands, among many other things. Proposed repeals and elimination of protections have come at a breakneck pace. On the chopping block are the Roadless Rule and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Conservation Rule, as well as at least five national monuments.

Sadly, the administration is being aided in its actions by the Congress, where they are using tools such as the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to eliminate protections as they seek to open up more lands to destructive mining and oil and gas development. The CRA can only be used on rules that were finalized within 60 congressional work days of the action and, if passed, the rule or action cannot be reinstated unless Congress does so. The good news is that many of the public lands attacks have been rebuffed, including Senator Mike Lee's (R-UT) attempt to include a massive public lands sell-off in the "Big Ugly Bill." After extensive opposition, it was not included. The bad news is, the attacks continue.

The Trump administration expressed its intention to rescind or reduce in size several national monuments, including two in Arizona—the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon and Ironwood Forest. While no actions have yet been initiated to eliminate or shrink these monuments, we remain vigilant and are organizing opposition. Sadly,

efforts to remove protections from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah are advancing, as the congressional delegation is trying to use the CRA to eliminate the monument's resource management plan to remove essential protections. On top of this, Trump has appointed Steve Pearce as director of the BLM. Pearce has a horrible public lands record and does not even believe in having them.

While Congress and the Trump administration accelerate their attacks, the Arizona Legislature is joining in as well by introducing bills to try and limit additional land protections. One such bill is SB1281 federal government; land acquisition; consent. It requires the State Land Department to provide a new catalog of federal public lands, including the natural, scenic, historical or cultural value, species, ecosystem, habitat or characteristic to be protected, and determine whether the land protection is the smallest necessary to protect these resources. These are unreasonable requests and clearly intended to try to remove protections that are "too big."

Arizona is blessed with roughly 28 million acres of federal public lands (12.1 million BLM, 12 million national forests, 1.8 million wildlife refuges, 2.6 million national park units), including wildland gems such as Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, and Saguaro National parks, as well as the Superstition Wilderness Area, Kaibab National Forest, and Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. These lands, and wherever we are today in Arizona, are all Indigenous lands and that is key to consideration of what happens with and to them.

These public lands provide extensive opportunities for recreation and provide key habitat and corridors for numerous animals and habitat for plants. Public lands provide us with clean air and clean water. Arizonans love and enjoy our public lands and now we need to show that love more than ever by speaking up.

Sandy Bahr is director of the Grand Canyon Chapter

THE "NOT-SO-SMART WALL": A \$46.5 BILLION ASSAULT ON THE BORDERLANDS REGION.

by Erick Meza



Concertina wire in remote areas of the border. *Photo by Erick Meza*

The Sierra Club, with communities along the U.S.-Mexico border, strongly opposes U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) plans to construct a devastating and unnecessary "Smart Wall." This project, funded by the recent \$46.5 billion "Big Ugly Bill" allocation to the Department of Homeland Security, is a rebranded expansion of failed policies that will inflict lasting ecological and social harm, and is far from "smart."

The first wave of contracts, announced on October 10th, 2025, and totaling over \$4 billion, will fund 230 miles of new physical barriers and nearly 400 miles of surveillance technology, impacting landscapes from California to Texas. This will cover some of the most remote areas in the border and will include wilderness areas, national monuments, state parks, national forests, etc.

Branded now as a "Smart Wall," the project is just more of the same very familiar strategies. It consists of:

- Secondary walls, creating a double-barrier in many areas including floating barriers.
- Hundreds of miles of new roads for border patrol vehicles.
- An array of surveillance equipment, including cameras and harmful lighting systems.

This infrastructure will transform vast swaths of ecologically and culturally sensitive areas into permanent militarized zones, further fragmenting wildlife corridors, erasing the culturally significant places that have been stewarded by Indigenous people since time immemorial, and continuing to industrialize desert landscapes.

If all this is not enough, the Department of War, in collaboration with Border Patrol agents, has deployed an historic amount of concertina wire in some of the most remote and fragile areas of the border.

The administration has once again invoked waivers to bypass dozens of core environmental and cultural protection laws, just as was done in the previous Trump administration. This continues to create a dangerous precedent of lawlessness in our borderlands.

Real solutions address the root causes of migration and prioritize the health of our shared environment, not the profits of private contractors.

The Borderlands Program of the Grand Canyon Chapter works in collaboration with border chapters to stop this madness and protect some of the very last wildlife migration corridors we have.



Photo: Coronado National Memorial AZ, by Erick Meza
by Erick Meza is the Border Program Coordinator for the Grand Canyon Chapter



Support Your Local Sierra Club

When you make a donation to the Grand Canyon Chapter, you support Sierra Club's work in your own backyard. You allow us to continue our efforts to protect wilderness and wildlife, to improve the quality of life in our cities, to curb global climate change, and to promote the enjoyment of nature. If you haven't already, please also consider signing up to become a monthly, recurring donor to support local Chapter efforts!

Contributions to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support the Sierra Club's citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Donate online at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/arizona/donate>
or by mail to:
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<https://www.sierraclub.org/arizona/sign-up-for-our-newsletters>

ENVIRONMENTAL DAY A HUGE SUCCESS—400 STRONG!

PEOPLE POWER FOR THE PLANET

by Sandy Bahr



Sierra Club and partners (see a full list in the adjacent column) hosted a wonderful Environmental Day at the Capitol on February 11 with more than 400 people coming from at least 40 groups and schools, and we had meetings with about half of the legislators. We brought our People Power for the Planet to the Arizona Legislature. [Check out this short video on Instagram](#) to hear from a few people. Arizonans connected with legislators to address priority environmental concerns relating to water, climate justice and clean energy, and lands and wildlife. Participants also discussed voting rights with their legislators.



AZ Youth Climate Coalition. *Courtesy of Shaela Patel*



LD5 Team Photo with Rep. Marquez. *Courtesy of Tatyana Johnson.*



LD5 Team Meeting with Rep Liguori. *Courtesy of Tatyana Johnson*

The day included a program with speakers from several high schools, the Arizona Youth Climate Coalition, and youth from Rural Arizona Engagement and Chispa Arizona, Senator Rosanna Gabaldón, Representative Mae Peshlakai, Representative Aaron Marquez, and Pima County Supervisor Jen Allen spoke about environmental priorities and the need to do more to protect our air and water and rein in data centers, plus to act on climate.

Groups that Participated in Environmental Day at the Capitol

Activate 48	Green Latinos
Agave Community Threads	Kids Climate Action Network
Arizona AANHPI For Equity	Living Desert Alliance
Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans	Mi Familia Vota
Arizona Center for Empowerment	Moms Clean Air Force—Arizona
Arizona Faith Network	Mountain Mamas
Arizona Families for Vaccines	Northern Arizona Climate Change Alliance
Arizona Interfaith Power and Light	Our Voice Our Vote Arizona
Arizona Trail Association	Physicians for Social Responsibility, AZ Chapter
Arizona Youth Climate Coalition	Poder Latinx
Arizonans for a Clean Economy	Rural Arizona Action
Brophy Student Climate Coalition	Rural Arizona Engagement Scientist Rebellion
Chispa Arizona	Sierra Club—Grand Canyon Chapter
Citizens Climate Lobby	Sustainable Tucson
Climate Cabinet Action	Sustainable Water Network
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection	Third Act
Elders Climate Action—AZ	Tó Nizhóni Áni
Environment Arizona	Vets Forward
Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy Environmental Coalition	Vote Solar
Friends of Ironwood Forest	Wild at Heart Raptor Rescue
Fuerte Arts Movement	Yuma Audubon Society
Great Old Broads for Wilderness—	
Sonoran Broadband	
Tucson Broadband	



LD5 Team with Sen Alston. *Photo by Tatyana Johnson*

Most groups had information tables and Wild at Heart Raptor Rescue had some of its educational birds there to help inform people about the need to protect them and their habitat.

Sierra Club so appreciates everyone who made this day happen and all who participated! If you missed it, come next year or come down another day. Sign up for our weekly legislative updates to learn more about weekly actions at the Capitol too. [You can sign up here.](#)

Sandy Bahr is director of the Grand Canyon Chapter



WILD ABOUT ROADLESS FORESTS

Help Protect Our Wildest Forests from Trump

Arizona has six national forests encompassing approximately 12 million acres, including about 1.1 million acres of unloaded forests that have been protected from industrial development—no roads, no logging, no mining—for two decades by the Roadless Rule. Now the Trump administration is trying to eliminate those protections, including for places such as the Chiricahua Mountains, forest along East Clear Creek, and in the Blue Range.

The Forest Service established the Roadless Rule to keep important wildlife habitat intact and to save money—roads are an enormous budget item for the Forest Service. Even though the Trump administration is steamrolling ahead and ignoring the American public—more than 600,000 people expressed their opposition. We think it is important to continue to demonstrate how popular this policy is, and to raise more awareness about it, so we are co-hosting a series of events to raise awareness and continue to gather comments, video testimonials, and more.

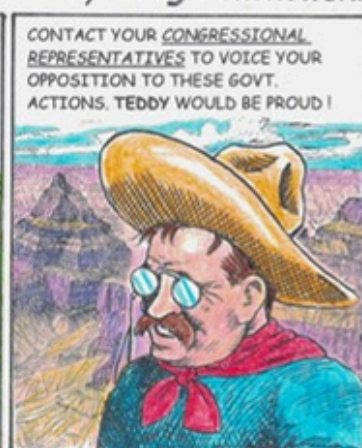
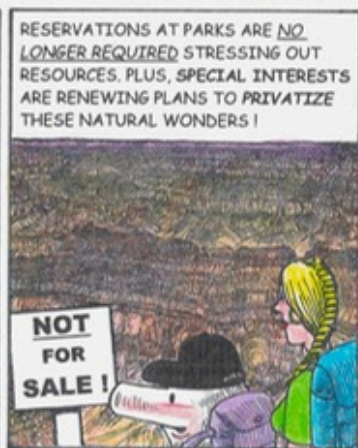
Roadless Area Townhall
Co-hosted with Environment Arizona
April 16 at 5:30 PM
Ward 3 Tucson City Council Office
1510 East Grant Road, Tucson
[RSVP here.](#)

Roadless - Southside Block Party
Co-hosted with Center for
Biological Diversity
May 2 at Noon
The Hive Flagstaff
2 S Beaver St, Ste 190, Flagstaff
[RSVP here.](#)

Roadless Event Phoenix
Week of May 4
Details to follow.

Contact Sandy Bahr at sandy.bahresierraclub.org for more information.

Beyond the Slab -- CELEBRATING OVER 30 YEARS OF PUBLISHED ECO-AWARENESS!



Canyon etching courtesy: J.W. Powell expedition 1868-1872

By Greg Pentkowski

© 2016 GREG PENTKOWSKI



Cast of Characters

Stephanie Vasquez Salas



Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, and moved to Arizona when I was 8. I've lived in Arizona ever since, growing up and attending school in Glendale before eventually going to Arizona State University. I earned my Bachelor's in Political Science with a minor in Sustainability in 2019 and later completed a Master's in Public Policy from ASU in 2021.

I began my career in the legislature in 2019 as an intern with the Democratic Caucus in the Arizona House of Representatives, where I staffed committees including the committees on Natural Resources, Energy and Water, and Public Safety. Since then, I've spent much of my career working in state government, where I now focus on helping organizations navigate the legislative process and engage with policymakers. My work focuses on building relationships and supporting policy initiatives that create meaningful impact.

What are your hobbies or interests?

Most of my free time is spent with my family, my fiancée, our daughter, and our pets. I also really enjoy gardening and doing Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) work with feral cats. That work has turned into so much more than I expected. It's brought neighbors together and created a sense of shared responsibility. Through TNR, you see how when people trust each other and communicate, they are more willing to step up and work together. It really builds a stronger sense of community.

I also believe animal welfare is closely tied to human welfare. The way we treat animals, especially those without homes, reflects how we treat each other. So for me, it's not just about helping the cats. It's about helping build a stronger, more connected community.

Do you have a favorite place to walk, run, hike, bike, or watch wildlife?

I don't get out as much as I'd like these days with work and family, but when I do, I love going to the Sonoran Preserve in North Phoenix. It's such a peaceful place to be outside and spend time with my family.

What made you want to volunteer with Sierra Club and what has kept you involved?

I started volunteering with the Sierra Club in 2018 after completing a legislative internship with Sandy Bahr. I was interested in policy, but that experience really showed me how policy can be used to protect the environment and make a difference. It also gave me a better understanding of the Arizona legislative process, which I was largely unfamiliar with before.

Over the years, I've taken on several different roles within the Chapter. I've served on the Executive Committee, became the PAC Chair, and now I'm also the Chapter Chair. Each role has been a different way to stay involved, learn new skills, and contribute. Growing within the organization in this way has been really meaningful to me.

What do you like most about environmental protection and environmental justice work?

Environmental issues don't exist on their own. They show up in public health, housing, economic opportunity, and overall quality of life. It's not just about protecting land or water, it's about people and the conditions they live in every day.

Environmental justice brings that into focus. It highlights how some communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color, are more likely to be impacted by pollution, extreme heat, lack of green space, and limited access to clean resources. These impacts aren't random. They're tied to policy decisions and long-standing inequities. That's why intersectional work matters so much. You can't fully address environmental issues without also considering health, affordability, and community stability.

What advice would you give to someone considering getting involved in environmental work?

Just start somewhere. You don't need to know everything or have it all figured out. There are so many ways to get involved, whether it's policy, volunteering, or community work.

You frequently help with rescuing animals and getting them spayed and neutered. What is your favorite rescue story?

The cat that first got me involved in TNR was a black long-haired cat I named Mom. While she never let me pet her, we had a silent understanding that I was there to help. For two years, I worked to gain her trust and learn her patterns. Mom had three litters of kittens before I was able to step in. With her first litter, she had left the kittens in the sun, and sadly, one didn't survive. She was still just a kitten herself having kittens, and that really showed me how important TNR is.

I was eventually able to trap her and get her spayed, along with a third litter. Those two kittens, after a lot of socialization, are now mine and live indoors. Mom was released back outside and lived the next couple of months happy and kid-free, but a few months later, she died from antifreeze poisoning. Losing her was really hard, but she's the reason I got involved in this work. Because of her, more than 20 cats in the neighborhood have been spayed and neutered. She really started everything for me.

What accomplishment are you most proud of and why?

One of the things I'm most proud of is raising my daughter. I want to raise a human who cares about the world she lives in, the animals she shares it with, and the people in her community. Teaching kindness and empathy is really important to me, especially in how she treats others and understands her role in the world. Raising the next generation comes with a lot of responsibility, but it's also an opportunity to help shape someone who is thoughtful, compassionate, and aware. That feels like one of the most meaningful impacts I can have.

What one word do you think describes you best?

Committed. I stick with the things I care about and try to follow through in a meaningful way.

Lake Pleasant

We knock on waves and the landscape
Blurs dry rock and blue water.
Spray pounds against our outstretched hands
And the corners of our mouths upturn.

A distress wave cuts us short.
A blue-striped speed boat pitches and rolls.
At the bow a graying man and
Bikini-clad young women.
Pinks and reds, blues and a yellow.
All just staring.
Adrift.

We circle and throw them a rope.
We tug them in, no spray now.
Just silence and time.
At dock, they steal away
And we chug through ripples
Back out to open water.

By Brian Mostoller (2013)

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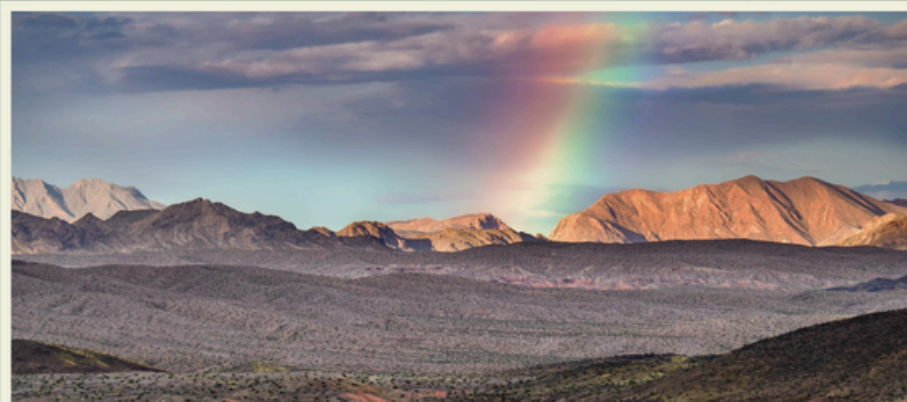
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ARIZONA: where beautiful places can be protected forever by gifts in wills

Photo by Andrew Cattoir, National Park Service

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Water Sentinels Outings Dates

Photo by Toni Malcolm

The Arizona Water Sentinels conduct water quality monitoring to assess the general health of Arizona rivers. Data is shared with state natural resources agencies and used to inform decisions about better protecting these rivers. [Join us at one of these events.](#)

Rio Salado

April 26
 May 17
 June 14
 July 12
 September 13
 October 25
 November 15
 December 6

Verde

April 25 Training
 May 9
 June 13
 July 11
 August 8
 September 12
 October 24

San Pedro

April 6 Training
 May 11
 June 15
 July 13
 August 10
 September 14
 October 26

a water sentinel's reflection....

by Matt Przyborski



Matthew Przyborski. Photo by Jennifer Martin

role in it, water quality monitoring allows me to assist where I can with the little free time I have. It doesn't feel like much, but it is a big help to Sierra Club, keeps me informed of regional water issues, and provides critical data to help inform and influence decisions around protections for the San Pedro.

Jennifer Martin runs a great, informative, and welcoming team—one of the reasons I return each year! Spending the day outdoors, enjoying the beauty of the San Pedro, is a welcome reprieve from the grind of everyday life in Tucson and a great way to reconnect with the natural beauty here in Arizona. Unfortunately, even in my short time as a Water Sentinel, I can see concerning changes to the San Pedro—each year there seems to be less water available to monitor than in years before. It is a clear reminder that preserving this resource will take all the help the river can get and makes me proud to be a Water Sentinel for the San Pedro.

Matt has a Masters in GIS and is a member of the Water Sentinels for the Grand Canyon Chapter.