Opinion: It’s Time for the Grand Canyon Protection Act

By Stan Bindell

Grand Canyon should be protected. It seems silly that we have to say this. Grand Canyon is one of the world’s seven natural wonders. The scenery is incredible. The geology, Colorado River, and wildlife are just some of the reasons this is paradise to many.

Grand Canyon is more than 275 miles long, 18 miles wide, and ranges in elevation from 2,000 to 8,000 feet. There are a multitude of trails ranging from easy walks along the rim to wilderness trips down to the river.

Yet there are those who would mine uranium near Grand Canyon that could pollute the water and cause other problems.

That is why the Grand Canyon Protection Act is needed: To permanently protect the greater Grand Canyon region from new mining claims and the pollution they would produce.

The Grand Canyon Protection Act would permanently withdraw more than one million acres of federal public land north and south of Grand Canyon National Park from eligibility for any future mining claims while leaving valid existing claims intact.

One of the scariest concerns about uranium mining near Grand Canyon is that it could contaminate the aquifers that feed the seeps and springs in the Canyon.

The Grand Canyon Protection Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is pending in the Senate. It passed the House 227-200 as part of the Protecting America’s Wilderness and Public Lands Act.

The passage in the House came with the help of U.S. Rep. Tom O’Halleran, who deserves praise for speaking out to protect Grand Canyon and co-sponsoring the legislation. Rep. Raúl Grijalva was the lead sponsor and Arizona Representatives Ruben Gallego and Greg Stanton were also cosponsors.

Mark Kelly and Kyrsten Sinema, the two U.S. Senators from Arizona, introduced the Grand Canyon Protection Act in the Senate.

continued on page 3

Take Action:
Support Empowered Transitions for Coal-Impacted Communities

Coal plants are closing, and the communities who have relied on them need help securing a renewable, sustainable, and secure future. The Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) will decide if and how Just and Equitable Transition assistance will be provided to the Navajo, Hopi, and rural coal-impacted communities.

Add your voice to urging the ACC to enact policies now to provide the support needed to rebuild economies and uplift communities before and after coal plants close down.

You can take action by submitting a video testimony, providing written comment, or using this social media toolkit to spread the word. Learn more about the campaign and get involved online at: www.empoweredtransition.org.
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Flagstaff/N AZ: Joe Shannon 520-576-5083 mweesner@att.net
Palo Verde: Don Steuter 520-576-5083 mweesner@att.net
Vacant: Tom Slaback
Yavapai: Vacant

Chapter Announcements
JULY 11 (SUN) Chapter Conservation and Executive Committee meetings (virtual). Club leaders meet to consider matters related to statewide conservation efforts, share experiences across groups, and coordinate strategy to align our Chapter mission and goals with that of national Sierra Club. For more information, please contact sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org.

JULY, SEPT (TBD) 6:30 p.m. Political Committee meetings (virtual). Help us elect more environmentally-friendly candidates! If you are interested in helping improve the political climate in Arizona, consider being part of our Political Committee! All Sierra Club members are welcome to participate. For information, contact political.chair@grandcanyon.sierraclub.org.

JULY 12, AUG 9, SEPT 13 (MON) 6:30 p.m. Wildlife Activist Group meetings (virtual). Interested in making a difference for wildlife? Want to help protect habitat, gather important research data on wildlife, or watchdog the Arizona Game and Fish Commission? Please consider joining our Wildlife Activist Group For more information, please contact sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org.

JULY 27, AUG 24, SEPT 28 (TUE) 6:30 p.m. Energy and Climate Action Team meetings (virtual). Discussions and programs encompass renewable energy and energy efficiency campaigns nationally and locally. Everyone is invited to participate, no matter how much or how little you know about energy issues. For more information, please contact sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org.

AUG (TBD) Publications Committee meeting (virtual). Have an idea? Help plan future issues of Canyon Echo! Contact Meg Weesner at 520-576-5083 or mweesner@att.net, or Sandy Bahr at sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org.

SEPT 1 (WED) Copy deadline for Fall 2021 Canyon Echo. Articles, art, photographs, poetry, essays, and brief epiphanies are welcome. Contact Meg Weesner at 520-576-5083 or mweesner@att.net, or Sandy Bahr at sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org.

http://sierraclub.org/arizona
Kelly has been outspoken about protecting Grand Canyon. He issued a statement that said: “I’ve seen the Grand Canyon’s beauty from space and up close. It is a treasure for Arizona and for our country. We can and must protect the unique public lands that our economy and communities depend on.”

Protecting Grand Canyon is not only the right action to take for the environment, it’s also a sensible action to take for the economy. Before the pandemic, Grand Canyon had more than six million visitors per year. These tourists contribute $1.2 billion each year to the Arizona economy and support more than 12,500 jobs.

We have seen the damage that uranium mines have done to those living on the Navajo Nation, causing cancer and health ills while Navajos have waited decades for cleanups of those mines with more than 500 mines remaining to be cleaned up.

Rep. O’Halleran has seen these problems. “Uranium mine operations on lands near Grand Canyon threaten the health of these Arizona families, the water supply of the Southwest, our state’s tourism economy, and the cultural and spiritual significance the Canyon holds for several Native American communities. I am proud to join my colleagues in reintroducing this important bill that protects Arizona’s natural wonder, the 40 million people that rely on Colorado River aquifers, and the families that still suffer from these dangerous operations,” O’Halleran said.

The area in question is currently in the midst of a 20-year moratorium on new claims instituted in 2012 by then-Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. Unless extended, that moratorium will expire in the next decade.

The legislation is endorsed by the Havasupai and Hopi Tribes, and the Navajo Nation, as well as the Inter-Tribal Association of Arizona and numerous conservation groups.

Rep. Paul Gosar, from Arizona, is among the most outspoken critics of the Grand Canyon Protection Act as he wants uranium mining allowed. But if we won’t protect Grand Canyon, what will we protect?

Stan is a member of the Yavapai Group Executive Committee

Calling all Writers: Arizona’s Special Wilderness Areas

Stan Bindell, a longtime Sierra Club member, is writing a book about Arizona’s 90 wilderness areas. He is interested in hearing from anyone with knowledge of any of these wilderness areas or hiking these areas with other Sierra Club members. Bindell has written hiking columns for more than 20 years and currently writes a monthly hiking column for 5 Senses in Prescott and periodic hiking stories for the Navajo Hopi Observer.

Bindell can be reached at 928-636-3903 or thebluesmagician@gmail.com

Irreplaceable: Grand Canyon Series Available

The Irreplaceable: Grand Canyon series of webinars and podcasts is now available for viewing and listening on YouTube. The series was developed by Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter and presented online last fall to spread awareness of threats to the Grand Canyon region. The four sessions, each lasting about 90 minutes, highlight uranium mining near the Canyon, proposed dams and tourism development on the Little Colorado River, a massive proposed development just south of Grand Canyon National Park at Tusayan, and an expanding ski resort on the San Francisco Peaks, a mountain that is a Traditional Cultural Property for no less than 13 Tribes.

The series is based on conversations with people from affected communities about why these places are important, the values at risk, and the tools we have (and tools we need) to ensure that future generations have access to clean water, traditional use areas, sacred places, and livable spaces. Each of the webinars focuses on the importance of place, people, water, and wildlife.

You can watch the series online:

- Uranium Mining in the Grand Canyon Region [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iL_KUQXKMBY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iL_KUQXKMBY)
- Threats to the Little Colorado River [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23_wrNt3s00](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23_wrNt3s00)
- Proposed Development at Tusayan, AZ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c4_iKdAiYU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c4_iKdAiYU)
- San Francisco Peaks TCP and Arizona Snowbowl [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1ZHHF8XNnY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1ZHHF8XNnY)

Arizona Water: Scarce and Precious Series

Grand Canyon Chapter is now hosting a series of webinars titled Arizona Water: Scarce and Precious. The first program featured Jocelyn Gibbon, J.D., of Freshwater Policy Consulting. Jocelyn provided an easy-to-understand introduction to water law and policy in Arizona, and described some of the water-related challenges and opportunities the state faces in the years ahead. You can watch a recording of the event online here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctRI8UFezO4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctRI8UFezO4)

The next program in the series will take place August 16th at 6pm and will focus on springs. Check the Grand Canyon Chapter calendar online at [https://www.sierraclub.org/arizona/events-activities](https://www.sierraclub.org/arizona/events-activities) for more details.
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The Grand Canyon Chapter is also thankful for the generous support from those who chose to remain anonymous.
Help Lead the Grand Canyon Chapter: You Are Sierra Club

Nominations for Chapter and Group Executive Committee Elections
Due by August 23rd

Become a candidate to serve on your group or chapter executive committee! No experience is necessary. If you want to help create a vision, make policy, execute plans to protect and preserve our environment, participate in deepening work on equity and justice, and have fun while doing it, please nominate yourself. If you know of another good person, let us know. Volunteer leadership positions within the Grand Canyon Chapter are an ideal way to deepen your involvement in the issues important to you. There are many opportunities and activities, from advocacy for air, water, and wildlife, to leading hikes, and more. (Look through this Canyon Echo to see how other members have gotten involved.)

If you want to learn more about what would be involved, please contact Oscar Medina at oscarmedinagomez@gmail.com, Sandy Bahr at sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org, or your group chair (see page 13). Guidelines for chapter and group executive committee elections are as follows: 1) To be listed on the ballot, candidates must submit their names and membership numbers. If you aren’t sure what your membership number is, see your Canyon Echo label or contact the chapter office at 602-253-9140. Be sure to include contact information along with your submission. 2) Submit a candidate statement (recommended but not required) indicating the chapter or group executive committee for which you are running to oscarmedinagomez@gmail.com and sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org no later than August 23, 2021.

Candidate statements are limited to 200 words and must be submitted by email. (Because much of the executive committee’s business is done by email, candidates must have email capability.) The official ballot will appear in the Fall 2021 Canyon Echo.

So go ahead, nominate yourself or someone you think would be a good leader. Thank you for considering this important work!

A Word from Current Members:
Getting Involved with Sierra Club Executive Committees

Being a member of the Chapter Executive Committee is exciting, as it allows me to be hands-on with on where the Grand Canyon Chapter of Sierra Club focuses its energy and resources. It is great fun to share good work with people who care about conservation, biodiversity, and want to protect Arizona’s wild places and resources. We work hard to bring people to the wilderness and to be in community through participation in programs and special projects. Group Executive Committees are a great place to get involved. These communities are responsive, nimble, and fun to work with. We need your help and fresh perspective! I strongly recommend becoming more involved with Grand Canyon Sierra Club, as you will find a welcoming space where everyone’s skills and talents are put to good use.

Written by Kathy Mohr-Almeida

I became a Sierra Club member in 2014 because I wanted to support an organization working to address the climate crisis. Since joining the club and getting involved, I have learned more about not only the climate crisis, but a variety of other environmental issues including environmental justice, threats to our state from mining interests, water issues, endangered species, transportation, wilderness, and the border. I appreciate Sierra Club meetings because I can not only learn about these issues but also meet other members who are passionate about environmental issues.

To serve as a board member with the Palo Verde Group (Phoenix area) Executive Committee, you don’t need to be an expert on environmental issues – just bring your passion to protect our planet along with the willingness to volunteer your time.

Written by Rebecca Hinton

I may have joined the Saguaro Group Board in an unusual way. I thought I was attending a Sierra Club general meeting, whereas it actually was a Saguaro Group executive committee meeting. A vacancy existed due to a Board member having taken a position at the Chapter. I volunteered to fill the vacant position. That was over 15 years ago, and I have never regretted a minute of it. After initially serving as Group Treasurer, I now have led our service projects for several years. Each year we now assist numerous organizations ranging for Wild at Heart Raptor Rescue to stewardship of a section of the Maricopa Trail.

Each event has brought an appreciation of meeting new volunteers and thanking those who have volunteered for numerous events over the years. Of particular gratification has been the participation of high school conservation clubs and the enthusiasm they bring to our environmental efforts.

Written by Urb Weidner

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Dire predictions that climate change will make parts of Arizona uninhabitable have generated controversy for years\(^{(1, 2)}\). Lengthier periods of hot weather, protracted droughts, and extended wildfire seasons almost certainly lie in the future\(^{(3)}\). Although these changes are anticipated to climax gradually, they are already producing murderous impacts on Arizona dry land environments.

**Merging Hazards**

Things are not what they used to be. Aggressive colonization by non-native, invasive plants has physically altered large patches of Arizona landscapes. Fast-growing species such as buffelgrass, Cenchrus ciliaris, sometimes grow profusely enough to fill open patches completely and smother some of the native flora\(^{(4)}\). Where these competitive grasses become dominant, many native wildflowers, cacti, desert trees, and wildlife vanish\(^{(4, 5)}\).

Large-scale wildfires were once rare in naturally sparsely vegetated Arizona dry lands, an evolutionary history that has left cacti and other desert-adapted plants sensitive to blazes\(^{(6, 7)}\). In contrast, several invasive plant species now insidiously overwhelming large swaths of Arizona landscapes not only recover from brushfires readily, their dense stands supply ideal tinder for more frequent dry land wildfires\(^{(8)}\). Repeated cycles of sprawling dry land brushfires promote the elimination of sensitive native plants and their replacement with grasses.

**Assessing Implications and Taking Action**

Arizona State University Emeritus Professor Stephen Pyne suggests we are transitioning into the “Pyrocene” era\(^{(3, 9)}\), where wildfire could become the climax force remodeling Arizona environments. Abetted by climate change\(^{(10)}\) and stoked through the proliferation of invasive plant species, the unrelied wildfire seasons to come will ultimately imperil the wellbeing of both humans and large expanses of Arizona dry land environments as we know them today.

Will a combination of mounting adverse environmental changes raze Arizona? Controlling the weather is impossible, but the growing hazard posed by invasive species-fueled wildfires may be diminished through proactive management of landscape vegetation. Illustrated instructional guides are available to enable Arizona citizens to easily identify and eliminate the invasive plants on their properties\(^{(11–13)}\). In addition, the Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter and other organizations\(^{(14, 15)}\) are coordinating long-term volunteer projects to control the impacts of invasive plants on Arizona public lands.

The situation is stark; several invasive plant species are widely disseminated across the state and spreading actively. Prioritizing critical landscapes for protection and marshaling resources and labor to them may become essential if trends continue to unfold according to predictions. Actively supporting strategic planning efforts, public outreach, and expanding on-the-ground work will be critical if we are to ensure viable Arizona desert environments survive the challenging times ahead.

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(3) Steve Goldstein. 2021. ASU Professor Predicts "Fire Age" as Fire Season Stretches From Months to Most of Year. KJZZ, 28 April 2021. https://kjzz.org/content/1678848/asu-professor-predicts-fire-age-fire-season-stretches-months-most-year
Rick Isetts: In Memoriam

Written by Don Steuter

Former Canyon Echo editor Rick Isetts passed away in April at age 69.

Rick volunteered as a contributing and assistant editor in the early nineties and went on to become a full-time editor from 1994 to 2001. With computer publishing in its early stages, Echo articles were laboriously typed out, printed, cut and pasted onto poster board in puzzle-like fashion, and hand delivered to the printer (usually in a mad dash to meet deadline). In 2002 he received a Publication’s Award from the Grand Canyon Chapter for his dedication and many years of service.

In support of his duties as editor, Rick attended meetings and conferences and was a strong advocate for protection of public lands. Camping, fishing, and photography were his preferred outdoor activities, with memorable trips in the deep green Toyota 4-Runner that survived to the end.

Rick was also an accomplished guitarist who could, at times, be found at musical gatherings and jams at local clubs. Most any song could be improved with the addition of Rick’s inexhaustible repertoire of blues licks, which he kept in excellent practice.

Rick is predeceased by his long-term companion and soulmate Karen Amacker (Palo Verde Group Chair in the late 90s). He is survived by a brother and sister in Wisconsin, and by his step-daughter Gabrielle in Tucson.

Don is Conservation Chair for the Palo Verde Group and Grand Canyon Chapter.

From the Archives:
“High Noon on Grazing Reform”
By Rick Isetts, contributing editor, Sept. 1993

Ranching in the West isn’t just a job. It’s a way of life, an unprecedented cultural phenomenon, the legendary stuff of books and movies which describe a lifestyle that has reached mythical status in the minds of many.

To environmentalists, a cow is a stream-stomping, meadow-mashing, grass-gobbling, water-slurping, fly-bitten agent of ecosystem destruction—a semi-nomadic beast causing untold destruction to the land, much of it under public domain.

The controversy of public lands grazing spurred a series of meetings scheduled by Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt. The fifth and final hearing was held at Northern Arizona University on July 9, 1993, and despite a Friday afternoon agenda (which undoubtedly prevented many working people from attending), the event drew over 400 Arizonans from all sides of the issue. Ranchers composed about three-fourths of the group.

A similar hearing was held in Albuquerque May 6. According to Patricia Wolff, chapter wildlife chair for the Rio Grande Chapter, New Mexico, “Interior Secretary Babbitt conducted the hearing with hopes that he would find reasonable support for reforming federal grazing policies. What he found instead was total intransigence by an industry that would rather die than change.”

Change, however, is in the wind. And while a discussion of proposed grazing fee hikes dominated other hearings in Bozeman, Mont; Grand Junction, Colo.; and Reno, Nev., the focus in Flagstaff was whether or not cattle grazing and riparian protection are compatible.

This complete Canyon Echo article is available at:

Happy 20th Birthday to Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area

By Bev Full

In 2000, residents of the Town of Cave Creek voted to tax themselves $21,000,000 for the purchase of Spur Cross Ranch, a rugged and relatively unspoiled area of 2,238 acres directly north of Cave Creek. This vote, along with dollars from the State Parks Heritage Fund, facilitated the purchase of the ranch, which was up for sale and builders were planning to purchase the land for a housing development.

The ranch lands were relatively unspoiled and now remarkably restored. High on Elephant Mountain there is a Native American fortress overlooking the preserve. Cave Creek begins high in the mountains at Seven Springs in the Tonto National Forest, which is east of the preserve. It is an important water source for the wildlife within the preserve. Today the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation area is owned and managed jointly by the Town of Cave Creek, Maricopa County, and the State of Arizona.

Sierra Club’s Saguaro Group has helped with restorations that include planting a grove of ironwood trees, removing rusty barbed wire fencing, and building and maintaining seven miles of hiking trails. Most recently, members of the Saguaro Group created and installed new signs to remind visitors of the need to properly dispose of trash.

The preserve is now a very popular destination for hiking, mountain biking, bird and wildlife watching, and enjoying the scenic mountain views.

Bev is Outings Chair for the Saguaro Group

http://sierraclub.org/arizona
We are all concerned with our water capacity and trust that our water quality meets safe drinking standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Seth Siegel, New York Times writer and water activist, lets us know that we also need to be more attentive to our drinking water standards.

In Troubled Water Siegel provides a comprehensive review of the history of clean water in the United States, from our initial use of sand filters and chlorine to kill deadly microbes in the early 1900s, to our current research on endocrine disruptor (ED) chemicals. Without these fundamental treatments our municipal water would still be the origin of dysentery and polio. Consider that all substances we use for hygiene, coffee caffeine, pharmaceutical and illicit drugs, along with thousands of other unregulated chemicals, can be found in our drinking water.

Scientists have understood for decades that commonly used products like Teflon, plastic, and fertilizers are toxic to the environment and humans. Although the 1974 Clean Water Act was instituted by President Gerald Ford, and there have been a few updates in later years, the EPA has not kept pace with the tens of thousands of chemicals in use to keep our technological-based society moving. Examples of contaminants in our Arizona water include perchlorate (rocket fuel) from Henderson, Nevada, and perfluorooctanoic (PFOA) used in coating many products to extend usefulness, which is found throughout the Colorado River basin. Yes, Central Arizona Project water does contain these harmful chemicals, although in ultra-low concentrations.

With all of these chemicals being present in our sewage effluent, the common practice of using reclaimed water on sporting fields and pumping this nearly drinkable “clean water” into regional aquifers for future use certainly needs to be reevaluated. The 3M slogan of “better living through chemicals” is not accurate, but the 1960s catchphrase “If you won’t eat it do not use it” is very true. Seth follows up by showing us our water quality situation with positive actions we can take, particularly in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) marginal locations, such as Flint, Michigan.

The Flagstaff-Northern AZ Group, Friends of Flagstaff Future, and the Water Group are passing around copies of this book to create awareness of our reclaimed water use and speak to the excellence of Troubled Water.

Joe is Chair of the Flagstaff-Northern AZ Group
Get to Know AZ Wildlife:
California Condor

While their common name is California condor, these endangered birds can be found in Arizona (and Utah and Northern Baja California, Mexico), primarily around Grand Canyon and Vermilion Cliffs. From only 22 birds back in the 1980s, California condors have been brought back from the brink of extinction, although they are still very much endangered. As scavengers, the condors eat animals that may have been shot with lead ammunition, resulting in lead poisoning that will frequently kill these birds if they are not treated and sometimes kills them, even if they are treated. More than half of all condor deaths are related to lead poisoning, according to the Peregrine Fund.

Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter has been engaged in litigation to protect condors by challenging the use of lead ammunition on the Kaibab National Forest.

Get Involved:
Wildlife Activist Group (WAG): WAG meets via Zoom Meeting on the second Monday of every month. Our next meeting is Monday, July 12 at 6 p.m. Please join us if you are interested in making a difference for wildlife. Learn more and share your passion and knowledge about Arizona’s wildlife. Our program will focus on impacts of the border wall to wildlife.

Seeking Wildlife Writers: Do you have a specific topic regarding wildlife conservation or a certain species of Arizona wildlife that you’re particularly passionate about? We are seeking writers to create wildlife related content that will be featured in our Canyon Echo newsletter, and on the Sierra Club Arizona website and email broadcasts. Please reach out to us if you like to write about wildlife!

Opinion: Staying Positive in Difficult Legislative Sessions

Taylor Miller

Watching countless people stand up and speak up against bills that they believe are harmful, just to see legislators pass these bills with impunity, painted a chilling reality of Arizona politics. It was not uncommon to watch powerful testimonies quickly followed by passing votes along partisan lines. At first glance it seemed like no one was listening, but in the end, I came to realize that if you want to positively influence your community through legislation, you can.

The purpose of government is to serve the people, and we are the people. It is our right to tell our representatives what we want from our country, and it is their job to listen. And they do!

At first I felt like a small fish in the big sea, and that any actions I could possibly take to support or oppose a bill would only be a drop in the bucket. But I quickly realized that enough drops make a storm, and our government is built to enable people to influence the political process.

Many legislators will listen to you if you want to speak, and any issue that you are passionate about has people supporting it who care as much or even more than you. With every bill you consider harmful there are hundreds of people organizing behind it, and every bill you believe is positive has crews of passionate politicians seeking to make the bill law.

That really is the beautiful part of politics, that everyone and their interests, no matter how niche, are represented. You’re not supposed to agree with every bill that becomes law, because the legislature is a place for discourse. It is for anyone with a variety of diverse perspectives to voice their opinion and have it shape our government.

I had the opportunity to speak with Senator Juan Mendez and Representative Athena Salman from Legislative District 26 regarding bills that I found alarming in the 2021 session. I was met with the utmost care and consideration. It is our representatives’ job to care about our concerns, and they went into politics because they sincerely have an interest in serving the community in some way. If you have a concern with the government, it is quite literally your representative’s job to listen.

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Overall one of the greatest lessons that I gained from interning with the Sierra Club in the 2021 legislative session is the realization that the animosity directed towards politicians and the government is largely unmerited at times. The government is a collection of people with interests, and everyone has the power to promote their interests and shape the government in a meaningful way.

So while this session did not always go the way I had hoped, it proved that as long as we continue to have passionate and caring people involved and positively influencing our government, there is opportunity for change.

Taylor is an intern with the Grand Canyon Chapter
AZ Environmental Organizations Release Interview Series on Civilian Climate Corps

By Sandy Bahr

Last month Arizona Interfaith Power & Light, Mi Familia Vota, and Sierra Club released a series of interviews focusing on a key component of President Biden’s American Jobs Plan, the Civilian Climate Corps. They spoke to teachers, civil rights leaders, park rangers, organizers, and historians about how our communities have benefited from past infrastructure investments, including via the Works Project Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, and how these new investments can help revitalize Arizona’s economy—and build back better. A Civilian Climate Corps can help parks and communities and engage a new and diverse generation of youth in making these investments in our future.

While the investments in clean infrastructure, including transit, energy efficiency, and clean renewable solar and wind energy, are critically important, a key investment in our future is the Civilian Climate Corps, which will put a new generation to “work conserving our public lands and waters, bolstering community resilience, and advancing environmental justice.”

The Civilian Conservation Corps built hiking trails and ramadas in South Mountain Park and Preserve in the 1930s. South Mountain is a special place and sacred to the Akimel O’odham and Pee Posh. Masavi Perea shares a vision for a Civilian Climate Corps at South Mountain to benefit future generations in an interview with Sandy Bahr with Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter.


In the 1930s the Civilian Conservation Corps camped and worked at Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Sylvia Lee, the Arboretum historian, shares a vision for a Civilian Climate Corps to care for and restore desert ecosystems for this and future generations in her conversation with Doug Bland with AZ Interfaith Power & Light.

Watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBeH4WZFImY

Ulisses Correa with Mi Familia Vota interviews Ricardo Palomera, a North High School history teacher, who reflects on the history of the Works Project Administration at his high school and how a Civilian Climate Corps can benefit the community.

Watch it here: facebook.com/MiFamiliaVota/videos/150989283733852

Connie Rudd, retired National Parks Superintendent, speaks with Doug Bland of AZ Interfaith Power & Light about how the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps made National Parks even better and how a Civilian Climate Corps could serve our National Parks and our country.

Watch the video here: youtube.com/watch?v=nqEKUXAGi9A&ab_channel=DougBland

Dr. Warren Stewart reflects on the history of Eastlake Park and the role it played in the civil rights movement in Arizona in a conversation with Doug Bland with AZ Interfaith Power & Light. In the 1930s the Civilian Conservation Corp worked on the physical infrastructure of this historic place. Today, a diverse Civilian Climate Corps could do even more: building bridges across the racial and cultural divides in our nation.

View the video and conversation here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keZ4prbJk-E

Find out more about how to advocate for the Civilian Climate Corps by emailing sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org or calling (602) 253-8633.

Sandy is Chapter Director
New Adventures for Dan Millis
Grand Canyon Chapter says goodbye to Borderlands Program Manager and celebrates his more than 12 years of service

The Grand Canyon Chapter is grateful for Dan Millis and his passionate efforts to preserve and protect the borderlands, as well as the communities and wildlife who live there. You can see messages left for Dan by his Sierra Club friends and colleagues online at bit.ly/danmillis.

Farewell Thoughts from Dan:

I’ve learned a ton during my 12+ years doing this job, and there are 3 main takeaways I’d like to share with you, if you’re interested:

1) Trauma is real, self-care is key
   It took me a long time to learn that my privileges don’t protect me from the trauma of suffering, death and destruction that I witness or experience, and I know many of you are in the same boat. My main reason for leaving is an ongoing inability to do this work while also maintaining my own health and happiness. But there are resources available to help us cope. Laura van Dernoot Lipsky’s Trauma Stewardship book was recommended to me by a No More Deaths friend and fellow volunteer, and I found it very useful. There are also counseling resources available through Employee Assistance Programs and social service organizations, many of which are now free or very affordable thanks to programs that have expanded these services to meet the challenge of the pandemic. If you’re struggling, it’s OK, it’s normal. You can take the next step to care for yourself!

2) There is no environmental movement but the antiracist environmental movement
   We are fighting to protect the environment on a continent where, for generations, land and labor was and continues to be stolen under the system of white supremacy. Ibram X. Kendi teaches us that discriminatory policies cause racist ideas, not vice-versa (his book, Stamped from the Beginning, has changed my life). Our fight is against border walls and militarization policies that harm Indigenous and Latinx lands and communities. The militarization profiteers and their stockholders or political supporters manufacture racist ideas and narratives to justify their own criminal actions, and the media brings those bogus messages into our homes and heads. I’m proud that our coalition is focused on concrete policy improvements and building community power, and only rarely distracted by proven failures such as uplift suasion and assimilationist narratives.

   --Still, our coalition and the larger environmental movement can make improvements to become more overtly and effectively antiracist. I look to the work led by Tannya and Tricia in Laredo and Norma, Ricky and Roberto in the Rio Grande Valley for inspiration and leadership as models of building grassroots power and defending frontlines communities. My previous lengthy rant to this list was about land acknowledgements, and I encourage you to incorporate them into your environmental work and routine, if you haven’t already! And if you’re unfamiliar with the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, study and implement them.

3) Union!
   Many non-governmental organizations, including mine, fight for justice and equity in the outside world while perpetuating injustice and inequity within the organization itself. The most effective force for justice within the Sierra Club that I have witnessed has been the BIPOC-led Progressive Workers Union (PWU), of which I am a proud member. Since PWU provided chapter staff people like me the opportunity to join a couple years ago, I have benefited in a number of ways: PWU secured the most significant salary raise I’ve ever had by forcing Sierra Club to pay all staff according to standardized pay scales. PWU has trained me in becoming a better white ally and more effective antiracist. PWU represents non-managerial staff at Sierra Club, 350.org and GreenPeace. Maybe your organization is next?!

That’s it. I hope this is helpful. I really appreciate you. I don’t have any plans - just hoping to take a year off and do as little as possible, maybe discover what it is I want to do next.

Sierra Club Reopening: COVID-19 Update

The safety of our volunteers is our top priority, so all outings and outdoor activities have been on hold as we take every precaution relative to COVID-19.

Sierra Club has announced a tiered reopening, with limited outdoor activities resuming in July. You can see more information from Sierra Club regarding the reopening timeline online here. Please keep an eye out for more announcements from the chapter regarding upcoming outings.
Happenings Around AZ

Five groups and one regional conservation committee make up the Grand Canyon Chapter. All events and meetings listed below are open to members interested in learning more about Sierra Club. You can find out more at http://www.sierraclub.org/arizona/events-activities. Schedules are subject to change.

(x) Group ExCom members

Rincon Group (Tucson)
http://sierraclub.org/arizona/rincon

Contact Meg Weesner for information about Rincon Group events

Palo Verde Group (Phoenix)
http://sierraclub.org/arizona/palo-verde

Contact Rebecca Hinton for information about Palo Verde Group events

Saguaro Group (North Maricopa County)
http://sierraclub.org/arizona/saguaro

Contact Sally Howland for information about Saguaro Group events

Flagstaff-Northern AZ Group
http://sierraclub.org/arizona/plateau

Contact Joe Shannon for information about Flagstaff Group events

Yavapai Group (Prescott)
http://sierraclub.org/arizona/yavapai

For information about events in the Prescott area, contact Gary Beverly