

Carapace

NEWSLETTER FOR THE

Upper Gila Watershed Alliance



Spring 2019

Vol. 22 No. 1

The Gila River is Number One!



Aldo Leopold Charter School students enjoy the cool waters of the Gila River while backpacking from the Sapillo-Gila confluence to Grapevine Campground, Sep. 2018. Photo: Mike Fugagli

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Photos: Mike Fugagli

The Next Generation Steps Up

Aiden Young: My experience in Atlanta showed me how little the feuding of party politics matters in relation to the climate crisis. Al Gore’s leadership and drive has inspired me to take action in whatever way I can, including reinforcing in our own community that regardless of your political stance, climate change affects all of us.

Emily Cox: Our trip to Atlanta, Georgia for the Climate Reality Project Training is an experience I’ll always treasure. The conference opened my eyes to issues related to the climate crisis that I had never even thought about before. Many topics were discussed including climate migration, climate inequality, climate disasters, and overall, the optimism of clean energy. I look forward to sharing the knowledge that I have acquired from this conference with my community.

Izabela Chase: My trip to Atlanta, Georgia was an amazing experience. I loved learning from Al Gore about the most recent events that have been happening and hearing about the different connections to diseases and climate change. It really put things into perspective. I would love to thank everyone who donated towards this trip. I’m now working with others in my town to help create a community that has a stronger fight for climate change solutions.

Thank you to everyone who donated to send these students to the Climate Reality workshop!



UGWA is a proud participant in Give Grandly, our community’s annual giving event!

On Saturday, May 11, in conjunction with the opening day of the Farmers Market, we will

be joining 53 other non-profit organizations for 24 hours of giving to make our region stronger and to create a thriving community for all.

Please consider making an additional donation to UGWA at this time, to help us continue the work that is important to you: protecting the long-term health of the Upper Gila watershed and its communities of life.

Join us on May 11 from 8:30am-2:30pm for a wide variety of food, music and fun at 8th and Bullard Streets in downtown Silver City.

Tipping Points

by Mike Fugagli

IF THERE IS A SINGLE CONCEPT that rises above all others in regard to our ongoing climate crisis, it is the idea of tipping points, those dangerous thresholds, which, if crossed, suddenly and dramatically move ecological systems irreversibly into new states of being. Just recently, for example, new scientific research suggests that Australia's Great Barrier Reef has reached a tipping point. Coral bleaching events are now happening so frequently in the reef system that scientists believe there is almost no chance for reef recovery because the successful reproduction of coral species is now forestalled. It is a profound lesson coming from an irreplaceable ecological system that, until recently, was considered by many as "too big to fail."

The good news is that tipping points are not restricted to physical systems like coral reefs. Social systems have tipping points, too. Actions that have seemed politically impossible for years or decades can, all of a sudden, become not only possible, but probable. Seemingly overnight, public opinion can change, the future can be rewritten, and hope can be reborn.

Two years ago, I was in a pretty dark place – literally. I was sitting in a cave along the Gila River deep in the wilderness, overcome by the findings of new regional climate assessments that predicted, with a high degree of certainty, the massive mortality of needle-leaf evergreen ecosystems – our piñon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and spruce-fir forests and woodlands – by the end of the current century. On top of that, I was looking out of the mouth of my cave onto a wilderness river plagued by feral cattle. The cattle impacts on the river corridor were so extensive that they were precluding riparian recovery. It was tragic, not only because of what was currently missing, but because I also knew that as climate change advances, the wilderness reach of the Gila River, if protected, could provide our native species and ecosystems a critical refuge in the chaotic decades just ahead.

Huddled there in my cave, I didn't know what to do. What I did know is that no one was talking about

these things. Nobody I talked to recognized that our coniferous forests were so close to their own tipping points, and no one seemed to know or care about the feral cattle population and the damage they were causing to the rich diversity of both the present and the future.

When the Gila National Forest's preliminary draft forest plan revision was eventually released, it was largely silent about the impacts of our changing climate. As far as I could tell, no reader of the preliminary draft would walk away understanding that our pine forests were slated for destruction, or understanding that climate change was, by orders of magnitude, now the principal driver of ecological change in the upper Gila watershed. And despite the very large number of species that are totally dependent on the Gila's pine forest ecosystems, no effort was made, as far as I could tell, to connect the dots between the existential threat to our pine forests and the draft Species of Conservation Concern list, which triggers the content of the Gila National Forest's future monitoring plans. I was, it seemed, a voice crying in the wilderness, shivering in my cave, cold and alone.

Then I had an idea. What if I wasn't really alone? What if I worked with UGWA to force a climate conversation in our community by creating a program specifically designed to empower our region's youth – those with the most to lose – with the knowledge, tools, and passion they would need to influence regional decision makers and land managers? What if our region's youth rose up, like the seas, and shattered the cone of silence?

Now, two years later, UGWA's Thinking ON a Mountain project has legs, and we're hitting our stride! With a variety of partners, including Aldo Leopold Charter School, where I now work as the school's eco-monitoring supervisor, UGWA's Thinking ON a Mountain program is successfully fostering the creation of young climate leaders in our community. It's a two-step process. First we focus on ecological

Continued next page

Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

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Mission Statement

The Upper Gila Watershed Alliance is a non-profit watershed protection and conservation organization working to promote the long-term health of the Upper Gila Watershed and its communities of life. Through advocacy, education, research and restoration projects, we are striving to build communities of stewards in more locally based economies.

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Tippling Points (continued from page 3)

literacy. By taking advantage of Aldo's unique emphasis on experiential educational and their commitment to help students "Think Outside the Desk," UGWA is able to support a broad array of field ecology studies in important climatic refugial areas. Then, as program participants gain a deeper understanding of the climate crisis and its relationship to the landscapes they now know and care about, their new understanding manifests itself as passionate action towards the restoration, resilience, and recovery of the Gila's threatened ecology.

Recently, over spring break, thanks to the overwhelming support of this community, I was privileged to escort Silver City's first group of eco-monitors from Aldo Leopold Charter School to Atlanta for a three day Climate Reality Leadership training with former Vice President Al Gore. Now, as certified Climate Reality leaders, these dedicated students are bringing a strong climate message back to New Mexico. They are highly motivated, and they have big plans. Together, we are going to protest, and speak, and write, and affect local change. And we're going to grow our ranks and demand meaningful climate action from our city and county governments. We are going to insist that our new forest plan treats the climate crisis like the crisis it is. And we are going to get those feral cattle off our wilderness river, because the time for that kind of absurdity is over.

Must we change? Yes. Can we change? Yes. Will we change? Yes, I can see that now, even though lately I've been looking through tear-filled eyes. But they're not the same eyes I was looking through two years ago. My eyes are younger now, they're more prone to laughter, and the tears, well, they're tears of joy; the kind of tears that well up when young people who trust you jump up and down like maniacs along the edge of Gough Park, holding handmade signs and banners and yelling over and over and over again, "I believe that we will win...I believe that we will win...I believe that we will win!"

M.H. “Dutch” Salmon

March 30, 1945–March 10, 2019

One is left with the memories certainly, a few laments perhaps, and with luck some dear goodbyes.

Lovers, rivers, pass on. One can only touch it while it's there. But handle it gently.

~ Dutch Salmon, *Gila Descending*

THE LOCAL CONSERVATION COMMUNITY lost a true river champion and friend when M.H. “Dutch” Salmon passed away on March 10, 2019. Many of you know Dutch from reading his 1986 Southwest classic, *Gila Descending*, where he tells the tale of his 200 mile canoe journey down the Gila River, from its headwaters downstream to Safford, Arizona, with a hound dog and a cat for company.

Dutch’s name is synonymous with the Gila Conservation Coalition, the organization he co-founded and chaired for more than 35 years to protect the free flow of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and the wilderness characteristics of the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas.

Dutch and his fellow advocates were successful in defeating the Hooker and Conner dams and Mangas diversion in the 1980s and 1990s, closed the San Francisco River to motorized vehicle use, and also kept the East Fork of the Gila River closed to motorized vehicles. Since 2001, he was a leader in the fight against the current diversion threat under the Arizona Water Settlements Act.

Dutch’s steadfast commitment to the protection of the Gila River and his unending love for our wild



Photo courtesy of Cherie Salmon

rivers and wild places have been an inspiration to all of us. He will be remembered always for his tireless work to protect and conserve New Mexico’s wildlife, rivers and lands.

Dutch Salmon’s storied career spanned more than 35 years in the Southwest. His professional and personal pursuits were many: author, publisher, hunter, fisherman, homesteader, conservationist.

Hope you’re fishing that big river in the sky, Dutch. May you catch a big catfish and a Gila trout, all from the same fishing hole.



**Save the date for Gila Conservation Coalition’s 9th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival
Friday, June 28th at 6:30 pm at Light Hall on the WNMU campus.**

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival inspires environmental activism and a love for nature, through film. This year, the Wild & Scenic Film Festival shares an urgent call to action, encouraging festival-goers to learn more about what they can do to save our threatened planet.

Juliana v U.S. Continues...

by Carol Ann Fugagli

As part of UGWA's Thinking ON a Mountain Project, which aims to teach students about the threats of climate change and empower them with tangible tools to become responsible planetary stewards, we continue to follow this landmark lawsuit.

IN 2015, 21 YOUNG PEOPLE, with their attorneys from Our Children's Trust and Earth Guardians, filed a lawsuit against the United States. The suit claims that the government has known for more than fifty years that burning fossil fuels would cause climate change to progress at an unnaturally rapid rate, resulting in negative, irreversible, and catastrophic global impact.

The plaintiffs claim that these actions infringe on their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, as well as endangering their very existence. During the past four years, the lawsuit has withstood at least a dozen attempts at dismissal by the government.

The Trump administration continues to use unusual procedures to try to stop this case from going to trial. They claim the plaintiffs have "meritless claims" and that the discovery phase of a trial would be "burdensome." Their latest attempt resulted in the Supreme Court issuing an administrative stay while they decide whether to put a longer temporary stay in place. On October 29, 2018, the date the case was scheduled to go to trial, thousands rallied at courthouses around the country to support the plaintiffs' right to be heard at trial.

Since then, the defendants and plaintiffs have engaged in a series of attempts to either halt the case or move it forward. Various legal strategies were used, such as a writ of mandamus and interlocutory appeal; the specifics of these are beyond the scope of this article. A hearing has been scheduled for June 4, 2019.

In this lull before the trial, the climate justice movement is in full swing. Climate justice is a term used to frame global warming as an ethical, political, and social justice issue, rather than being solely an environmental concern.

An example of this momentum is the number of climate strikes that began in August 2018, after 15



From left, Aldo Leopold Charter School students Emily Cox, Aiden Young, and Izabela Chase pose with Levi Draheim (second from left), the youngest plaintiff in the lawsuit *Juliana v US* at the Climate Reality Training in Atlanta in March." Photo credit: Mike Fugagli

year old Greta Thunberg sat in front of the Swedish parliament every school day for three weeks, to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis. She posted her actions on Instagram and Twitter, and it soon went viral. The movement "Fridays For Future" was the result, and on March 15, 2019, there were more than 1.6 million climate strikes on all seven continents, in more than 125 countries.

UGWA's Thinking ON a Mountain Project continues this energy with our own, local climate strikes, presentations, videos, and other information on the effects of global warming, as well as the development of motivational strategies by local students. UGWA will keep you informed of events happening locally when the case sees its day in court.



Date: 3-14-2019
 Time: Approx. 12:15 pm
 Place: Box Canyon Rd., Gila, New Mexico
 C-130 aircraft dropping flares
 UTM: 32.999427N 108.551426W

Informing the Air Force

by Donna Stevens

THE SPECTER OF F-16 training flights over the Gila National Forest, Gila Wilderness, and surrounding areas has not faded away. The latest intel is that the Air Force intends to release in late spring or early summer the draft Environmental Impact Statement, the document that analyzes the potential impact of F-16 military trainings. Because the Air Force contractors doing the analysis don't reside here, they may be unaware of the myriad reasons why the Gila National Forest is an inappropriate place for military flights.

The Air Force's map shows southwest New Mexico as a featureless expanse, but those of us who live here know all too well what we stand to lose if F-16s start flying regularly over the Gila. With an estimated 10,000 military training flights per year – 1,000 at night, 1,000 producing sonic booms, and some flights as low as 500 feet above ground level – our quality of life will be drastically diminished.

The local coalition of nonprofits (including UGWA) and individuals opposing the military trainings has researched various aspects of the threat and written mini-reports addressing these issues, including: the unknown effects of chaff, bundles of aluminum-coated fiberglass that will be dropped by some of the planes; the health impacts of sudden, excessive noise; the wildfire risk posed by dropping flares; the lack of response to citizens' concerns; the cumulative impacts of expanded military training; and more. These reports were recently submitted to the Air Force for them to consider as part of their environmental impact studies. You can read the reports at peacefulgilaskies.org.

In addition to apprising the Air Force on topics of concern, the coalition has provided information on potential impacts of the F-16 trainings to local public officials. As a result, the Grant County Commission and the towns of Hurley, Santa Clara, and Bayard

Continued next page

Informing the Airforce (continued from page 7)

have passed resolutions in opposition to the military trainings. The Town of Silver City sent a letter to the Air Force expressing its opposition to the F-16 trainings, citing the potentially negative economic impact on Silver City.

Recently, the Cliff-Gila Valley, Bayard, and Mimbres have experienced low overflights by military C-130s. At least one of these training flights in the Cliff-Gila Valley dropped flares, causing residents considerable consternation. Low-level F-16 activity has increased over Gila Hot Springs in the last several months. The coalition is working to uncover which military bases are responsible for this increase in activity, which has proved more challenging than one might think.

We're working to ensure that the Air Force concludes that the Gila National Forest, Gila Wilderness, and surrounding rural communities are inappropriate places for military training maneuvers, and that existing military airspace be used instead.

Nuestro Gila Contractor Job Opening
The Upper Gila Watershed Alliance and the Wilderness Society are looking for a contractor to do outreach in the Hispanic community. For the job description and other information, please email director@ugwa.org

Save the Date:
15th Annual Gila River Festival
September 19-22, 2019
History of the Future
Please see article on this page for more info

15th Annual Gila River Festival, HISTORY OF THE FUTURE

Our Moral Obligation to Protect the Gila River and Act on Climate Change September 19-22, 2019

by Donna Stevens

EVEN IF YOU USUALLY SKIP the Gila River Festival—perhaps *especially* if you skip the festival—I urge you to reconsider. This year, our keynote speaker will be Tim DeChristopher. You may not recognize his name, but no doubt you'll remember his brave actions that brought him to our attention. In 2008, DeChristopher disrupted an illegitimate Bureau of Land Management oil and gas auction for parcels of land around Arches and Canyonlands National Parks in Utah. As Bidder 70, DeChristopher bid on fourteen oil and gas leases, worth \$1.8 million, for which he had no intention of paying.

For his act of civil disobedience, DeChristopher was sentenced to two years in federal prison. Released after 21 months, he used his experience as a platform to talk about the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for bold, immediate action. In 2012, a film titled *Bidder 70* told the story of DeChristopher's inspiring activist journey. See timdechristopher.org for more info.

Other festival events include presentations by Naelyn Pike, a San Carlos Apache climate activist; and by Akilah Sanders-Reed, who in 2011 was the youth plaintiff in a New Mexico lawsuit arguing that the atmosphere is part of the public trust, and that the state had failed in its duty to protect that public trust by not acting on climate change. The festival will also feature a climate chaos presentation by Aldo Leopold Charter School students who attended a Climate Reality workshop in Atlanta in March, where they were inspired by Al Gore's climate activism. (See article on p. 2)

As in years past, the Gila River Festival will feature expert-led Gila River field trips; fun family events; Apache dancers; a workshop on Active Hope in coping with climate change grief; and much more.

Please save the dates of September 19-22 for the Gila River Festival. When the schedule is finalized, you can see it on gilariverfestival.org.

Governor Lujan Grisham Makes Good On Her Word

by Donna Stevens

2019 New Mexico Legislative Session

THE NEW MEXICO legislative session can be frustrating, with good bills languishing in committees, taking years to pass, or never passing at all. In the last few legislative sessions, Representative Rudy Martinez and then-Senator Howie Morales introduced legislation to use the federal funding allocated by the Arizona Water Settlements Act for non-diversion projects that meet a water supply need, rather than using every cent for a harmful diversion. In each legislative session, including the 2019 session, this excellent bill has died in a committee.

Of course, the good news is that bad bills die as well. In this year's legislative session, a bill that would have made the NM CAP (Central Arizona Project) Entity a political subdivision of the state was tabled in a committee. It would have given them the authority to issue bonds, and, alarmingly, condemn private property to build the diversion and water conveyance infrastructure.

UGWA staff, along with our partners in the Gila Conservation Coalition, lobbied committee members and spoke at committee hearings in an attempt to influence the political process in a way that protects the Gila River from a harmful diversion. We were successful in stopping the bad bill, but did not prevail in passing the good Gila bill.

Sometimes, though, good news comes after the session is over.

Governor Lujan Grisham Makes Good On Her Word

A month before the November 2018 elections, gubernatorial candidate Michelle Lujan Grisham released a water plan that stated, among other water priorities:

“End work on the Gila River Diversion Project. With about a year left to secure approval for the diversion project, there is little to show for the millions spent on staff, lawyers and studies. New

Mexico can use the federal funds from the 2004 Arizona Water Settlements Act for water efficiency, conservation and restoration projects or receive additional money to build a diversion of the Gila River. In 2014, the ISC [Interstate Stream Commission] decided, by one vote, to pursue the diversion and there is still not a clear financially viable plan that will benefit local communities. We need to use the settlement money more efficiently on other projects that could help more of southwestern New Mexico. As governor, I will take whatever steps are available to withdraw the proposal for the diversion project and ask the ISC to explore alternatives to diversion with local governments and stakeholders and develop appropriate plans. I also will work with our Congressional delegation to ensure that the Gila River is protected by federal law.”

After New Mexico's legislative session ended on March 16, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham had until April 5 to sign or veto bills that passed the House and Senate. She also has the discretion to line item veto portions of bills, and this is what she did with Senate Bill 280 on Capital Expenditures.

The governor vetoed \$1.698M in capital outlay from the NM Unit Fund to the Interstate Stream Commission for fiscal year 2020, which begins on July 1, 2019. This funding was to “Design a new water supply project in Southwest NM pursuant to the 2004 Arizona Water Settlements Act. Complete environmental and archeological studies under NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] to evaluate potential impacts from the project.”

While this veto doesn't kill the diversion project outright, cutting off crucial funding for more expensive studies is certainly a step in the right direction. We need to continue to push Governor Lujan Grisham to end work on the diversion. Please see article on p. 10 for ways you can help.

We're Number One!

by Donna Stevens

OH, WAIT – that’s not a good thing. This is a list you don’t want to be on.

The Gila River is #1 on the list of America’s Most Endangered Rivers of 2019. American Rivers – a national nonprofit whose mission is to protect rivers – annually designates ten waterways as America’s Most Endangered Rivers. While the Gila has been on this list in the past, most recently in 2014, it’s never before been #1.

The factors leading to this listing are the threat of a diversion and the expected impacts of climate change. Scientists estimate that, due to climate change, the Gila will cease to be a snowpack-fed river by mid-century. The diversion project, proposed to benefit local irrigators, would exacerbate the impacts of climate change and alter the river’s natural flows even further. Climate change will also impose limitations on the amount and availability of water that can be developed by the proposed diversion, calling into question the project’s long-term viability.

Despite the dire listing, it’s too soon for a requiem for the Gila River. On April 5, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham issued a line item veto in the state’s budget that removes \$1.698 million from the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC). See article on p. 9 for more information.

There are a few ways to prevent a diversion. One is for the governor to direct the ISC, which answers to her, to stop work on planning the diversion and instead use the funding allocated by the Arizona Water Settlements Act for non-diversion projects such as municipal and agricultural conservation, the Grant County Regional Water Supply Project, and other much-needed water projects in southwest New Mexico.

A second way for the diversion to die is for the Secretary of the Interior to determine that the project should not proceed. Given that the new Secretary is David Bernhardt, who is notoriously anti-conservation, we can’t count on a favorable decision. The decision is supposed to be made by the end of 2019, although, as this newsletter goes to press, the NM CAP Entity has

called a special meeting to decide whether they should ask for a deadline extension. If you haven’t done so already, please sign the action alert to nudge Governor Lujan Grisham to take the final step to end the diversion. See ugwa.org.

Roll on, Gila River!



UGWA Membership

Your membership and additional financial support sustain UGWA and are critical to the organization’s ongoing health. Share in the protection and conservation of our watershed and become an UGWA member today.

Name(s)

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone

E-Mail

Membership Categories—Annual Dues:

Chiricahua Leopard Frog	\$ 20
Gila Trout	30
Mexican Gray Wolf	50
Beaver	100
River Otter	250
Other Amount	_____

***Make your check payable to
UGWA
and send to
PO Box 383, Gila NM 88038***

I don’t wish to join at this time, but please notify me of upcoming events:

Name

E-Mail

Wild and Scenic Rivers.

**Let's Keep Them That Way.
Let's Make It Official.**

by Donna Stevens

THE GILA. THE SAN FRANCISCO. These rivers are already wild and scenic. Why bother with Wild and Scenic designation? Because we don't know what the future holds. Wild and Scenic designation will preserve the rivers in their current condition, so that future generations can enjoy them the way we do now.

UGWA is cooperating with other nonprofits to make Wild and Scenic designation a reality for the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and major tributaries in the Gila National Forest. *Only Congress has the authority to designate rivers as W&S.* Because we know that it can sometimes take years for legislation to pass, we'll have to be persistent.

The November 2018 issue of *Carapace* has a lengthy article on W&S, because 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. (See ugwa.org for this article and others). That information won't be duplicated here, except for a few points that bear repetition.

There are two requirements for W&S eligibility. The river must be free-flowing and must possess one or more "outstandingly remarkable values," such as "scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values," according to the 1968 legislation.

W&S designation neither limits the public from accessing public lands within designated river corridors, nor opens private land to the public. There is no effect on fishing and hunting, because these uses are regulated by the state. Livestock grazing continues as it did before designation, with the stipulation that the nature and intensity of the use remain the same as before designation. Private lands can still be developed, and water rights are not affected.

Conservation opponents have sometimes characterized W&S as a "land grab," but nothing could be further from the truth. W&S designation protects the

uses of rivers and adjacent lands *just as they are now*, as a safeguard against future degradation.

Legislators like to pass laws that enjoy broad-based support. That's where you come in. Please take a few minutes to write to Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, to let them know that you are in favor of W&S designation for the Gila, the San Francisco, and major tributaries. You'll be on the right side of history.

Senator Tom Udall
201 N. Church St., Suite 201B
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Senator Martin Heinrich
505 South Main St., Suite 148
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

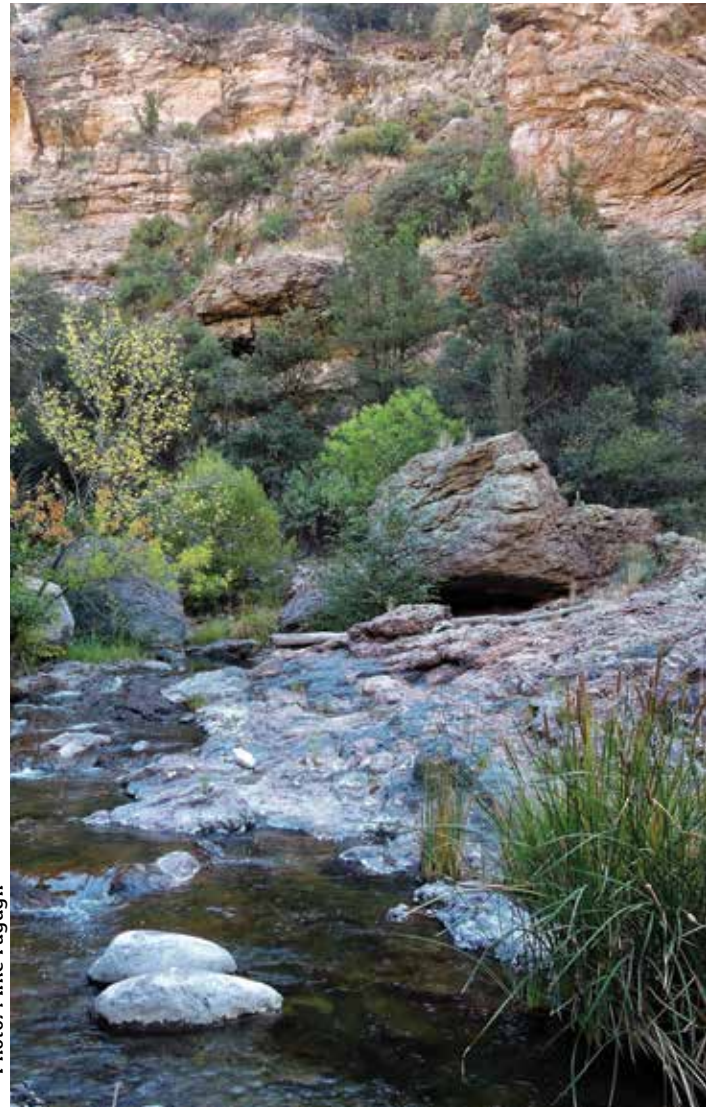


Photo: Mike Fugagli

Turkey Creek is proposed for W&S designation.

Thank You!

New Members

[October 28, 2018– April 5, 2019]

Robert Robbins • Kathleen Froese & John Warner • Deborah & Armando Guerra
Janet Wallet-Ortiz • Tom Evans • Angie Wulfow

Returning Members

[October 28, 2018– April 5, 2019]

Corinne & Howard Smith • Nena & Steve MacDonald • Kathleen Wigley & Robert Pittman
Pam & Don Lichty • Anne Beckett • John Egbert • Edward Michael • Nelson Murphy • Ron Parry
Angela & Spike Flanders • Ceil Murray & David Rose • Vicki Allen & Neal Apple • Barrett Brewer
Susan & Ken Slade • Meyoni Geouge • Nathaniel Priest • Lynda Aiman-Smith • Carolyn Meinel & Michael
Bertin • Jeff Goin • Laurie Van Vliet • Jackie & Jim Blurton • Dennis Weller • Anonymous

Thank You to Our Funders

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Maki Foundation • Native Plant Society of New Mexico • Resources Legacy Fund • T & E, Inc.
Town & Country Garden Club • The Wilderness Society

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