

Carapace

NEWSLETTER FOR THE

Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

FALL/WINTER 2021



Vol. 24 No. 2



UGWA
turns
25!

At UGWA's Eco-camp, students learn firsthand the joys of the river. This was a new experience for some.
Students, left to right: Sonnie Sherwood, Sam Chavez, Adam Senter, Minnie Metcalfe, Luke Lawhon.

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Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

Office

PO Box 383 • Gila, NM 88038

575-590-5698 • admin@ugwa.org

www.ugwa.org



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.

UGWA Staff

Donna Stevens

Executive Director

Carol Ann Fugagli

Administrative Assistant &

Education and Outreach Director

Graphic Design

Autumn Stinar

Social Media

Tuan Tran

Board of Directors

Sarah Johnson

Gila, NM

Tom Krohley (Treasurer)

Silver City, NM

Ron Parry

Silver City, NM & Houston, TX

Sharman Apt Russell (Chair)

Gila, NM

Dennis Weller

Silver City, NM

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- Gila River Update -

The ecologically devastating, technically infeasible, and prohibitively expensive Gila River diversion is dead. So now what? Can we just rest easy or move on to another adventure? Well, not just yet.

After wasting more than \$15 million to study the diversion, there is still roughly \$90 million of Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA) funding remaining. It can only be used for water projects in the four counties of southwest New Mexico, Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna. That's a considerable chunk of change, and conservationists want to make sure that it's spent wisely for projects that protect the Gila River, meet our water demands, conserve water, and benefit the greatest number of residents equitably.

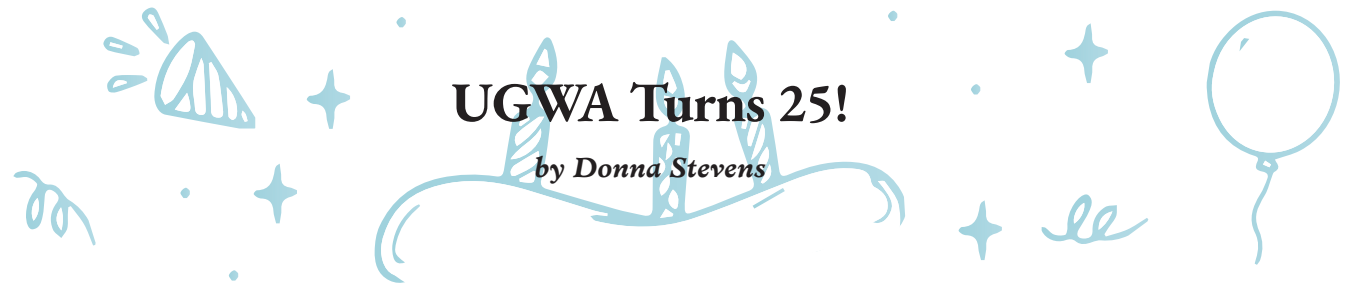
Communities have been waiting almost twenty years to access the AWSA funding for some of the critical water projects they've identified, such as new wells, water line improvements, effluent reuse, and efficient irrigation systems. One especially worthy project is the Grant County Regional Water Supply Project, an intercommunity water supply pipeline between Silver City, Santa Clara, Bayard, Hurley, and a well at Grant County Airport. This project has already been started but still needs about \$15 million to see it through to completion.

In March 2021, the New Mexico legislature passed House Bill 200, which ousted the NM CAP Entity, the proponents of the Gila River diversion. The bill tasked the Water Trust Board, an advisory board under the New Mexico Finance Authority, with analyzing and recommending proposed water projects to the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC), which makes the ultimate decision.

Reviewing water projects is wonky stuff that most people are only too happy to ignore, so it's important that UGWA and our partners in the Gila Conservation Coalition remain vigilant. We all recognize that using our limited water judiciously will only become more important as the climate becomes hotter and drier.

Also on our radar is the state's upcoming 50-year water plan, which Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has tasked the ISC with developing. UGWA and Gila Conservation Coalition are engaging in this process, reviewing the climate assessment that informs the process and submitting comments at each input juncture. Again, wonk territory. We travel there so you don't have to! However, we may need you to visit during public comment periods. We'll provide good directions.

Thank you to our anonymous Major Donor for funding to stay engaged with Gila River and water issues.



In 1996, Bill Clinton and Al Gore were reelected to the highest offices in the land. Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and Dennis Rodman led the Chicago Bulls to an NBA championship. Tupac Shakur was gunned down. Fox News was launched. Timothy Leary permanently dropped out. Everyone danced the Macarena.

And UGWA became an official nonprofit.

This newsletter features an article, “A Long Engagement,” about working on an issue for years. In its quarter-century lifespan, UGWA has been involved in many lengthy campaigns. During these times, people’s priorities naturally change and they move on to other interests. Small, local organizations persist over time only if there’s someone to pass the baton to, and UGWA is no exception. I won’t attempt to name everyone who’s run with UGWA’s baton since 1996, out of fear that I’ll inadvertently leave someone out. But I want to acknowledge and thank all of them because UGWA wouldn’t have lasted this long without them.

In large, well-funded conservation organizations, staffers can divide up the work and specialize in their respective areas of expertise. Small nonprofits like UGWA don’t have this luxury. Just two part-time UGWA employees wear several hats to accomplish all the tasks required of an organization: brainstorm programs and projects, write grants, do financial accounting and taxes, educate ourselves on issues, attend endless meetings, and much more. The silver lining is that our work is never repetitious or boring!

A few words about my journey with UGWA. In late 2009, when I was offered the position of Executive Director, I was very reluctant to step into the role. The timing was terrible, as the country was in the throes of a financial crisis and grant opportunities were scarce. I clearly remember asking a board member what would happen if I failed to obtain grant funding during the recession. When he graciously replied that the fault would not be mine as long as I was doing my job, I accepted the baton and started my long journey. Fortunately, UGWA was able to weather the lean times, and I have excellent traveling companions, UGWA’s mighty Administrative Assistant and Education and Outreach Director Carol Ann Fugagli, and the stellar UGWA board, currently consisting of Tom Krohley, Sarah

Johnson, Ron Parry, Sharman Apt Russell, and Dennis Weller, all of whom have served for many years.

Just as the UGWA board and staff have changed in the last 25 years, so too has UGWA’s focus as we confront new challenges and opportunities. For the last several years, our work has encompassed three broad categories: advocacy, restoration, and education.

Advocacy involves long-term campaigns such as protecting the Gila River from a harmful diversion, working for Wild and Scenic River designation, defeating an inappropriate proposal to conduct military trainings over the Gila, and engaging with the Gila National Forest on its forest plan revision.

Restoration has become a bigger focus for UGWA, and we’re fortunate that grant funders recognize the value of these endeavors. Over the last several years, we’ve tackled restoration projects such as cutting invasive tamarisks along the Gila River, fencing streams, canyons, and springs from cattle and vehicles and placing boulders to prevent driving in the Gila River.

Climate change, barely a blip on most people’s radars in 1996, has become a much bigger focus of UGWA’s work in the last several years. Carol Ann Fugagli is passionate about educating youth about the climate emergency and empowering them to be climate change activists.

Conservation work can be daunting and disheartening. It requires a lot of patience and persistence, and, in certain circumstances, a thick skin. Always, a big heart is required. Fire in the belly. A sense of humor and of the absurd. As the late botanist Jack L. Carter, my beloved mentor used to say, “It’s gotta be visceral.”

I can’t pretend to know where – or if – UGWA will be in another 25 years. I believe the need for small, local watershed protection groups will still exist. And I hope there will always be young people to accept the baton and run with it.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve.

Deep appreciation to funders who believe in UGWA’s mission and ability enough to award us general operating funding that can be used where needed: Altman Foundation, Anonymous Major Donor, Conservation Lands Foundation, and the Wilderness Society.

The Gila: America's First Wilderness River

by Donna Stevens

The Gila River is America's First Wilderness River, with its headwaters deep in the Gila Wilderness – the nation's first wilderness. At last, it's one step closer to being designated a Wild and Scenic River. Both of New Mexico's federal Senators, Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, are co-sponsors of the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act. As this newsletter goes to press, the senators have just introduced the bill, named for writer and conservationist Dutch Salmon, a long-time protector of the Gila River who passed away in March 2019.

The legislation would protect about 450 river miles of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and many named tributaries, mostly in the Gila National Forest. There are also a few miles of rivers on Bureau of Land Management land and on private property where landowners have requested to be included.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1968, when Stewart Udall – the father of recently retired New Mexico Senator Tom Udall – was Secretary of the Interior under President Lyndon Johnson. Wild and Scenic Rivers can only be designated by Congress. In 1968, conservation was a bipartisan priority. Alas, this is no longer true, and passing conservation legislation can be a protracted process.

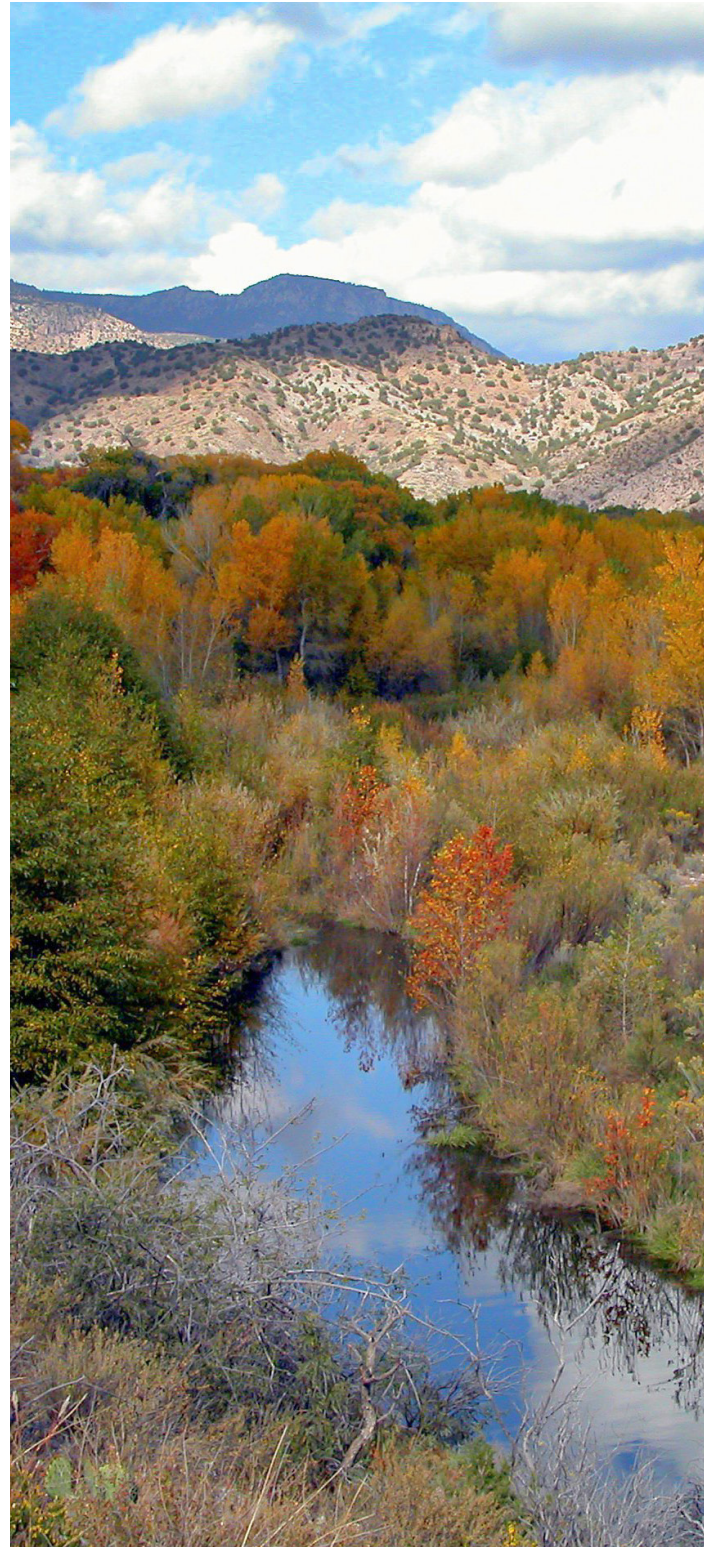
In New Mexico, only about 124 miles, all in the northern part of the state, are designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers: the East Fork of the Jemez, Pecos, and Red Rivers, Rio Chama, and Rio Grande. This represents less than one percent of the state's river miles. As climate change leads to hotter and drier conditions statewide, it is increasingly important that we protect our rivers. Wild and Scenic River designation is a great way to achieve this goal.

To be included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, according to the 1968 Act, a river must “possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values.” If a river meets this standard and is designated, it “shall be preserved in free-flowing condition for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. Gila lovers already recognize that the Gila River is outstandingly remarkable, and while we waiting for Congress to catch up, we'll keep the pressure on. We'll let you know the right time

to let Senators Heinrich and Luján know that they have your support.

Many thanks to the Conservation Lands Foundation for funding UGWA's work on Wild and Scenic River designation for the Gila.



Overlook in Fall. Photo: Carol Ann Fugagli

A Long Engagement Period: Plans and People

by Donna Stevens

Do an internet search for “long engagements,” and you’ll find advice on the ideal time to be engaged before tying the knot. Various factors, including the pandemic, have led to longer engagement periods, with couples now spending more time getting to know their beloved.

Love between people isn’t the only reason for long engagements. Lovers of places also endure long engagements. An example of this is the Gila National Forest’s management plan revision process, which UGWA has been involved in since 2016, when a large group of conservationists met in Silver City to discuss our interests, hopes, capacities, and strategies for a robust forest plan. (Those were the days, my friend, when we could meet in person.) And here we are, five years later, still engaged. Ah, love!

In the May 2021 issue of Carapace, a brief update on the Gila National Forest’s management plan revision said that the final plan would be released in late 2021. That date has been postponed to spring 2022.

The forest plan is significant, and worth waiting for, because it will guide the Forest Service’s policies and projects in the Gila National Forest for the next 10-20 years. This time period represents a critical window in which to lessen the severity of the current and expected future impacts of climate change. How can we make a difference with such an overwhelming global phenomenon? It turns out that the old bumper sticker, “Think globally, act locally,” was right.

Comments on the draft forest plan, submitted in spring 2020 on behalf of UGWA and a large coalition of conservation and sportsmen’s groups, were very lengthy and comprehensive. While the following recommendations from our comments may sound vague and overly broad, they were actually quite specific and detailed, and were more than 300 pages long. Very briefly, our recommendations included:

- Establishing strong protections for riparian areas, streams (perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral), and watersheds
- Excluding or limiting livestock in riparian areas
- Maintaining or restoring native plant diversity and old-growth forests
- Protecting habitats of threatened, endangered, endemic, and rare plants

- Maintaining or restoring wildlife habitat, especially for threatened and endangered species and Species of Conservation Concern
- Designating wildlife corridors to facilitate wildlife movement and migration, especially as pertains to climate change
- Protecting areas with great potential as climate refugia, e.g., the Gila River in the Gila Wilderness Area, especially from the devastating impacts of feral cattle
- Acknowledging the current climate emergency, and adapting forest management to minimize its consequences
- Prioritizing ecological integrity over historic forest uses such as livestock grazing
- Resolving the conflict between livestock grazing and maintaining ground-level fuels (grasses) required for low-intensity wildfires
- Identifying an ecologically and financially responsible road system and prioritizing roads for decommissioning
- Recommending approximately 430,000 acres of additional wilderness areas, consistent with a highly researched citizens’ proposal submitted to the Forest Service

The Forest Service planning team is legally required to answer all public comments, and either change the final plan in response to input or justify why they did not. Of the five national forests in New Mexico, the Gila generated the most comments (ah, love!), hence the delay of the final plan. When it is released, UGWA and our conservation partners will review it carefully to determine whether the bulk of our recommendations were incorporated. If not, the coalition will submit an administrative objection, requiring a response from the Forest Service.

Lengthy engagements require not just persistence and patience, but also love. I’ll give the last word to environmental philosopher, writer, and 2021 Gila River Festival keynote speaker, Kathleen Dean Moore, who writes: “Love isn’t just a sort of bliss; it’s a kind of work. To love a person or a place is to pledge your life to its thriving, to defend it fiercely, faithfully, for all time.”

Thanks to the Wilderness Society for funding to engage with the Gila National Forest’s plan revision process, for years.

Thinking ON a Mountain

by Carol Ann Fugagli

Climate change defines the current generation, as well as everyone alive today. UGWA's Thinking ON a Mountain project is a climate justice and youth empowerment program aimed at giving the youth of our region the knowledge, skills, and tools they'll need to be effective advocates for social change. This youth-led moral call to action is a platform to reimagine our world and build resilient and equitable communities.

Our Thinking ON a Mountain project reaches youth in a variety of ways, each building on the previous one. See the short articles about Eco-camp, Climate Club, and

Climathon, all of which are part of the Thinking ON a Mountain initiative.

The name of this initiative is a reference to conservationist Aldo Leopold's noted essay "Thinking Like a Mountain." In pondering how to help youth become ecoliterate, UGWA hit upon the idea of doing outdoor education in the Gila National Forest, on mountains, along rivers. Thinking ON a Mountain came into being, and has been growing and evolving ever since.

What's a Climathon?

How can a small local watershed nonprofit help to solve a global problem as huge as climate change? The Upper Gila Watershed Alliance jumped into the fray by hosting a Climathon, or hack-a-thon, at Western New Mexico University July 30 and 31.

For two days, 48 participants attended workshops and demonstrations in preparation for brainstorming ideas for diverting food waste from landfills and building soil for ecological restoration. The group then broke up into six teams, each tasked with coming up with an idea to present to a panel of judges. Two teams tied to win cash prizes.

Forty percent of the organic material going into our landfill can be composted. Neighborhood composting centers would save Grant County money by delaying the necessity to create a new landfill, and help to mitigate climate change by keeping methane, a toxic greenhouse gas, out of the atmosphere.

UGWA's education director, Carol Ann Fugagli, said the climathon was a huge success. "We now have a solid working group who are implementing ideas generated by the climathon and we also have folks working to establish a local civilian climate corps. The Town of Silver City has a wide array of people from diverse groups who want to see these projects happen. UGWA is pleased we could offer the climathon that ignited the spark to see these projects come to fruition."

This workshop was organized in collaboration with

2811, an international organization dedicated to educating people about ways to take action on climate change.

Thank you to the Conservation Lands Foundation and Lineberry Foundation for funding this event.



Participants of the Silver City Climathon July, 2021.

Photo: Hawk Fugagli



Minnie Metcalfe holds a baby goat while Alaina Sedillo and Deidranee Abeyta watch during a visit to an organic farm. Students learned about regenerative agriculture and life choices.

Photo: Carol Ann Fugagli



Andrew Dahl-Bredine demonstrates the traditional way to create a coal by using friction while campers Joshua Riggs, Danielle Wacondo, Minnie Metcalfe, and Luke Lawhon observe.

Photo: Carol Ann Fugagli

Eco-camp

How do we prepare young people for life on a planet that is significantly different than in the past? This is the challenge that UGWA attempted to meet by hosting an eco-camp to reconnect young people with the natural world through a variety of fun, place-based activities, including primitive skills training and an introduction to regional Indigenous cultures.

From June 21 to 25, UGWA and The Nature Conservancy collaborated to teach an eco-camp along the Gila River. Seventeen high school students from Aldo Leopold Charter School, Silver, and Cliff High Schools participated in this overwhelmingly successful eco-camp.

Students had several opportunities to hike up the Gila River (a first for many of them), while instructors taught them about riparian vegetation, and resident birds and other animals. Participants learned a wide variety of techniques, such as how to create fire by safely making a coal, and using local plants, such as yucca, to create baskets. We explored the art of animal tracking by opening our senses while quietly walking up the river looking for animal sign. Instructors explained river health in terms of the chemical composition of water and how it affects the abundance of aquatic macroinvertebrates. Students used kick nets, hand nets, and microscopes to look closely at these unusual creatures. We visited an active archaeological dig site, learned about the Indigenous peoples who came before us,

their lifestyles, and the regional climate during that time period.

For students wishing to engage in activism beyond camp, we identified several meaningful actions they can take.

Once it is safe to do so, we will offer this camp as an on-site camping experience.

Thank you to the Lineberry Foundation and The Nature Conservancy for funding this event, and to Aldo Leopold Charter School for providing transportation.

Climate Club

A just, equitable, and livable future is only possible if we advocate for all people, spanning the spectrum of class and race. Our youth have the moral authority to demand an environment where they will have clean air, fresh water, and relevant jobs to transition into the future.

UGWA is beginning a climate club for middle and high school students in the Silver and Cobre School Districts. This youth-led club will discuss the science of our changing climate and how it will affect our region, and learn to take actions to foster ecological and societal resilience.

We meet the first and third Saturdays of the month at The Commons: Center for Food Security and Sustainability.

Thank you to the Lineberry Foundation for funding this program.



Tread work and building cairns on Gilita Creek. Photos: Melissa Green

Tamarisks and Trails

by Donna Stevens

Tamarisks For six years, UGWA has been working to eradicate invasive tamarisks (salt cedar) along the Gila River, mostly in the Gila Wilderness, but also downstream. We were fortunate to receive three grants to accomplish this work in 2021.

Tamarisks can outcompete native riparian trees and shrubs, create dense stands lacking diversity, and are poor substitutes for native willows and cottonwoods on which many species of wildlife depend.

In 2016, UGWA removed tamarisks along the Gila River in the Gila Wilderness. We revisited the same locations in 2017, searching for resprouts and new seedlings. In 2018, the work expanded to the West and Middle Forks of the Gila. Due to a Forest Service issue beyond our control, in 2019 and 2020 we were unable to treat tamarisk in the Gila Wilderness and worked instead downstream of the Gila River Bird Area.

During the 2021 field season, the tamarisk workers returned to the Gila River in the Gila Wilderness Area and down to Mogollon Creek, and again downstream of the Gila River Bird Area. For the first time, we treated tamarisk in the East Fork of the Gila. This demanding work was accomplished by our experienced, competent, and trustworthy tamarisk contractors, Zack Crockett and Mike Fugagli.

Although we're still compiling all the data, such as numbers of stems cut and treated, what we know for sure is that about 45 miles of the mainstem Gila in the Gila

Wilderness were treated, and about 15 miles on the East Fork.

Trails 2021 was the first year that UGWA ventured into trail maintenance in the Gila Wilderness. We partnered with Melissa Green, former trail crew leader for the Gila National Forest, and the Gila Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen. Our goal was to maintain 25 miles of wilderness hiking and equestrian trails, but Melissa and her dedicated crew of hard-working volunteers blew past that goal to maintain 39 miles! They prioritized trails that connected to previously maintained trails or that completed loops, or were in bad disrepair, causing human safety and erosion problems. Maintenance of trails included brushing out trails, tread work, building cairns, and removing logs.

So much conservation work consists of campaigns that yield no tangible results, often for years. There is such satisfaction in doing on-the-ground projects like tamarisk and trail work. Instant gratification!

Many thanks to the National Forest Foundation, National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, and Native Plant Society of New Mexico for funding to eradicate tamarisk, and to the National Forest Foundation and Great American Outdoors Act for trail maintenance funding.

Gila River Festival Presentations Now Available

Although many of us long for the days of attending events in person, the saving grace of virtual presentations is that they can be easily recorded, shared widely, and enjoyed in the comfort of your home. Not all Zoom presentations are created equal, as you know if you've had the misfortune of enduring crushingly dull ones. I can highly recommend the following three excellent and informative talks, presented by compelling and interesting speakers. All were part of the 17th Annual Gila River Festival and can be accessed at gilariverfestival.org/presentations2

1. “The Work of Loving the World”, Kathleen Dean Moore’s keynote presentation

“Loving isn’t just a way of feeling; it’s a way of acting in the world. Love isn’t just a sort of bliss; it’s a kind of work. To love a person or a place is to pledge your life to its thriving, to defend it fiercely, faithfully, for all time. So let’s talk about that too, what our beloved Gila River asks of us in a time of drought and diminishment. Here, in this work, is where we will find stubborn purpose, membership in a community of caring, and gladness, to be part of the strange and necessary work for the endangered Earth.” Join award-winning author and environmental philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore, as she calls us to fall in love again with the places that sustain our bodies and souls.

2. “Nature’s Best Hope” with Doug Tallamy

In this presentation featuring beautiful photos, Tallamy discusses re-imagining Americans’ relationship to our yards and offers a proposal: “What if American landowners converted half of their yards to productive native plant communities? Even moderate success could collectively restore some semblance of ecosystem function to more than 20 million acres of what is now ecological wasteland.” Doug Tallamy teaches Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. His book *Nature’s Best Hope*, a New York Times best seller, was released in 2020.

3. “Exploring the Connections Between Identity and Nature” with Sharman Apt Russell, Michelle Otero, and Subhankar Banerjee

This panel discussion features UGWA board member, writer, and John Burroughs Medal awardee Sharman Apt Russell and Albuquerque Poet Laureate Michelle Otero, a Deming native. The free-ranging discussion, moderated by artist, writer, and conservationist Subhankar Banerjee answers the questions: How is our self-concept formed by our relationship to the natural world? How does our connection to the environment influence our and society’s actions toward the planet?



Photo: Carol Ann Fugagli



From top: Comon Blackhawk in Flight; Adult Thrasher;
Dragonfly. Photos by Carol Ann Fugagli

UGWA Membership Application

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

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

Name _____

E-Mail _____

Thank You!

[May 16 - October 31, 2021]

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Andrea & Jon Walker • Catherine Bradley • Katheryn Haas & Jac Estes

Returning Members & Supporters

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Jeff & Allison Boyd • Howard & Corinne Smith • Lita Furby • Marguerite Bellringer and Bill Schumm
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Funder Thank You!

Altman Foundation • Anonymous Major Donor • Conservation Lands Foundation
Lineberry Foundation • National Forest Foundation • National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance
Native Plant Society of New Mexico • New Mexico Environment Department
New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division Outdoor Equity Fund
Resources Legacy Fund • The Nature Conservancy • The 30 Something
The Wilderness Society



UGWA's Statement of Philosophy

The members of the UGWA recognize a vital and necessary connection between our individual and collective rights and responsibilities as landowners and community members and the long-term stewardship of the Upper Gila River Valley and Watershed.

The members of the UGWA share a love and concern for our community which is an integral part of our lives and, therefore, seek to harmonize our presence and activities within the watershed for the health and integrity of the entire "community," which includes the soil, the air, the water, the people, the plants, and animals.

The members of the UGWA share the conviction that men and women work best together in a spirit of cooperation, conflict resolution, and consensual agreement that builds upon a common ground that benefits from the views and concerns of each individual acting as uncoerced free agents.

To realize our vision for the common benefit of the entire community served by the Upper Gila Watershed, and for the sake of future generations, the UGWA seeks ways and means to bring people and organizations together in constructive dialogue and activities aimed at clear communication, education, land restoration, research, and local economic health.

Calling All Hikers!

If you enjoy hiking and want to keep our Gila National Forest healthy, please consider joining UGWA's new impact monitoring project. We need boots on the ground so that we can notify the Forest Service when closed roads are being inappropriately used, where damage is occurring, where signs have been destroyed or removed, and other issues. Volunteers can work in pairs and choose from a number of high priority locations close to Silver City. We will train you in our simple data collection protocol that will enhance your enjoyable experience in our beautiful forest.

If you are interested, please email Carol Ann at: admin@ugwa.org

Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
PO Box 383
Gila, New Mexico 88038

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