



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Arizona
2022: Annual Manager's Report

San Pedro Riparian

National Conservation Area



Map



Accomplishments

The Agents of Discovery (AoD) application (app): Developed with partner assistance from the Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR), the AoD app continued to serve its purpose of providing youth and families opportunities to explore the natural and cultural environments offered within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (Conservation Area). The AoD app is an educational, Global Positioning System (GPS) based mobile game that engages kids of all ages, encouraging them to explore opportunities on public lands. When using the app at selected sites like Fairbank, Murray Springs, and the San Pedro House, participants are able to enjoy the full AoD experience, finding quizzes, challenges, and even prizes.



Other significant accomplishments include:

- Continued engagement with the Arizona Site Stewards Program for routine monitoring of the Conservation Area’s cultural sites.
- Completed eight compliance inspections for four unique range allotments.
- Completed 14 reaches via Assessment, Inventory & Monitoring lotic protocol.
- Completed non-native invasive plant mapping surveys on over 450 acres of the San Pedro River corridor, north of the Fairbank townsite and south of the Saint David Cienega.
- Worked with a utility cooperative to rebuild two additional powerline segments to modern standards, which will reduce risk of wildfires and support energy infrastructure.
- Adopt-a-Trail program contributed over 400 hours of trail maintenance activities at San Pedro House, Fairbank, Murray Springs, Hereford, and Escapule.
- Administered 14 Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) for wildlife and archaeological interpretive walks, organized group events, and outfitting-guiding services.
- Constructed new trail steps at the Murray Springs Clovis Interpretive Site during a National Public Lands Day event hosted by the Tucson Field Office and FSPR.
- Maintained 4.5 miles of the Murray Springs Trail with an Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) crew.



Tucson Field Office (TFO) staff completed trail alignment in the Conservation Area. The Escapule Trail was rerouted due to public safety issues posed by an old, dilapidated bridge along the trail. The old bridge was removed, and highly visible reflective markers were installed, to ensure public safety. In addition, the new trail segment was marked with Carsonite signs along with highly visible Conservation Area trail signs and directional arrows.

The Escapule Adopt-a-Trail group dismantled and removed debris from the bridge, pruned vegetation, and removed roots that the backhoe was unable to manage.



In May 2022, the Conservation Area was recognized as one of the best hiking areas in the Sierra Vista area by the Sierra Vista Review. "These "Best of Sierra Vista" awards were around long before I moved here 14 years ago and never once had we gotten something like this," said acting TFO Assistant Field Manager Eric Baker.

Challenges

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) continued to survey for and dispose of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC), on former target ranges within the Conservation Area under the Formerly Used Defense Site Program. Specific activities included vegetation trimming to facilitate the use of ground penetrating radar during the search for MEC. An identified hazard was removed and disposed of offsite. The USCAE continues to coordinate their remediation efforts with BLM and provides public outreach and educational materials concerning the presence of MEC within the Conservation Area and ongoing remediation efforts.

The loss of water within the San Pedro River and the loss of habitat for many animal species that call the river corridor home, continues to be a primary challenge. Additional challenges include loss of cultural resources (specifically historical structures) from lack of maintenance and attention, damage associated with inappropriate recreational use of the landscape, and unpermitted activities.



Visitors

In 2022, approximately 170,256 visitors came to the Conservation Area. Visitor data was collected from traffic counters, number of participants attending authorized SRP activities, and visitor data provided by the FSPR. Partner data indicated 185 education participants, 1,780 interpretive participants and a total of 9,760 volunteer hours.

The reopening of the two visitor contact stations allowed FSPR to bring back their wildlife and history docent-led interpretive walks at the San Pedro House, Fairbank Townsite, Murray Springs Clovis Site, Clanton Ranch, Grand Central Mill, and the Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate.

Partnerships

The Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR)

[FSPR | conserving and sharing the river \(sanpedroriver.org\)](https://sanpedroriver.org)

The FSPR is a non-profit volunteer group that supports the BLM's efforts of public outreach within the community. Their communications strategy addresses social media, publicity, and dissemination of the BLM's conservation message. While temporarily closed during the pandemic, FSPR re-opened its Fairbank and San Pedro House visitor contact stations. The visitor stations are independently operated and staffed by FSPR volunteers and one paid employee. Throughout 2022, as feasible, FSPR provided outdoor volunteer greeters at the San Pedro House and Fairbank, to provide visitors information about the Conservation Area.

Upper San Pedro Partnership

[Member Agency Profiles | Upper San Pedro Partnership](#)

The BLM participates in the Upper San Pedro Partnership, which is a consortium of federal, state, and local agencies as well as stakeholders and non-profit organizations.

Sky Island Alliance (SIA)

[Sky Island Alliance](https://www.skyislandalliance.org)

The SIA is a non-profit organization dedicated to conducting science and increasing the knowledge base regarding the ecological diversity of the sky island habitats in Southeastern Arizona. During Fiscal Year 2022, BLM partnered with the SIA on two projects in the Conservation Area. The BLM and FSPR identified repair needs of four wildlife water sources within the Conservation Area, and SIA developed a grant funding proposal to obtain funding and labor to conduct repairs to the wildlife water. Additionally, BLM issued SIA a research permit to use game cameras to monitor wildlife use of the international border area of the Conservation Area.

The Nature Conservancy

[The Nature Conservancy in Arizona](#)

Every year, the BLM partners with The Nature Conservancy for the annual wet-dry walk of the San Pedro River. Since 2007, every mile of the river within the Conservation Area is monitored for perennial water at the driest time of the year (end of June).

Community Watershed Alliance

[Community Watershed Alliance - Overview, News & Competitors | ZoomInfo.com](#)

Other partners besides the BLM include Fort Huachuca, Arizona Game and Fish Department, City of Sierra Vista, and Cochise County. Many of these entities also partner with the BLM on projects throughout the San Pedro Watershed.

Science

The Conservation Area currently has five research and or study initiatives and all are ongoing. One is an ongoing fish population tracking study conducted by the TFO. There are two ground water studies and one precipitation study being conducted by the TFO. The Sierra Club Water Sentinels, a local non-governmental organization, conducts surface water sampling and monitors river health by testing for turbidity and other metrics.

TFO staff complete fish studies within the Conservation Area. The San Pedro River historically supported 13 native fish species known to the Gila River System. However, only two natives, the Longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*) and the Desert sucker (*Catostomus clarkia*), remain in the San Pedro River. Common non-native species in the San Pedro are Yellow bullhead, Common carp, Green sunfish, Mosquito fish, Fathead minnows, and American bullfrogs. Current threats to native aquatic species include climate change, groundwater pumping, changes to the natural flow regime of the river, and introduced species.



In an effort to continue contributing to 25-year data set tracking fish populations on the San Pedro River, a team of BLM interdisciplinary resource specialists Christina Perez, Mark McCabe, Theresa Condo, and retired fish biologist Jeff Simms surveyed the river. The surveys took place over a 3-day period in May. The historic data set focuses on five fixed sites in the San Pedro River. The crew sampled two of the five fixed sites, as one site is completely dry and two are now intermittent. A new perennial site was selected two years ago to replace the intermittent sites. Backpack electrofishing is used to sample the river. At the three sites, fish catch and habitat data are recorded.



BLM staff and volunteers conducted a Huachuca water-umbel (HWU) inventory in late May through mid-June 2022. Approximately 25 miles of the San Pedro River, from Boquillas to Hereford bridge, was surveyed. The river was not surveyed north of Boquillas and south of Hereford bridge, because of the reduction in perennially moist soil due to drying trends. Additionally, within the last ten years there have been no documented populations in these areas of the river. The survey area was broken into 10 reaches approximately 2-5 miles each. A total of 12 patches were documented within the survey area.



Events

The TFO and FSPR hosted a National Public Lands Day Event at the Murray Springs Clovis Site in mid-November. TFO volunteers and soldiers from Fort Huachuca installed a new ramada for interpretive talks and demonstrations and constructed new trail steps that were previously eroded for public use.



On Feb 28, 2022, a group of volunteers and preservation staff from several Federal agencies met at the Presidio de Santa Cruz de Terrenate, a Spanish Colonial frontier outpost dating to 1770, to undertake much-needed preservation of the remaining historic adobe walls.

The Terrenate Mud Party had been an annual event prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; many of this year's participants were veterans of previous efforts. The group included staff from Logan Simpson Design, representatives of several National Park Service units across southern Arizona, BLM staff from the Phoenix and Gila District Offices, and was facilitated by a multi-agency Historic Preservation Specialist.

Through a collaborative combination of skills, equipment, and materials, all the remaining wall segments were fully encapsulated with an application of adobe mud, which helped protect the original walls from further weathering and deterioration. It also provided opportunities for participants to learn new skills, and to network with other preservationists from both the private and federal sectors.





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