



Altar Valley Conservation Alliance

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Conserving the Altar Valley for future generations

DEAR FRIENDS,

For over 20 years now, serving the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance as a board member, and more recently as its first Executive Director, has been a major aspect of my life's work - right up there with family and the Elkhorn Ranch. A year ago, on December 20, 2016, our lives changed in an instant when my husband, Charley, had a serious accident. From that moment forward, we had to juggle priorities to put family first, and focus all of our energy on his recovery. During this same time, Tom Sheridan, Chair of our Science Advisory Board, experienced serious health issues. Meanwhile, and on a brighter note, Sarah King took some personal time to welcome a second child, George, into the cadre of Altar Valley future generations. Luckily, our Program Administrator, Sherie Steele was steady at the wheel and we'd made a great decision the previous year when we added Kyle Thompson to our team as our Science & Conservation Coordinator. One of my key mentors, Kerry Baldwin, stepped up to serve as an interim Executive Director for much this year - further icing on the cake.

A recent Netflix movie planted the idea of "collateral beauty" in my mind. The beauty of this year has been watching the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance not only withstand a challenging time, but truly thrive. The resilience and strength of relationships amongst neighbors and partners far outweighed the challenges. The most heartening aspect has been watching Kyle Thompson take off in his role, as the Alliance's first full time professional staff, and observing the numerous ways in which so many people stepped up to engage. The breadth of community commitment to the work and collaborative conservation principles at play in the Altar Valley is remarkable.

There are so many bright spots that mark this year in the Altar Valley. Grassland restoration projects via brush control are underway thanks to a new partnership with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. AVCA and the University of Arizona are collaborating on a series of professional education workshops on the same topic. Arizona State Forestry and many fire partners, including the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, made great strides on prescribed fire management partnership work, and helped combat a challenging Arizona wildfire season.

Visitors from around the country, as well as academics from foreign countries, visited the Altar Valley to learn about collaborative conservation. Courtney White, who writes about conservation work at the radical center, and renowned wildlife biologist Dave Brown spoke at Altar Valley events. We welcomed new supporters into the fold at a lovely mid-summer celebration dinner. Pima County Regional Flood Control District is wrapping up a watershed study that will help prioritize the best places to work in the valley; and a new contract with Robert Davis and the Quiet Creek Corporation will make cutting edge Geographic Information System (GIS) data accessible to Altar Valley partners. On a personal note, I'm delighted that my daughter Clara, who studies range management at University of Arizona, is meeting so many Altar Valley colleagues as guest lecturers in her classes.

When Charley and I were in Tucson hospitals for the first three months of this year, we joked that we were on sabbatical. Stepping back, and now returning with a refreshed perspective, has been another aspect of collateral beauty. I am more proud of this organization than ever before. I sincerely hope that you will pause during the holiday season to take note of all the positive accomplishments by the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance. In grassroots style, we are doing good work on the ground in our region; and our community and region are increasingly referenced as an example of cutting edge collaborative conservation work, thus stretching the value of our work far beyond local geography. Our conservation work remains right on point, and it is truly the work of many fine people that none of us could accomplish alone! On behalf of the Altar Valley staff, its Board of Directors, and Science Advisory Board, I would like to express our deep gratitude for the generous ways that you support the conservation of the Altar Valley watershed for future generations.

Happy holidays!

With thanks,



Mary Miller, Executive Director

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS IN 2017

2017 brought some old faces helping the Alliance in new ways. When Executive Director Mary Miller needed to step back from the Alliance for family health reasons, we tapped recently retired former Pima County Natural Resources Division Manager, Kerry Baldwin to help keep the Alliance moving forward. Kerry gave the Alliance an excellent infusion of new perspective and helped us to make some new connections with partners and grantors. Kerry is a member of the Alliance's Science Advisory Board, and we look forward to continuing to benefit from his knowledge and experience as we dive into 2018. Thanks for all of your work for the Altar Valley this past year, Kerry!

After a couple of years working with Robert Davis of the Quiet Creek Corporation on a variety of projects, the Alliance has officially hired Robert to manage our mapping and Geographic Information System (GIS) needs. The world of GIS and mapping takes real know-how, and the ability to stay on

top of cutting edge technology. Robert has both, and has been extremely generous in sharing his knowledge with us. Hiring Robert to manage our data with expert ability will ensure that the Alliance is taking advantage of the latest in mapping, while freeing up our staff to focus on our other areas of work. We're excited to welcome Robert as part of the Alliance team!

Finally, thanks to everyone who made the Alliance's An Evening with Courtney White event such a success! We welcomed in the summer monsoon season with a bang, and raised \$11,183 for the Alliance! The evening featured an inspiring talk about collaborative conservation by Courtney White, plus a fun selection of silent auction items, from many generous donors. The evening was attended by long-time Alliance supporters, along with many new faces.

It was a treat to spend the evening with all of you! Don't miss the opportunity to join us in welcoming the monsoon this summer - we'll be hosting a similar evening at the M.O. Club on September 8th, 2018!



An example of Robert's mapping work.

THE ALLIANCE'S MISSION AND VISION

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance is a collaborative conservation organization founded in 1995, and incorporated as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

THE ALLIANCE'S MISSION STATEMENT:

We work through a strongly collaborative, science-based, community driven and integrated approach to:

- **CONSERVE** healthy and productive working landscapes, including soil and water conservation, wildfire management, habitat conservation and protection of native species, and other environmental initiatives.
- **PROMOTE** a thriving agricultural economy by encouraging improved ranching and farming practices, diversification and innovation, and by supporting programs and policies that support more effective, long-term economic development.
- **SUSTAIN** a resilient rural community by retaining and renewing the cultural and historical traditions of the Altar Valley.

THE ALLIANCE'S VISION:

Ranchers and other agriculturalists work effectively with our partners to conserve healthy and productive working landscapes, promote a thriving agricultural economy, and sustain a resilient rural community enriched by the culture and history of the Altar Valley.



SPOTLIGHT ON ALLIANCE GRANTS AT WORK IN ALTAR VALLEY

The spirit of collaborative conservation is one of the hallmarks of the Alliance's work in the Altar Valley, and that extends to the grants that we have been awarded over the last several years. We use these grants to leverage your generous donation dollars, time and resources donated by our partners, and countless volunteer hours to create tangible positive impacts on the ground in the Altar Valley. Thanks in large part to impressive efforts by the Alliance's Science & Conservation Coordinator, Kyle Thompson, we received new grant awards in the tail end of 2016, throughout 2017 and 2018, and applied continued grants to work we did throughout the year.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) — Integrated Methods for Grassland Habitat Enhancement.

This is the Alliance's second NFWF grant. We began implementing this grant in April 2012, and have extended its duration to August 2018. The total grant funding was for \$382,000, with an AVCA match requirement of \$1,107,660. We're proud to say that as of October 31, 2017, the Alliance has exceeded that number with \$1,141,953 documented match for this project. Our first NFWF grant enabled the creation of five prescribed fire plans for five different conservation action sites. This second NFWF grant allowed us to create erosion control plans for those five original sites, choose two new conservation actions sites, and then create fire plans for them.

Additionally, this grant provided for the creation of erosion control plans for each of the seven sites, and provided funding to conduct the burns when conditions allowed. The prescribed burns have been conducted at two of the sites, and we are still coordinating burning at the additional sites. While this grant has had positive impacts on each of the sites, its importance in the Alliance's overall work in coordination of jurisdictions and interested parties cannot be overstated, as it has given us the ability to invest countless hours of staff time toward problem solving, risk management, and overall finding ways to return fire to the landscape as a brush control method.

Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation — Elkhorn/Las Delicias Demonstration Site (Elk/LD Site), Phase II, 2017 Grant

This is the Alliance's fourth grant from the Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation. This \$40,000 grant was awarded for 2017, in order to fund the sixth year of the Elkhorn/Las Delicias Demonstration Site Project. The project was installed in January 2012 via an initial \$50,000 grant from the Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation, with another \$150,000 in match contributions. The project was designed to address rapidly escalating erosion problems on a fence line road on the boundary between the Elkhorn and Las Delicias Ranches. It showcased the planning, installation and monitoring of watershed restoration practices in arroyos and associated uplands over an approximately 1,500 acre project site. This current grant funded the continuation of ongoing monitoring activities begun in 2012, including photo monitoring, vegetation and channel substrate

monitoring, precipitation monitoring, channel morphology monitoring, and maintenance needs. Throughout 2017, the Elk/LD Site has served as an outdoor classroom in the valley; since 2010, over 600 individuals associated with visiting groups have included delegations from China, US and foreign colleges, Sierra Club, Farm Bureau, youth volunteers from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and others. The Alliance will conduct a professional training workshop in early 2018 at the site. The Alliance also submitted a paper on the project to The Quivira Coalition, in order to continue to broaden the project's reach. The Elk/LD Demo Site has been a key project for the Alliance throughout the past six years, as it has allowed us to truly meet people on the land, and educate our visitors on the potential of erosion control efforts on the landscape.

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Water Quality Improvement Grant: Watershed Preservation — Sediment Discharge Reduction Through Brush Management in the Altar Valley

This is the Alliance's first ADEQ grant, and we were awarded \$220,200, with a \$150,193 match requirement. The grant began on October 1, 2017, and will finish September 30, 2019. It aims to combat the mesquite encroachment found in the Altar Valley, by testing the use of an aerially applied herbicide to reduce mesquite densities on 2,000 acres of rangeland to promote the return of desert grassland, improve soil conservation, and reduce sediment

discharge. A detailed monitoring program will also be developed as part of this project, using repeat photography and aerial imagery. The methods, progress, and results from this project will be presented at the workshops coordinated via our WSARE grant as a case study in brush management. This grant will allow the Alliance to explore an additional method of brush control that might aid landowners and other resources managers in the Altar Valley.

Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (WSARE) — Cross-Watershed Visit Videography Funding

This was the Alliance's first WSARE grant, and it augmented our Cross-Visit Incentive Program grant by funding the videography portion of the workshop. We were awarded \$1,216, which allowed us to hire the University of Arizona videography team to film the

workshop. The footage became a short video entitled Common Ground, and was shared via YouTube. It will also tie in with the videography that AVCA is working on under our second WSARE grant. The video can be found here https://youtu.be/DngzpYqVL_c

Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (WSARE) — Collaborative Training for Southwest Grassland Restoration under Environmental Uncertainty

This is the Alliance's second WSARE grant, though much more substantial than the first, and which began on July 1, 2017, and will close on June 30, 2019. This grant is being implemented with the University of Arizona's School of Natural Resources and the Environment in CALS, the CALS Communications and Cyber Technologies unit, as well as the Rangelands Partnership. The awarded grant totaled \$70,000; AVCA's portion of the grant is \$28,294.96. The rest of the funding will go toward enabling our University of Arizona associates to work with us to complete the grant. The goals of the grant are (1) to organize and implement three work-

shops (in January 2018, April 2018, and Oct 2018), (2) to document the workshops and share stories through 3 training videos, (3) to implement a social media campaign before, during, and after the workshops to engage stakeholders throughout the West, and (4) to adapt videos and workshop materials for the web, and incorporate into RangelandsWest.org as a Highlighted Topic to extend learning opportunities. Since the grant has started, we have been working with our University of Arizona counterparts to plan the workshops, and we're excited to involve the public in the first workshop on January 22, 2018!

Cross-Watershed Network — Cross-Visit Incentive Program

The Alliance was an inaugural recipient of this grant from the Cross-Watershed Network. The grant award was \$2,500. The Alliance's cross watershed visit was with the Malpai Borderlands Group on December 2-3, 2016. The purpose of the visit, which coupled with a Fire Ecology Tour through the Altar Valley, was to facilitate discussion between the two groups and other participants about overcoming challenges to prescribed burning and other related

topics. The grant was intended to provide technical and funding assistance to watershed groups interested in visiting their peers in other watersheds. It served to bring in perspective from outside the Altar Valley watershed on issues that have arisen in our work on our NFWF grants, as well as created a foundation from which to launch our WSARE grants.

USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Grant — Noon Ranch and Arivaca Boys' Ranch

This is the Alliance's third, and largest, USFWS Partners grant. This grant's duration is from June 1, 2017 - May 31, 2021. AVCA was awarded \$39,000, and although match is not required, AVCA will be contributing \$15,500. We are currently in the project planning phase of the arroyo restoration, using Steve Carson of Rangeland Hands, Inc. as the chief consultant on the project. We

are planning a workshop showcasing arroyo restoration using hand-built rock structures at the Noon Ranch February 16-17, 2017. The project builds on an already completed phase of small-rock arroyo restoration structures installed in 2016 via funding from our second NFWF grant.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Between November 1, 2016 and October 31, 2017, the Alliance received \$12,535 in cash contributions. The Alliance received \$40,000 in new grant funds from Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation matched by an additional \$20,000 in donated time and talent towards this project. We also applied funds from our multi-year National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant to work in the field, matched by in-kind contributions and donated goods and services totaling yet another \$40,000. The Alliance also used the funds from the Cross-Visit Incentive Program totaling \$2,500 to fund our Cross-Watershed Visit with the Malpai Borderlands Group, coupled with the \$1,216 in funds received from the WSARE Cross-Watershed Videography Funding to facilitate videography work at the workshop. Grants and donations give us the financial resources to further our mission. However, no amount of money can substitute for the collaborative, cooperative spirit of mutual respect and support that is demonstrated among our many partners, stewards and friends. Below is a list of the amazing groups and persons that share our mission and our vision for the Altar Valley, and continually put their resources and time into conserving the Altar Valley for future generations.

ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Altar Valley School District
Arivaca Fire District
Arivaca Boys Ranch
Arizona Association of Conservation Districts
Arizona Department of Agriculture
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Arizona Game & Fish Department
Arizona Land & Water Trust
Arizona Revegetation & Monitoring Co.
Arizona State Forestry
Arizona State Land Department
BKW Farms
Buckelew Farms
Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
Cascabel Conservation Association
Chilton Ranch
City of Tucson Water Department
Commotion Studios
Coronado National Forest
Cross-Watershed Network
Cuerca Los Ojas Foundation
Diamond Bell Ranch
Elkhorn Ranch
Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation
Global Rangelands
Jarillas Ranch
JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc.
King's Anvil Ranch

King's 98 Ranch
Larry Humphrey
Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance
Malpai Borderlands Group
Marley Ranch
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
Noon Ranch
Old Hayhook Ranch
Palo Alto Ranch & Baboquivari Peak Ranch
Pima County Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation
Pima County Office of Sustainability & Conservation
Pima County Regional Flood Control District
Pima Natural Resource Conservation District
Quiet Creek Corporation
Quivira Coalition
Rancho Santa Lucia
Rancho Seco
Rangeland Hands, Inc.
Robert Schmalzel
Robinett Rangeland Resources
Santa Margarita Ranch
Sierrita Mining & Ranching Co.
Sky Island Alliance
Southern Arizona Rangeland Honey
Southwest Decision Resources
Stockwell Honey Company
The Loft Cinema
The Nature Conservancy

Three Points Fire District
Tohono O'odham Nation Fire Department
Tucson Interagency Fire Center
U of A CALS Communications and Technologies
U of A CALS Cooperative Extension
U of A Little Chapel of All Nations
U of A School of Natural Resources and the Environment
U of A Southwest Center
U of A Tierra Seca Club
U of A Wildcat Research & Conservation Center
US Border Patrol
US Bureau of Land Management
USDA Agricultural Research Station
Southwest Watershed Research Center
US Fish and Wildlife Service Arizona Ecological Services
US Fish and Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
US Forest Service
US Natural Resources Conservation Service
Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona
Western Landowners Alliance
Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
Westland Resources, Inc.
Zeedyk Ecological Services

ALLIANCE STEWARDS

If your name was omitted from this list or misspelled, please accept our sincere apology and notify us so that we may correct our records. These lists reflect donations, services and partnerships occurring between November 1, 2016 and October 31, 2017.

Jade Antoine
Arizona Theater Company
Walter & Lew Armer
John & Robin Baade
Kerry Baldwin
Sally & Joe Barber
John & Teri Barry
Dinah Bear
Cameron Becker
Betts Printing
Shannon Bronson
Sharon Bronson
Connor Brooks
Christopher Campisano
Steve & Nansy Carson
Faya Ellen Causey
Jim & Sue Chilton
Helen Clay Chace
Richard & Diane Collins
Al & Hilary Creighton
John Czys
Rachel Darché
Robert & Vancie Davis
Kevin & Cynthia Devine
Elkhorn Ranch
Stephen Engel
Larry Fisher & Tahnee Robertson
Sally Flatland
Lorna Kathleen Fox
Alden Freed
Diana Freshwater
Gaslight Theater

Barbara Giesen
David Graham
Diana Hadley
Tom & Margaret Hall
Greg & Lorraine Harper
Regis & Katherine Henckler
C. Benson Hufford
Chuck Hutchinson
International Wildlife Museum
Myron & Patricia Kanis
Mary & Rob Kasulaitis
King's Anvil Ranch
Joe & Sarah King
John & Pat King
Dan & Mary Kretschmer
Mary Lamy
Walter Lane
Kimberly Larson & Robert Chavez
Jason Lohmeier
Michael and Kay McCarthy
William McDonald
Sharon McDonough-Means
Maureen Michael
Charley & Mary Miller
Clara Miller
I. George Miller
Janet D. Miller
Jim & Christine Oliver
Paca de Paja B&B
Eva Patten
Hank & Barbara Peck
Chris Pendleton & Shannan Marty

Wyatt Pendleton
Cynthia Perin
Brian Powell & Leza Carter
Vanessa Prileson
Cherry Provost
Quiet Creek Corporation
Richard & Helen Reeves
Reid Park Zoological Society
Joe Retz
Karen Riggs
Jon & Peggy Rowley
Santa Margarita Ranch
G. Lawrence & Pamela Schubart
Bob & Lloyd Sharp
Eric Shepp
Tom Sheridan
Charles & Elaine Silverson
Fred & Eleanor Silverstein
Don & Marion Slack
Sherie Steele
Walt & Nancy Taylor
Gretchen Theobald
Kathryn Thomas
Kyle Thompson
Victoria Treherne
Tom & Deanne Urmy
Nancy Waldrop
Courtney White
Wild Bird Store
Stephen Williams
Bill Zeedyk





Altar Valley Conservation Alliance
PO Box 27906
Tucson, AZ 85726

ANNUAL ALTAR VALLEY COMMUNITY MEETING:

May 30th, 2018 at the King's Anvil Ranch

AN EVENING WITH THE ALLIANCE:

September 8th, 2018 at the Mountain Oyster Club

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Pat King, President
Heather Fox, Vice-President
Walter Lane, Treasurer
Sue Chilton
Mary Kasulaitis
Dee Lusby
Charley Miller
Tom Sheridan
Peggy Rowley
Mick Rusing
Tom Sheridan
Stephen Williams*

**SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD
MEMBERS:**

*Tom Sheridan, Chair
Kerry Baldwin
Larry Fisher
Chuck Hutchinson
Walter Lane
Charley Miller
Brian Powell
Dan Robinett
George Ruyle
Don Slack
Peter Warren*

STAFF

*Executive Director: Mary Miller
Interim Executive Director, 2017: Kerry Baldwin
Science & Conservation Coordinator: Kyle Thompson
Community Outreach and Education Coordinator: Sarah King
Program Administrator: Sherie Steele*

www.altarvalleyconservation.org