

Altar Valley Conservation Alliance

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Conserving the Altar Valley for future generations

DEAR FRIENDS,

We appreciate this chance to send greetings and news during the holiday season ~ a time to take stock of our blessings and look ahead into the new year. Though public life is often contentious these days, good work continues close to the ground, where people can work together to find commonalities, know and respect one another and get things done.

In 2019, Altar Valley conservation partners will launch an ambitious collaborative planning effort to affirm watershed goals and design projects. This endeavor, the Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Plan, will be completed two years from now in 2020. Having begun work as an alliance of ranching neighbors in 1995, this planning effort promises to be a fitting celebration of the silver anniversary of Altar Valley watershed conservation that will set the compass point towards a golden anniversary.

Back in 2000, when AVCA became a formal non-profit organization, we completed a watershed resource assessment as our first major project, which truly launched watershed wide conservation thinking and activity. Since then, our progress has been anything but linear, but trends have been steadily positive. We'd like to focus your attention on a few indicators of success.

There has been a strong surge of science activity in 2018. Four University of Arizona (UA) researchers and their teams, a senior scientist from USDA Agricultural Research Service and two citizen scientists are actively working in the Altar Valley. AVCA conservation projects are monitored using a combination of repeat photography, field data collection and a combination of drone flight, remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) technology.

Cutting-edge GIS technology via partnership with Quiet Creek Corporation has significantly expanded AVCA's technical prowess. This tool will play a critical role in the upcoming watershed planning process and our ability to explore questions and solutions using powerful analytic tools and maps.

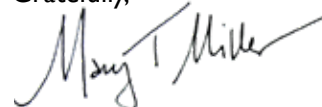
Most importantly, the spirit and practice of collaboration is stronger than ever in the Altar Valley. There was re-

cord-breaking attendance at our annual Community Meeting - mark your calendar now for May 29, 2019! Semi-annual Fire Coordination meetings remain a strong tradition, and resulted in completion of the Pig Mountain prescribed burn in May 2018. Watershed Working Group and Science Advisory Board momentum have resulted in receipt of major grant funding to produce the Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Plan and the surge of research activity. Diverse partners gathered to stretch understanding of brush management via a series of three workshops organized by AVCA and UA.

AVCA is both the grease and motor driving conservation activities. Our collaborative accomplishments are definitely greater than the sum of our parts. Given the critical nature of each part, we hesitate to highlight any one organization or individual, but this year we must. After 30 years of federal service, Kristen Egen, District Conservationist of the Tucson Field Office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, retires this month. Kristen has been a key advisor to AVCA since its inception. She has played a critical role in returning prescribed fire to the watershed as a management tool, including complex endangered species coordination. She is a steadfast supporter of range monitoring and sends her staff into the field to provide operators with technical support for agricultural and conservation activities. We applaud Kristen and the fantastic team of young range and soil conservation professionals she has assembled at NRCS's Tucson Field Office!

We thank each and every one of you for your support and partnership. Your financial contributions provide the fuel to keep us moving ahead and your partnership assures that we head in the right direction, together! On behalf of the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance Board of Directors, Science Advisory Board, and staff, may you enjoy happy holidays and a fresh new year!

Gratefully,



Mary Miller, Executive Director

WELCOME, JULIA!



We're pleased to announce that we've hired Julia Sittig as our new Conservation & Science Coordinator. Julia comes to the Alliance via one of our partners, Southwest Decision Resources. Julia works for SDR as a Program Associate, and designs and facilitates collaborative solutions for complex

environmental issues. She received a B.A. in environmental studies with a focus on environmental psychology from the University of Michigan in 2010. In 2014, she received her M.A. in Natural Resource Management from the University of Arizona. Her Master's thesis focused on public perceptions of renewable energy facilities. Julia is passionate about designing forward-thinking, stakeholder-driven efforts that benefit both people and the land. Her skill set and experience with conservation, science and collaboration make her an ideal person to join the Alliance's team! We hope you'll reach out to welcome her on board. Her e-mail is julia@altarvalleyconservation.org.

CONGRATULATIONS, MARY!



We're delighted to announce that Mary Miller, the Alliance's Executive Director, was recognized by Inside Tucson Business as the 2018 Non-Profit Champion in their Women of Influence awards! Mary was nominated for this award by colleagues in Tucson's conservation community, and was named as one of three

finalists in the highly competitive Non-Profit Champion category. On Wednesday, March 7th, 2018, Inside Tucson Business held their award ceremony and celebration. Mary was announced as the winner in her category. This award is the result of years of hard work and dedication to the Alliance and the organization's vision of conserving the Altar Valley for future generations. Congratulations, Mary!

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.



UPCOMING WATERSHED WORK

We're excited to announce that this summer the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance is launching the Altar Valley Watershed Working Group WaterSMART program! The project is getting underway as this arrives in your inbox. This is a significant milestone that is one of the hallmarks of the Alliance's work in the Altar Valley. Here's a quick overview of the project and some background about the Watershed Working Group.

BACKGROUND

The Alliance was founded in 1995 for a variety of reasons, but two of the primary reasons were a desire for restoration work in the Altar Wash mainstem and brush management in the valley. The Alliance has led a great deal of on-the-ground work in the Altar Valley revolving around these two goals. In addition, the Alliance has also led efforts to create documentation expressing common goals among stakeholders for the future of the watershed. Out of these efforts came the Altar Valley Watershed Framework for 21st Century Collaborative Conservation (Framework), which is intended to “guide and inspire partners on a host of stewardship activities” in the Altar Valley. The Framework is designed to be a living document, with the current version completed in 2017. The vision for the Altar Valley set forth by partners in the Framework is “to protect it as a working landscape, unfragmented by development, and which retains ecosystem and watershed function within the historical range of resources and variability.”

On December 3-5, 2015, the Alliance hosted the Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Retreat, a meeting of the minds that included many of the partners at work in the valley. Out of that retreat grew the Watershed Working Group. This group is comprised of stakeholders in the Altar Valley who are interested in defining common goals for the Altar Valley watershed, and forging pathways for how to achieve those goals on the ground.

In July 2017, the Alliance began organizing three brush management workshops supported by the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education funding. This grant is being implemented with the University of Arizona School of Natural Resources and the Environment, the UA College of Agriculture and Life Science's Communications and Cyber Technologies unit, as well as The Rangelands Partnership. The series of three workshops was held in 2018 and was attended by a variety of stakeholders. The workshops fostered extensive discussion about the future of brush management - what we know about choosing treatments, the effectiveness of treatments, and where we go from here as we plan for the future. In a complementary effort, the Alliance is also working on a grant from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality that began in October 2017. It aims to combat mesquite encroachment in the Altar Valley, by testing the use of an aerially applied herbicide on 2,000 acres of rangeland. The reduced mesquite densities are intended 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, aerial imagery and field transects.

During the past three years, significant new information and analysis has been produced, such that AVCA and partners are well positioned to produce plans to create on the ground action. This foundational knowledge includes: a contracted report by civil engineering firm, JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc., describing the need for watershed work in the uplands of the Altar Valley, a Pima County contracted sediment modeling project by the University of Arizona, an Altar Valley GIS database, and a finalized Watershed Framework outlining the vision and direction for watershed restoration in the Altar Valley. AVCA is poised and ready to use these tools to focus on complex restoration problems and formulate a restoration plan that synthesizes watershed knowledge with landowner and partner visions and goals and describes a tangible path forward.



WORK IN THE ALTAR VALLEY

iance was awarded a 2-year \$100,000 grant from the Bureau of Reclamation for mailboxes. This project continues the spirit of collaborative conservation and in depth look at the project detailed in the grant that we received, and some how it came to be.

WHAT WILL THIS PROJECT ENTAIL?

During the course of this 2-year, Phase I project, AVCA will continue and expand support of the existing Watershed Working Group of collaborative partners to develop a watershed restoration plan. AVCA and partners will develop watershed management project concepts and project profiles for 15-20 high-priority projects, supported by all parties of the Watershed Working Group and willing landowners. The restoration plan will focus on two large watershed issues: channel incisement/erosion and mesquite encroachment. Restoration goals include increasing water infiltration, reducing sediment transfer, and enhancing ecological site condition. The high priority project plans will include preliminary engineering design, costs, permitting requirements, and timelines.

The Pima County Regional Flood Control District (PCRFC) is heavily involved in the execution of this project. They will bring in the civil engineering firm that the Alliance has previously worked with, JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc. Both PCRFC and JE Fuller will add expertise and play a major role in conceptual design and planning of the projects.

AVCA will also hire Southwest Decision Resources to manage the collaborative process between expert partners and contractors in hydrology, rangeland management techniques, climatic trends, and other disciplines. Southwest Decision Resources is a widely respected facilitation firm that operates throughout Arizona and the greater southwest. Their skills in aiding collaborative decision making are an important piece of this process, as is their broad network of contacts throughout the region.

WHO SUPPORTS THIS PROJECT?

The Alliance received 20 letters of support for this grant from partners with a variety of interests in the valley, but all united by the common goal of keeping the Altar Valley open for future generations, with a healthy, functioning watershed. The list included: the Pima County County Administrator's Office, the City of Tucson, the Tucson Water Department, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, the Pima Natural Resource Conservation District, the Western Landowners Alliance, the US Fish and Wildlife Services Arizona Ecological Services Office, the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, the Southwest Watershed Research Center, the University of Arizona School of Natural Resources and the Environment, the University of Arizona College of Engineering, The Nature Conservancy, Rangeland Hands, Wildvisions Arizona, Robinett Rangeland Resources, LLC, the King's Anvil Ranch, the Santa Margarita Ranch, and the Elkhorn Ranch.

Many of these partners that voiced their support for the project are also engaged in the Watershed Working Group and will be directly involved with the heavy lifting to complete the Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Plan, and the project plans that will be included in it. This project that the Alliance is spearheading is truly collaborative conservation at it's best - a variety of stakeholders coming together to set goals for the future of the Altar Valley landscape and forge tangible pathways to accomplish those goals.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Between November 1, 2017 and October 31, 2018, the Alliance received \$25,347.73 in cash contributions. The Alliance received \$40,000 in new grant funds from Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation, matched by the same value in donated time and talent towards the Elkhorn/Las Delicias Demonstration Project. We also put funds from our multi-year National Fish & Wildlife grant to work in the field, matched by in-kind contributions and donated goods and services totaling yet another \$56,720.97, plus approximately \$17,500 worth of time and resources from fire partners invested in conducting the Pig Mountain Prescribed Burn. This year's brush management workshops were funded by grant money from the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program totaling \$28,294.96. Additionally, the Alliance's grant from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality awarded \$220,200.00 to fund our multi-year experimental brush management project. 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
Arivaca Watershed Education Task Force
Arizona Antelope Foundation
Arizona Association of Conservation Districts
Arizona Department of Agriculture
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
Arizona Farm Bureau
Arizona Game & Fish Department
Arizona Game & Fish Department, Tucson
Habitat Partnership Committee
Arizona Land & Water Trust
Arizona Revegetation & Monitoring Co.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
Arizona State Land Department
BKW Farms
Buckelew Farm
Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart:
Cooperative Watershed Management Program
Cascabel Conservation Association
Chilton Ranch
City of Tucson Water Department
Commotion Studios
Coronado National Forest
Cross-Watershed Network
Cuenca Los Ojos Foundation
Diamond Bell Ranch
Elkhorn Ranch
Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation
Friends of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
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 and Wildlife Foundation
Noon Ranch
Old Hayhook Ranch
Palo Alto Ranch and Baboquivari Peak Ranch
Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Pima County Office of Sustainability and 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, LLC
Safari Club International, Arizona Chapter
San Fernando School District
Santa Margarita Ranch
Sierrita Mining & Ranching Co.
Sky Island Alliance
Southern Arizona Cattlemen's Protective Association
Southern Arizona Rangeland Honey
Southwest Decision Resources
Stockwell Honey Company
The Loft Cinema

The Nature Conservancy
The Rangelands Partnership
Three Points Fire District
Tohono O'odham Nation Fire Department
Tucson Interagency Dispatch Center
U of A CALS Communications and Cyber Technologies
U of A CALS Cooperative Extension
U of A James E. Rogers College of Law, Natural Resource Use & Management Clinic
U of A Little Chapel of All Nations
U of A School of Anthropology
U of A School of Natural Resources and the Environment
U of A Southwest Center
U of A Student Chapter for the Society for Range Management: Tierra Seca
U of A Wild Cat Research and Conservation Center
US Border Patrol
US Bureau of Land Management
USDA Agricultural Research Service - 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 & Education
Westland Resources, Inc.
Wildvisions Arizona
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, 2017 and October 31, 2018.

Amazon Smile
Wally & Lew Armer
Arizona Tax & Business, PLLC
B&D Ranch
Kerry Baldwin
Barb's Frame of Mind
Joe & Sally Barber
Antony & Amy Barton
Dinah Bear & Roger McManus
Paul Bear
William & Nancy Coe Burke
Christopher & Lezlie Campisano
Steve & Nansy Carson
Helen Clay Chace
Jim & Sue Chilton
Richard C Collins
Rachel Darché & Vic Laurion
Elkhorn Ranch
Steve Engel
Nancy Faulkner
Larry Fisher & Tahnee Robertson
Alden Freed
Sage Goodwin & Sadie Hadley
Thomas & Margaret Hall
Regis & Katherine Henckler
Tom & Chris Herrick
Nicole Hill
Patty Hosmer
Carl Benson Hufford
George & Peggy Hunt
Hush Salon & Day Spa
Barbara Hutchinson
Charles & Jan Hutchinson
Jackpot Veterinary Center
Callie Jordan

Steve & Louisa Kessel
Susan Kiltie
Delores Kimmel
King's Anvil Ranch
Joe & Sarah King
John & Patricia King
Judith King
Mark Klingensmith
Dan & Mary Kretschmer
La Indita
Walter Lane
Jason Lohmeier
Katherine McCarthy
Michael & Kay McCarthy
Mitchel McClaran
Bill & Mary McDonald
Sharon McDonough-Means
Paul & Argyro Michelsen
Charley & Mary Miller
Janet Miller
I. George Miller, Jr.
George Montgomery
Brian & Denise Murray
Native Seed Search
Gerry & Laura Norman
Old Town Feed & Pet
Jim & Christine Oliver
JoEllen O'Neil
Carol Brooks Parker
Eva C Patten
Ellen Petersen
Powder River Imports
Brian Powell & Leza Carter
Presidio Wealth Management
Cherry Provost

William & Marcia Radke
Rangeland Hands, Inc.
Polly Rattner
Rancho de la Osa
Richard & Helen Reeves
Anne Richards
Dan Robinett & Linda Kennedy
Jon & Peggy Rowley
Michael Rusing
Rob & Reta Rutledge
George Ruyle
Santa Margarita Ranch
Nathan Sayre
Cecil & Carol Schwalbe
Don & Marion Slack
Bob & Lloyd Sharp
Tom Sheridan & Christine Szuter
Charles & Elaine Silverson
Rick & Jody Simpson
Southern Arizona Home Builders
Association
Sherie Steele & Dave Graham
Beth Stein
Pat Stoddard
Charlotte Tate
John M. Taylor
Walt & Nancy Taylor
Gretchen Theobald
Trico Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Gene & Charlyne Tucker
Anna Tyler
Vanguard Gabriel Fund
Stephen Williams
Caroline Wilson
Chris Zeoli





Altar Valley Conservation Alliance
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Tucson, AZ 85726

ANNUAL ALTAR VALLEY COMMUNITY MEETING:

May 29th, 2019 at the King's Anvil Ranch

AN EVENING WITH ED ROBERSON:

September 21st, 2019 at the Mountain Oyster Club

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STAFF

Executive Director: Mary Miller
Conservation & Science Coordinator: Julia Sittig
Community Outreach and Education Coordinator: Sarah King
Program Administrator: Sherie Steele

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