

Friends of the San Pedro River Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016

Vision Mission and Values

Our vision

- The San Pedro is a river of life.

Our mission – our unique role in achieving this:

- We will work with the staff of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) to conserve, protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the river.
- We will educate the public about the River in order to create a social environment in which the worth of the San Pedro is understood and appreciated.
- We will advocate for the preservation of the San Pedro River to the public and government entities that have an impact on its fate.

The Friends of the San Pedro River operates in accordance with these values:

- We cherish the River. The San Pedro River is an internationally significant natural and cultural treasure.
- Advocacy. We are the voice for the river.
- Volunteers. We are a volunteer organization that relies on and encourages the individual creativity and initiative of its members.
- Cooperation. We succeed through cooperation, not confrontation.
- Visitor Services. A good visitor experience builds public awareness and support for our goals.
- Partnerships. Partners are force multipliers. We will be active participants in local conservation issues.
- Connections. Membership in the Conservation Lands Foundation Community and other national organizations connects us to funding and expertise.
- Conservation. We are committed to the conservation of our planet's increasingly scarce resources.
- Science. Our positions will be based on science.

The strategic context – The Challenge

Our Challenge

The San Pedro River is a river worth saving. Roughly half of the upper San Pedro River still has water adequate to support a reasonably healthy riparian ecosystem. If measures are taken now to preserve the aquifer, the future of the San Pedro can be assured. Our main challenge is to influence public opinion so that there is more support for the preservation of the San Pedro.

Our Analysis

We seek to change public opinion to foster more favorable public policy and engender support from public officials. We want to create a public environment in which there is more support for conservation.

The FSPR must take the lead in bringing about this change in public attitude. The SPRNCA should be viewed as a tremendous asset, not a threat. These values should become central to the Friends efforts at outreach:

- The economic value of eco-tourism, which is a low-impact, renewable source of revenue for businesses throughout the San Pedro valley.
- Sierra Vista is a gateway city for eco-tourism focused on the SPRNCA and other natural sites in Cochise County.
- The benefit to local residents of having a 57,000-acre National Conservation Area within a 10-minute drive.
- The importance of preserving the river to the continued existence of Fort Huachuca.
- The need to conserve water in general in the face of looming shortages.

We must also work to increase public awareness of the SPRNCA and what it has to offer. Anecdotal evidence points to the sad truth that perhaps a majority of local residents are not even aware of the SPRNCA's existence. We should seek to change this through education, lectures, tours, our visitor contact stations, festivals and other activities that attract local residents to the SPRNCA where they can experience what it has to offer first hand. Items to emphasize include:

- Recreational opportunities: hiking, biking, horseback riding, hunting, mountain biking, fishing, etc.
- American Historical sites: the importance of sites such as Charleston, Fairbank and Millville to relatively recent Arizona history.
- Pre-American historical sites: the unique paleontological, archeological and early historic sites in the SPRNCA, e.g., Murray Springs, Lehner mammoth kill site, and the Presidio of Santa Cruz de Terrenate.
- Bird watching opportunities. We must not forget to cultivate this loyal group of enthusiasts.

- Nature watching. The diversity of wildlife in the SPRNCA is its most outstanding feature. Unfortunately, wild animals have a tendency to remain unseen so we need to develop programs that give people a chance to view and learn about the many species of mammals and reptiles that live in the SPRNCA.

The San Pedro River is not just a local resource. Bird watchers, eco-tourists, historical enthusiasts and others from around the world seek out Cochise County and the SPRNCA. Their attendance probably represents the majority of visitation to the SPRNCA. These visitors are not just a source of revenue but also of support to the goals of the FSPR. In seeking to reach these groups, we should speak to these values:

- The SPRNCA is one of the great bird watching destinations.
- The SPRNCA is a rare wild area in an increasingly developed landscape.
- Our historical sites are world-class.
- Through contributions and membership in the Friends, these visitors and part-time residents can have an important impact on the San Pedro River.

Our goal is to sustain the flow of the San Pedro River

The Friends of the San Pedro River will work to cultivate existing support for the River and work to create new supporters in order to build political and social support for the preservation of the San Pedro River:

- Support efforts to preserve the existing aquifer.
- Encourage conservation of water within all watershed communities.
- Speak in favor of recharge and other initiatives intended to support the river – but not as a substitute for conservation of the aquifer.
- Continue efforts to educate the public on the natural and cultural values of the SPRNCA in order to garner support for the San Pedro River.
- Work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to ensure good stewardship of the natural and cultural resources within the SPRNCA.

The Plan

This plan is intended to outline the major work programs for the next three years. The Aims and Objectives presented here will be supported by a yearly Annual Work Plan that contains details for the major actions described here, to include timelines, resources and assignments.

Our overall strategy is to focus on four main areas:

- **Advocacy.** We will speak for the River and its preservation at public forums, in the media and with the private and government entities who control the resources needed to sustain the flow of the San Pedro.
- **Interpretation.** We will provide visitor services to the public both on site at the SPRNCA and in other meeting places. The goal is to educate and foster appreciation of the National Conservation Area.
- **Resource management.** We will work with the BLM to ensure that conservation remains the priority for management of the SPRNCA. We will contribute funding and labor to support both natural and cultural resource management efforts.
- **Improvement of the Friends of the San Pedro River.** Our first Strategic Plan was largely focused on improvements to our own organization. That document guided the Friends through a time of great change. We have now achieved a new level of complexity and work, but the need to improve how we operate remains.

Aims and Objectives

1. Advocate for the protection of the San Pedro watershed.

Aim

To influence public opinion and government officials in favor of measures to ensure a healthy riparian area and the protection of the natural and cultural resources it sustains. Our values lead us to a scientific basis for our positions, a cooperative, non-confrontational style and the use of partnerships and networks to achieve this goal.

Objective 1. Develop a detailed strategy for our advocacy program. Seek the help of our national level partners, e.g., the TNC and CLF.

Objective 2. Develop a working relationship with public officials and their staffs. Learn how to communicate effectively with this important group of people. Use this communication to ask for their support on key issues.

Objective 3. Track local, state, and federal legislation, budget and planning issues that affect SPRNCA and the National Conservation Lands (with the help of CLF network and other partners) and speak for the River.

Objective 4. Develop, execute and maintain a program for communicating our positions on major issues to the public at large through all forms of media.

Objective 5. Harness our interpretive programs in support of our advocacy role. Use our 2 visitor contact stations to educate the public on our organizational goals.

Objective 6. Seek donors willing to help us fund this program. Cultivate local partners to help us execute our program.

2. Interpret the San Pedro to our visitors and the public at large.

Aim

Our aim is to increase public awareness and appreciation of the San Pedro River. This is a broad topic that includes operating visitor contact stations, providing hikes and tours within the SPRNCA, hosting lectures at sites away from the SPRNCA, working with educational institutions, placing informative articles and announcements in media outlets and staging large events to attract people to the River. Accomplishment of this aim will be governed by our values, which call for basing all materials on science and providing the best possible visitor experience.

Objective 1. Provide a quality experience for visitors to the SPRNCA. Make sure they have access to good information about recreational activities. Provide informative, entertaining interpretive displays at our contact stations and at SPRNCA sites.

Objective 2. Produce a steady stream of articles, social media postings, newsletters, lectures, public service announcements and brochures that publicize and inform about the facilities, recreational activities and events available in the SPRNCA.

Objective 3. Seek increased attendance at all events held by the Friends. Expand our visitor base at the regional and national level. Leverage partnerships with other organizations and businesses that are potential sources of visitors.

Objective 4. Strengthen the docent and volunteer programs through an improved training and mentoring program. Partner with other organizations to create better training programs for our docents, e.g., the Master Naturalist Program.

Objective 5. Host major events each year. This may include a nature-oriented festival in association with springtime bird migrations, a historic oriented event at Fairbank, a film festival, or other activities.

Objective 6. Provide educational programs, both at the SPRNCA and off-site. Use these as an opportunity to teach about the SPRNCA and what it has to offer as well as share our organizational goals.

3. Assure proper resource management of the SPRNCA.

Aim

The BLM is the land manager for the SPRNCA. This entails a myriad of actions and decisions on an ongoing basis the net result of which is sustainment of the resources of the area, cultural and natural. The FSPR must work to maintain a positive and constructive working relationship with the BLM that positions us to provide our input into their daily activities. We also contribute funding and labor to assist with resource management projects. Our values dictate that we perform this task cooperatively – we will not engage in confrontation with the BLM. As one of our core values is conservation, we will work at all times to encourage BLM actions that reduce resource usage in the SPRNCA.

Objective 1. Strengthen and improve trust and communication between FSPR and BLM.

Objective 2. Identify our own view of conservation management priorities and offer BLM input on the RMP and other decisions – and help advocate for the resources they need.

Objective 3. Take on projects to conserve, protect, and enhance natural and historical resources in the SPRNCA.

4. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Friends of the San Pedro organizational structure and processes.

Aim

To continue our evolution into a larger, better funded, more influential organization that meets our organizational goals in a cost-effective manner. Our values encourage us to rely on the creative energy of our volunteers. We will also seek local partners in order to maximize our effectiveness. Membership in national organizations such as the Conservation Lands Foundation will continue to be key to our success.

Objective 1. Operate our bookstores as economically viable enterprises, using volunteer help and paid oversight.

Objective 2. Recruit, train and deploy volunteers to perform the work of the organization. Provide natural and cultural docent training to develop a cadre of knowledgeable individuals to support our activities. Develop good lines of communications with our volunteers, including a newsletter, web site, social media and frequent email announcements.

Objective 3. Hire and retain staff and/or contractors as funding allows to support the board in operations, advocacy and other projects as may be identified.

Objective 4. Improve funding by applying for grants, learn about and implement a development plan and program to ensure sufficient and diverse funding sources.

Objective 5. Ensure that the organization is structured properly to perform its mission in accordance with our organizational values. Reorganize as required. The organization should be inclusive, encouraging new participants and engaging their skills.