

The Santa Cruz River: A Stream Of Nature and Culture

BY JOAQUÍN MURRIETA-SALDÍVAR,
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SONORAN DESERT ECOREGION PROGRAM

As I watched our board and staff, standing at the edge of the Santa Cruz River where cool waters flow across the Sonora-Arizona border, I began to fully realize the connectivity that the Sonoran Institute provides to this unique watershed.

From border marker #111 northward, the San Rafael Valley stands silent, vibrant, and open thanks to the critical involvement the Sonoran Institute began nine years ago to maintain this pristine working landscape. To the south, the clear waters of the Santa Cruz flow past the pastoral landscape of “Vallecitos” and the Chivato Mountains in Sonora, Mexico, both of which are witnessing the integration of responsible ranching practices.

In December 2001, the board of directors and friends of the Sonoran Institute had the opportunity to visit the Mexican side of these extraordinary binational grasslands. The river flows as it did 70 years ago in Tucson, nurturing a corridor for wildlife and a habitat for aquatic life. It also provides drinking water for seven communities, dozens of ranches, and many small farms. The highlight of the field trip was establishing the connection between work conducted in San Rafael Valley early in the 1990s and the community-based conservation being conducted today along the Sonoran portion of the Santa Cruz River.

The Sonoran Institute’s approach to conservation in the Santa Cruz River demonstrates clear and tangible benefits derived by these communities. Ventura Rivera, a local leader of San Lazaro, a



The board of directors and friends of the Sonoran Institute visit the Mexican side of the binational grasslands.

community bordering the Santa Cruz remarked, “The Sonoran Institute is the only institution that really puts emphasis on people issues and conservation. Thanks to their assistance, we are implementing new ways to manage our grasslands and be responsible to the future of our communities.” During the board visit, the Sonoran Institute’s partners from Sonora summarized their work in water quality monitoring, land-tenure studies, bird surveys, and vegetation condition. Each of these studies is designed to connect science and community participation in conservation.

At the Community Center for Conservation of the Santa Cruz River, established by the Sonoran Institute and the community of Miguel Hidalgo, a traditional Sonoran style “pit” barbecue meal was served to the hungry crowd. Everyone had an opportunity to talk and experience first hand the excellent community participation occurring with this conservation initiative. Inspired by the interaction and collaboration, enthusiastic Sonoran Institute board members spontaneously gathered funds to send Lalo Luzania, an eighth grader at the local school and budding expert on bird life of the Santa Cruz, to the

Contributors

TO THE SONORAN INSTITUTE
MAY 2001 - JANUARY 2002

David Aiken
Nina and Archie Alexander
Lynn Anders
Anonymous (2)
Valer and Josiah Austin
John Baden
Sandra and Francis Blake
Lucy Blake and Steve Nightengale
Fred and Kay Bosselman
Conley Brooks
David J. Brower
Anne Browning
Pamela and William Bryan
Donna and Jim Byers
Susan and James Chilton
Shel and Jacque Clark
Belton Copp
Lane and Linda Coulston
Paul Craig
Donald and Joan Diamond
Ziya Dikman
Dorothy and Joseph Distelheim
Lori Stephens Dolan and Dick Dolan
Karan English and Rob Elliott
Jacques and Cristine Etchegoyhen
Dorothy Finley
Susan and Brad Foster
Francis Gilbert
John K. Goodman
Andy Gordon
Sally Greenleaf
Ginny and Frank Gregg
Diana Hadley
Mary Halsell Leonard
Kiku and Johnnie Hanes
Rene Henry
Susan and Jack Heyneman
Clarice and James Holder

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In Celebration Of Lives Well Lived

EMILY FAULKNER STEVENS

We will remember Emily for her quiet, peaceful, and monumental influence on conservation issues across the intermountain west. A Sonoran Institute board member and a fervent environmental advocate, Emily put her heart into protecting working agricultural landscapes and open space, promoting regional arts and affordable housing, and preserving "sense of place" in communities around the West.

ERVIN H. ZUBE

Erv's sound thinking, ties to the Tucson community, and global perspective were critical in establishing the Sonoran and Rincon Institutes and guiding us through our formative years. Erv was both an extraordinary academic, and a dedicated conservationist. We are forever indebted to him for his profound contributions to our organizations.

Sonoran Institute Staff Updates

Ray Rasker, Ph.D. is unveiling the new Sonoran Institute SocioEconomics Program and will be its Director.

Ben Alexander will add his expertise as Associate Director, SocioEconomics Program, and continue leading the Working Landscapes Program. Dennis Glick is the new

Director of the Northwest Office. Dennis worked many years with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition pioneering growth management efforts in the Greater Yellowstone region. He served as the co-director of the Wildlands and Human Needs Program at World Wildlife Fund and is a leader in developing community-based conservation



Dennis Glick

practices nationally and internationally. Randy Carpenter, a Land Use Planner with extensive experience in helping to protect rural landscapes and wildland ecosystems, is also new. Randy assists citizens and local governments in the Northern Rockies with growth management and land conservation efforts. Amy Liposky Vincent is the Office Manager of the Northwest Office. Wendy Erica Werden, APR, is the new Director of Strategic Communications, and Bruce Weise is the Electronic Communications and Development Assistant. Watch for more staff updates in the next issue of Vision.

Moving on...

We thank and wish the best of success to people who have left the Institute to pursue other adventures: Mark Briggs, Shel Clark, Karin Lawrence and Melissa Richey.

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Nan Stockholm Walden
Carlos Valdes-Casillas

STAFF

TUCSON, ARIZONA
7650 EAST BROADWAY BLVD.,
SUITE 203 • TUCSON, AZ 85710
PH: 520.290.0828

Luther Propst Executive Director
John Shepard Associate Director
Kathryn Jenish Special Assistant
Erin McIntire Administrative Assistant

COMMUNICATION

Wendy Erica Werden Director
Reggie Romo Research Assistant
Bruce Weise Communications Assistant

DEVELOPMENT

Holly Hemming Foster Director

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Ginny Zacheo Director
Keith Ann Atkinson Office Manager

SONORAN DESERT ECOREGION PROGRAM

Steve Cornelius Director

Joaquin Murrieta-Saldivar .. Associate Director
Nina Chambers Project Manager
Alfonso Gonzalez Program Associate
(Mexico)
Cheryl Lord-Hernandez Program Assistant
Francisco Zamora-Arroyo .. Project Manager

SOUTHEAST ARIZONA PROGRAM

Roseann Hanson Director
Carolyn Gorman Outreach Specialist
Mary Vint Community Outreach
Coordinator

BOZEMAN, MONTANA
201 SOUTH WALLACE AVENUE
BOZEMAN, MT 59715
PH: 406.587.7331

Dennis Glick Director, Northwest Office
Randy Carpenter Land Use Planner
Amy Liposky Vincent Office Manager

SOCIOECONOMICS PROGRAM

Ray Rasker Director
Ben Alexander Associate Director

YELLOWSTONE TO YUKON COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Barb Cestero Director

CANMORE, ALBERTA
713 MAIN STREET, SUITE 6
CANMORE, AB T1W 2B2
PH: 403.678.4040

Carole Stark Program Associate

TRAINING FIELD STAFF
P.O. BOX 849
PAONIA, CO 81428
PH: 970.527.2409

Lee Nellis Director of Land
Use Planning

WWW.SONORAN.ORG
SONORAN@SONORAN.ORG

Faces Of Conservation

BY LUTHER PROPST, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I read through this issue, one theme common to each story stands out: a handful of people concerned about their community stepped forward to make a difference. During my 20 years working in conservation, I'm continually delighted with the willingness of local advocates to embrace a process that begins with the end in mind. This happens across neighborhoods, counties, regions, and even international borders.

The refrain we often hear from these "hometown heroes" is that the Sonoran Institute provides people with the tools to address their own conservation objectives. People who never thought they'd be leading their neighbors feel the passion and

confidence to make things happen in their own backyards.

Diverse interests come together for the betterment of all—from ranchers and developers, to public land managers and environmental advocates. The Sonoran Institute continues to provide resources until local efforts have the confidence, capacity, and track record to ensure that their conservation goals are met.

It all starts with one person. So when you look at yourself, we hope you see one more face of conservation just waiting to emerge.

Luther Propst



Contributors

CONT. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

David and Joan Howell
Ross and Susan Humphreys
Glenn and Gabriella Isaacson
Bill and Smokey Jack
Ray Keale
Mary B. Keller
Lenora Kirby
Jake Kittle
George Kittle
Walter Lane
Nancy Laney
Darlene Lavender
Ann Leenhouts and David Quantz
Steven C. Leuthold Family Foundation
Cynthia Marble
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George Masek
Connie and John McDonald
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Linda and Michael McNulty
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Muffy Moore
Maryanne Mott and Herman Warsh
Helen and Walter Norton
Gil and Marge Orday
Lyman Orton
Linda and Harry Page
Eva and Duncan Patten
Mary and David Peachin
Donald Pitt Family Foundation
Lollie Benz Plank
Homer A. & Mildred S. Scott Foundation
Cabot Sedgwick
Jeanne Seely
Farwell Smith
Paul Snyder and Marty Frick
Ann Speer
Nancy Speer
Emily Faulkner Stevens
Hope and Bob Stevens
Carter and Mary Thacher
Julia Thorne and Richard Charlesworth
Karen Vynner-Brooks
Nan Stockholm Walden and Richard S. Walden
Laurel Wilkening and Godfrey Sill

IN MEMORY OF
Marguerite Penfield Stockholm

IN MEMORY OF
Emily Faulkner Stevens

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Urban Planning & Growth

Making Tucson a More Sustainable Community

BY JOHN SHEPARD, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Tucson, like many growing urban areas across the West, is learning to deal with the delicate balance of conservation and increased population. At the invitation of the Tucson City Council, the Sonoran Institute is working with city staff, builders, planners, architects, and community activists to develop policy recommendations to encourage infill development and redevelopment of existing areas.

"If adopted by the City," said Tom Doucette, a local developer who is helping draft the policy proposals, "we can focus more on development options that reflect our community goals and help in the preservation of our unique Sonoran Desert environs."

The recommendations are Phase Two of the Sonoran Institute's report *Building from the Best of Tucson*, and are based on developments highlighted in Phase One. Nearly all of the policies will require public-private partnerships and rely on education and incentives to raise the

quality of local development. Recommendations will be presented to the Tucson City Council this spring and will include the following:

FAST TRACK:

A special review process for development projects that meet stringent environmental and community-enhancing design standards.

COMMUNITY DESIGN ACADEMY:

A forum that organizes educational programs for the general public and business entities on how commercial and residential development can better reflect community values.

GREEN BUILDING:

A program that certifies and provides marketing assistance to developers who take advantage of solar energy, water conservation technology, and other environmental innovations to minimize the impact of development.

REHABILITATION:

A new ordinance that facilitates redevelopment of Tucson's aging housing stock and commercial buildings.



Contributors

CONT. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Nearly one hundred percent of the staff support the Sonoran Institute, not only with their dedication and long hours, but with their financial contributions as well.

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

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Peter and Debbie Backus
Kevin Dahl
Molly and Evan Eglin
Mary Elizabeth Pollard
Rocking K Development Company
Thomas and Debora Williams

Creating Greenways In The Upper Columbia Valley

BY BARB CESTERO, DIRECTOR, YELLOWSTONE TO YUKON
COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

When Canadian explorer David Thompson found his way across the Rocky Mountains, he landed in British Columbia's Upper Columbia Valley. This flat broad valley lying between the Purcell Mountains and the Rocky Mountains has been home to people—from First Nations to European settlers—for 11,000 years. The upper stretches of the Columbia River meander through the valley, creating the longest continuous wetlands remaining in North America and supporting over 200 resident and migratory bird species. The valley's shrinking grasslands provide critical winter range for bighorn sheep and other ungulates, while bears move through on their travels between the mountain ranges.

Like so many other mountain regions, this natural beauty is attracting an increasing number of residents and second homeowners to the valley's small towns. This part of British Columbia is growing at a faster rate than the rest of the province.

Since 1999, the Sonoran Institute has been working with residents to craft and implement a community vision that will protect the assets drawing people here. In January 2000, over 140 residents from throughout the valley gathered for the Successful Communities Visioning Forum at which they identified shared values and goals, and prioritized next steps for their communities. The highest priorities that emerged were regional planning, growth management, and the protection of greenspaces, wildlife corridors, and recreational trails.

Since this Forum, the Sonoran Institute has been working with residents to develop a citizens' guide to land use

planning in the valley and to implement a "greenways" system within and between the valley's communities. Greenways are ribbons of protected open space that link nature reserves, parks, and cultural sites with each other and with the communities. By protecting or restoring wildlife habitat and providing non-motorized recreational opportunities, greenways will enhance the quality of life enjoyed by those who live there.

Locally, the Columbia River Greenways Alliance is leading this effort. This community partnership includes local governments, Parks Canada, Ktunaxa-

Kinbasket Tribal Council, Rotary Club, Ministry of Forests, local businesses, local conservation and naturalist organizations, and residents from the towns of Invermere, Radium Hot Springs, Edgewater, and Windermere. Meredith



"The Upper Columbia Valley is at a critical juncture in its future. Working with the Sonoran Institute, we have begun to harness local capacity to actively choose what that future will be."

—Meredith Hamstead

Hamstead, a local leader who was instrumental in organizing the original Forum, is serving as a full-time project manager, contracted to ensure

the continuity of the project and to support the work of volunteers.

In the fall of 2001, the Sonoran Institute hosted a community mapping workshop for the Alliance based on the Institute's new workbook *Landscapes, Wildlife and People: A Community Workbook for Habitat Conservation*. Participants used this workshop to refine their vision of a greenways system and pick a pilot project that would embody the overall goals of greenways.

Working directly with these communities, the Sonoran Institute has demonstrated that the power of inclusive, collaborative approaches to conservation can produce lasting results that Yellowstone to Yukon residents and wildlife will enjoy for generations to come.



Custer County: Pioneering A New Vision In Community Conversation

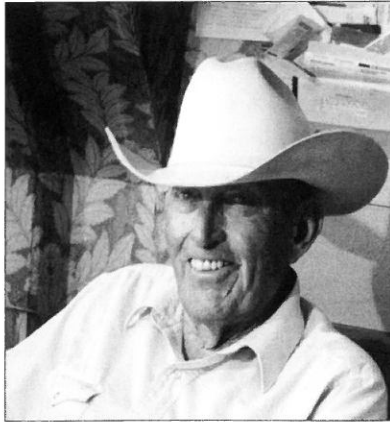
BY TODD WILKINSON

This is a story with all of the ingredients of a modern Western tragedy: a picturesque valley in Custer County, Colorado – rich with wildlife and cupped between two spectacular lines of mountains; a group of honest, salt-of-the-earth ranching families running cows just as their 19th-century ancestors did but now feeling their land and traditional way of life slipping away; and on the horizon, slowly replacing them, a wave of newcomers pouring in to buy land in what remains of the wild Colorado Rockies.

Right now, Custer County could well be following the familiar heart-wrenching path that has transformed so many other once-idyllic valleys across the interior of the American West, turning them into places that long-time locals sometimes find hard to recognize.

Except that here, in the pastoral Wet Mountain Valley, citizens are banding together around a common community vision based on the understanding that in Custer County far more can still be saved than has been lost.

In fact, citizen-led efforts are being held up as a model for how other valleys can preserve the essence of their rural



“Instead of going to heaven, people are coming to Custer County.”

— The late Ben Kettle, fourth-generation Custer County rancher

landscapes while at the same time creating a stronger, more cohesive sense of community.

For nearly three years, the Sonoran Institute has helped residents of Custer County foster a dialogue about things they value and develop strategies to protect them. In 2001, the homegrown effort bore a novel plan that is being touted by national newspapers as a milestone. Thanks to \$1 million in grants from the Colorado Conservation Trust, Great

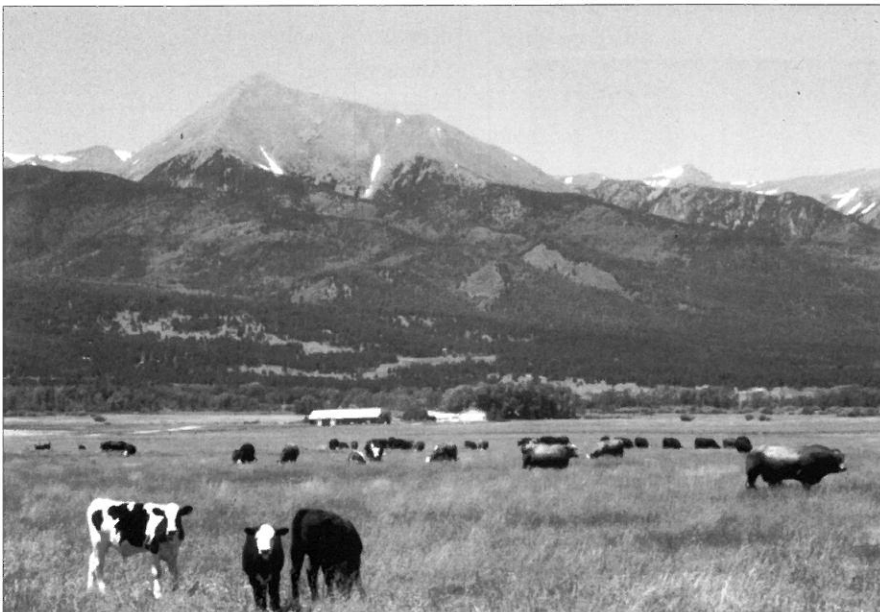
Outdoors Colorado, and seed money from private contributors, local citizens have unveiled an ambitious \$10-million campaign to permanently protect working ranches and 11,000 acres in the heart of the valley through conservation easements.

Woody Beardsley, a Trust for Public Land field representative and native Coloradan with roots deep in the ranching culture, says that while the campaign is momentous, key groundwork was laid by the Sonoran Institute.

In 1999, Sonoran Institute staff was invited by the San Isabel Foundation, the local land trust, and the Custer Heritage Committee (an informal group of local ranchers concerned about land fragmentation), to host one of the Sonoran Institute's trademark community visioning workshops. Before holding this event, the Sonoran Institute's Ben Alexander and local partners formed a steering committee with broad representation from the community as a whole.

The first workshop began with a public barbecue and included a full day of citizens identifying the common rural threads that hold their community together. “Most people realize they can't keep Custer County special without coming together and exploring all of the tools at their disposal,” Alexander says. “Our role was to help them begin a dialogue. The recent investment of \$1 million in local land protection is recognition from the outside world that what's happening here is remarkable. What you see, however, is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the hard work carried out by citizens going back years.”

A key turning point occurred when citizens added up the real costs of growth. With assistance from the San Isabel Foundation, American Farmland Trust, and National Association of Counties, the Sonoran Institute completed a cost of services study for Custer County which



The beautiful Wet Mountain Valley

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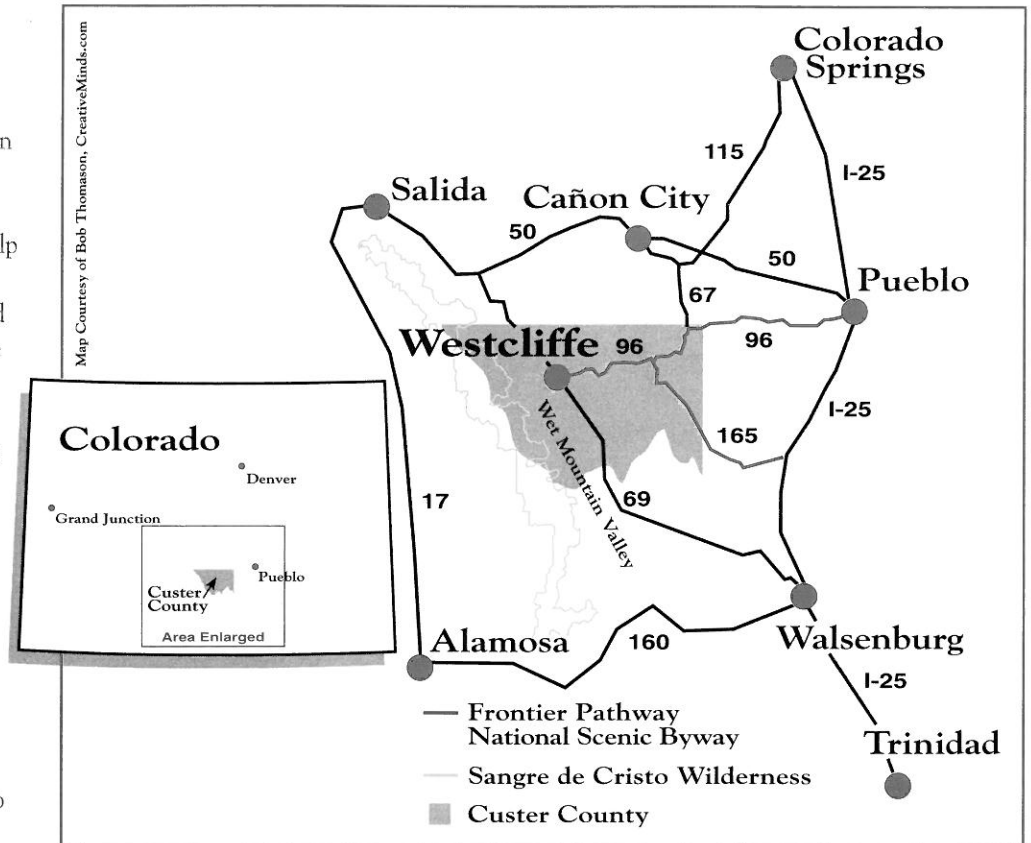
...Custer County

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revealed that rural sprawl actually represents a net drain on tax revenue—not a gain—for county coffers. It's a lesson that has implications for other rural counties, too. "This study is a great example of how solid information can help change the public dialogue on growth, serve to examine the myths that surround it, and engage citizens in finding land use policies that will work for them," Alexander says.

"Initially, there was suspicion from the ranching community about an outside group coming in and talking to us," says rancher Randy Rusk, who is the first participant in the ranch land protection campaign, and is working with both his father and son to keep his cattle operation viable. "Ben won over our trust because he showed us the Sonoran Institute was not here to preach but to help us realize our options as we look into the future. The biggest difference is that once the Sonoran Institute made a commitment to our community, it stayed with us and didn't walk away."

Today, the Custer Heritage Committee and the San Isabel Foundation are influential forces in helping the community craft its first-ever county-wide master plan. The effort dovetails with efforts to upgrade planning and zoning codes



fashioned to preserve open space, wildlife habitat for such species as elk and pronghorn antelope, and provide incentives for cluster development.

"Meaningful and lasting public policy often begins with a discussion of common values," says Alexander who adds that Custer County is an exciting example of

community-based conservation because it involves a combination of non-government and government-directed efforts.

"Rarely do we have an opportunity to facilitate such dialogues in the West because of acrimony, the rapid pace of change, and partisan politics. People here have set aside their differences to work together as neighbors helping neighbors," Alexander said. "It has never ceased to amaze me how aware this rural community is about what it takes to look after not only themselves but the integrity of the land."

In Custer County, ranchers, planners, and environmental advocates are choosing to re-write a potential modern-day tragedy. The final chapter is far from complete, but with assistance from the Sonoran Institute, local heroes are working together to make sure conservation plays a leading role. For more information on Custer County, please contact Ben Alexander at (406) 587-7331.



Community visioning workshop in progress.



Sonoran Institute's New SocioEconomics Program

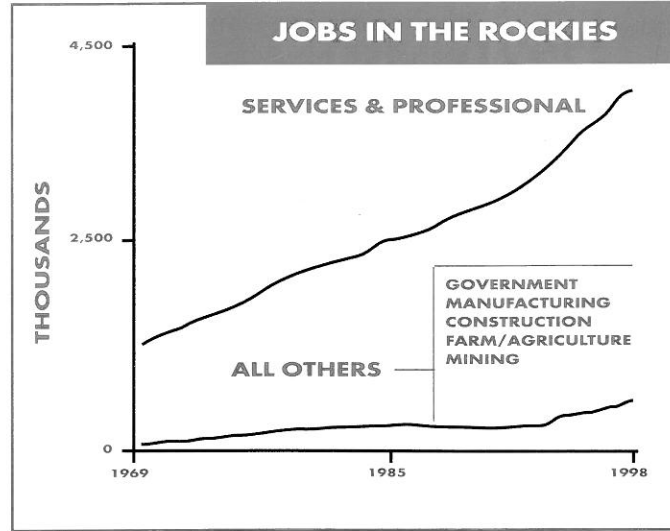
Perceptions Change with Shifts in Western Economies

BY RAY RASKER, PH.D., DIRECTOR, SOCIOECONOMICS PROGRAM

The culture of the West, our collective consciousness, identity, and sense of place and belonging are influenced by an economic history that is tied to the land as the source of wealth. The land provided food, clothing, and shelter for early pioneers and it provided a wealth of minerals, petroleum reserves, and lumber for the companies that followed. Entire communities sprang up overnight that were dependent on what could be grown or dug up and exported to distant markets.

Not surprisingly, this view of the economy persists. One of the popular bumper stickers in the rural West says: "If it can't be grown, it's gotta be mined." Another claims: "True wealth comes from the ground." However, the economy of the West has grown and diversified in ways that are very different from popular perception. With few exceptions, almost all of the growth has been in sectors other than those related to forestry, mining, oil and gas development, and agriculture—what used to be the traditional staples of the Western economy.

Today true wealth is generally created by brain-power industries—by engineers, architects, researchers, designers, financial specialists, managers, and a myriad of occupations variously labeled as "services." In addition, in many communities the biggest source of income is from the mailbox, in the form of retirement



benefits, 401K plans, and investment income. The rural West has been discovered and, for the first time in history, the migration of urbanites to the rural West has begun to outpace the movement of rural people to the cities.

But are these changes good for the West? While the economy may be different, new challenges have emerged that do not always leave people and the land better off. Sprawling subdivisions, an increasing divide between the haves and have-nots, and the loss of ranchlands to development are some of the social and environmental challenges of this so-called New West, Next West, or Real West.

In order to address these shifts, the Sonoran Institute has created the

SocioEconomics Program. The program helps residents of the West understand the changing economy, the ways in which it impacts land use, and plan for development that uses a quality environment as an economic asset—steering growth in a direction that preserves or improves the land and living conditions.

The staff of this new program have years of experience in economics,

demographics, and the social sciences. The SocioEconomics program will consist of five elements: (1) research; (2) media outreach and communication; (3) training programs for communities, conservation groups, and land management agencies on how to use economics as a tool for conservation; (4) on-the-ground assistance to communities, and (5) training and mentoring of students, thereby recruiting a new cadre of social scientists into the field of community-based conservation.

This unique program will allow us to incorporate socioeconomic information across all of the Sonoran Institute's work, as well as help communities and agencies access and utilize this much-needed resource to their greatest benefit.

What Is Your Legacy?

BY HOLLY HENNING FOSTER, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

For the past ten years the Sonoran Institute has responded to increasing requests from community leaders for the tools they use to create local healthy landscapes, vibrant economies and livable communities.

We believe the need for the Sonoran Institute's work will continue for generations.

As we plan to meet the needs of the future, the Sonoran Institute is establishing a

network of estate planners and planned giving professionals who understand the importance of a collaborative, community-based approach to conservation.

A gift to the Sonoran Institute through a trust, will, or endowment can help you meet your financial goals and help us to ensure that the impact of the Institute will continue for many years to come.



Please call me, Holly Henning Foster, at (520) 290-0828 to learn more about planned giving and other contributions to the Sonoran Institute.

Events Calendar

APRIL 8-13

Second Mobil Seminar for Mexican Journalists on the Colorado River Delta

APRIL 14-17

Western Community Stewardship Forum, Estes Park, Colorado

APRIL 25

Sonoran Institute Open House, Bozeman, Montana

MAY 4

Santa Cruz River Festival, San Lazaro, Sonora, Mexico

MAY 10

Luther Propst presents at University of Wyoming, Institute for Environmental and Natural Resources, Cody, Wyoming

MAY 16

Sonoran Institute Open House, Tucson, Arizona


JUNE 27-29

Board of Directors Meeting
Santa Fe, New Mexico

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...SANTA CRUZ CONTINUED

International Conference of Partners In Flight in Monterey, California. Lalo, who has learned more than one hundred bird calls and assists in gathering scientific data, will be representing the role of the local school in the first avian survey ever conducted in the Santa Cruz River.

The continuing work of the Sonoran Institute with people in the Santa Cruz watershed demonstrates the connection between community, conservation, and local responsibility. 




Lalo (right) gathers scientific data in the Santa Cruz watershed.

New Publications

A Resource Guide for Invasive Plant Management in the Sonoran Desert: Highlights of organizations and volunteer efforts for weed management in the Sonoran Desert. It includes a summary of current projects and contact information for each organization.

Bioinvasers of the Sonoran Desert: A re-issue of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's publication, *sonorensis*. An excellent outreach tool, the Sonoran Institute and The Nature Conservancy partnered with the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum to update and reprint this publication.

A Field Guide to Invasive Plants of the Sonoran Desert:

A guide in both English and Spanish of more than 20 of the worst invasive plants. It features color photos for identification, a description of each species, environmental impacts, and methods for control. 



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