



25

25 Years Strong, Shaping Our West

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

“For over 25 years, Sonoran Institute has been a pioneer in efforts to unite and celebrate the best of Western culture, history, nature and urban spaces. In a country and world that is sadly all too divided, Sonoran Institute unites and promotes all that we have in common; seeks practical solutions to the challenges the West faces; and, continues to prove that rural and urban environments can support one another and do so sustainably. We are proud to have made a lead gift to Sonoran Institute’s 25th Anniversary; we ask others to invest as well.”

Dick and Nan Walden, Farmers Investment Co./Green Valley Pecan Co., Sahuarita, AZ



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Last year in the Delta we hosted more than 2,700 community members, students, donors, government representatives, and NGOs at environmental education workshops and visits to our restoration sites. Also, as part of our annual tree planting event, 250 volunteers planted almost 6,000 trees at our Laguna Grande restoration site.

SECURING WATER FOR THE DELTA

The Colorado River Delta Water Trust holds 5,486 acre-feet of permanent water rights toward the goal of 8,604 acre-feet by 2017. This water is critical for maintaining reforested areas and wildlife habitat at our restoration sites.



Celebrating our Past, Embracing our Future

Dear Friends,

A 25th Anniversary is an important milestone—a time to celebrate the past and embrace the future. As with other organizations that have reached this milestone, the Sonoran Institute has developed important relationships and skills, and built a portfolio of accomplishments and experiences to position itself for a promising future.

Our 25th Anniversary Campaign has been a chance for us to meet and connect with longtime and new donors. We're near the close of the campaign, and thanks to our board, our campaign committee and the generosity of our supporters, we are on target to reach our goal of \$1.5 million by the end of 2015!

Our 2040 Vision, recently outlined in our new strategic framework, rededicates our organization to connecting people and communities to the natural resources that nourish and sustain them. At the same time, we make the economic case for continuing conservation. We know that the values that make the North American West so special—wide open spaces, wildlife and wild places, entrepreneurial spirit, and economic opportunities—are intricately connected and face mounting challenges.

Our West's greatest challenge is rapid change. The impacts of drought, flood, fire, and extreme weather events have become the expected. Events such as the toxic spill in the Animas River, while unexpected, are all too frequent and create their own cascade of consequences. Extreme heat and floods are increasingly impacting urban areas and creating environmental and health threats for the people who live there.

The Sonoran Institute has a track record of helping communities plan for and adapt to change. We are constantly developing innovative planning tools such as our Exploratory Scenario Planning trainings and our Resilient Communities Toolkit. We're working with Latino neighborhoods and leaders to create community based solutions to the impacts of climate change in underserved urban areas. We're building capacity in communities challenged by growth to protect natural resources and natural spaces as we have done in the West Valley of Phoenix by helping to found and launch the White Tanks Conservancy. We're restoring forsaken rivers, while preserving the cultural heritage and economic opportunities of the communities surrounding them, and creating constituencies to sustain them. Our work in the Colorado River Delta has literally transformed the river while providing opportunities for the people who live there. And we continue to work and advocate for Arizona's "Living River"—the Santa Cruz—and make it a model for using scarce water resources in innovative ways.

As your Board Chair and CEO, we would like to share with you how much fun we have had working together to lead the Sonoran Institute, how much we appreciate our hard-working, talented, and dedicated staff and board, how much we value our donors and partners, and how excited we all are about the future.

Stephanie Sklar
CEO

Henri Bisson
Chairman, Board of Directors

GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH

New Western Lands & Communities research found that urban Latino neighborhoods are disproportionately affected by impacts associated with changing climate. The report was based on detailed interviews with over 20 elected officials and community leaders representing multiple communities in Arizona, and a focus group discussion with Latino community leaders and representatives of conservation and environmental groups in the state.

PREPARING FOR DROUGHT AND WILDFIRE

Western Lands & Communities held its inaugural Resilient Communities Workshop, where representatives from Jemez Springs, New Mexico, and Missoula, Montana, learned how to mitigate the impacts of drought and wildfire. Both communities have begun implementing actions.



“Al restaurar el Delta, el Sonoran Institute provee una fuente de empleo importante para los miembros de la comunidad, quienes son capacitados con los conocimientos y herramientas adecuadas y así, ser parte de una economía verde.”

Fátima Luna, Delta Program Associate/Economist

Success Sprouts in the Delta

“Water is life.” It’s the mantra behind our mission to return water to the parched Colorado River Delta—and all signs are pointing to success. For more than 15 years, we and our partners have been planting one seedling at a time to restore the Delta’s once-lush habitat. Our theory behind last year’s historic pulse flow was that sending a surge of water down the Colorado for the first time in decades would allow nature to take over, and spur natural germination of native species like cottonwoods, willows, and mesquite. Follow-up research is proving us right. Since the pulse, there has been a nearly 25% increase in plant growth, reversing a decade of decline. With new plants have come more and different kinds of river-dependent birds, good news for both the Delta’s environment and tourism industry. While very positive overall, the results show that the Delta still needs our help. The pulse couldn’t accomplish what we’ve been doing with bulldozers: tearing out the invasive plant growth that is choking the riverbed. Areas we cleared ahead of the pulse had much higher germination success than those left alone. But progress is clear, and so is hope for more water: the Colorado River Delta Water Trust remains on track to meet its water delivery goals under Minute 319.

Preparing for Change

Change in the West comes fast and furious. Rapid and unplanned growth has threatened our open landscapes, our natural resources and, ultimately, our economy. Climate unpredictability is increasing the intensity and expense of water scarcity, fire, and floods. Our Western Lands & Communities team is helping communities stay ahead of these changes with innovative planning tools. Our Exploratory Scenario Planning tool identifies a range of possible scenarios that a community might face and highlights the best strategies to prepare for them. Our Resilient Communities Toolkit provides guidelines for communities that are ready to build climate change resilience and are looking for a place to begin. Last year, these tools helped five communities prepare for whatever circumstances the future may hold.

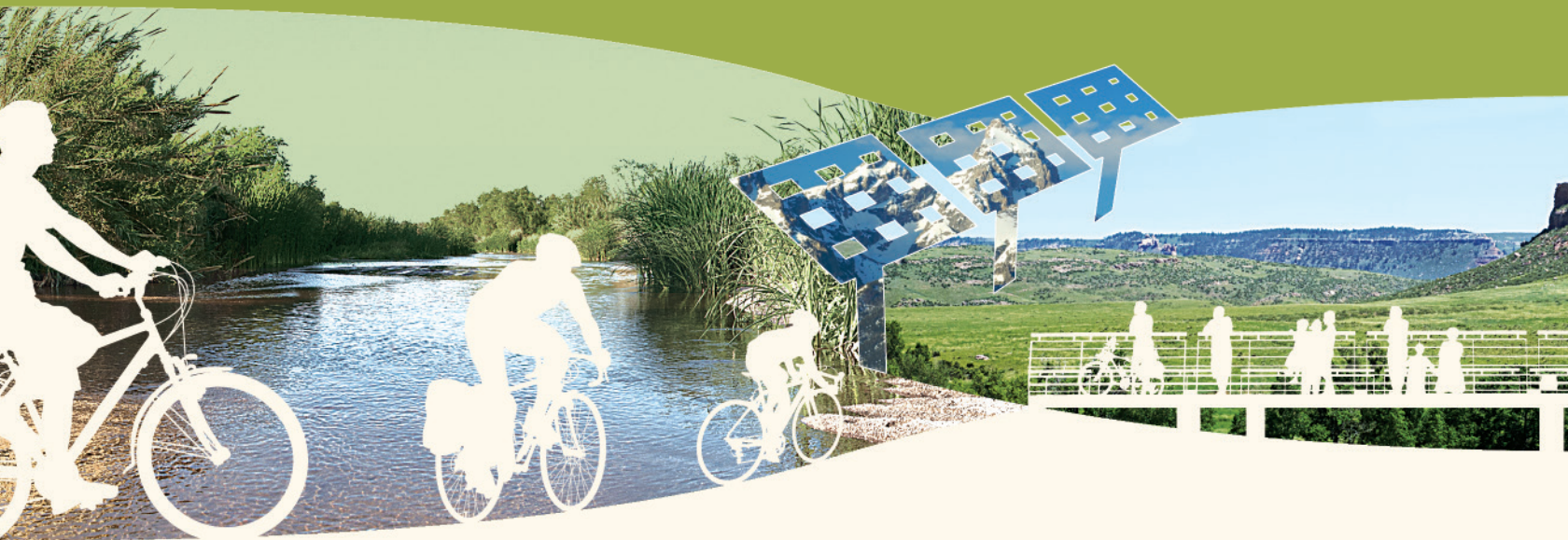
We are also helping states like Arizona prepare for—and meet—the new EPA Clean Power Plan rules, in a way that protects the state’s fragile environment. We’ve launched an innovative process to evaluate the use of renewable energy and are demonstrating new mitigation planning approaches that offset unavoidable impacts from infrastructure projects and renewable energy development.

PRAGMATIC CONSERVATION

We helped reintroduce the Arizona Sonoran Desert Heritage Act to Congress to protect almost 1 million acres of public land west of Phoenix and to preserve key military flight corridors to the Barry Goldwater Range.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

We are working with partners in Gunnison County, Colorado, on a concept that emerged from our 2014 Community Builders Leadership Training to create a regional economic prosperity strategy for Gunnison Valley.



R&D in the Sun Corridor

Our future West is a hub of innovation and transformative design—a living laboratory for developing sustainable solutions for people and the environment. By advancing innovations in clean energy, infrastructure, and river restoration, our Sun Corridor team is creating this future now. We’re helping Arizona realize its enormous solar energy potential by identifying hundreds of thousands of acres where solar plants could be built with minimal harm to the Sonoran Desert. Our ideas for transporting clean energy via “smart corridors” that locate power lines, highways, and rail lines within the same path instead of on undisturbed land has prompted agencies to explore siting a smart corridor along proposed routes for the new Interstate 11 highway. Our *Living River* reports for the Lower Santa Cruz River are also bearing fruit, demonstrating how reclaimed water can be used to restore rivers, their habitats, and their recreational uses for people in the arid West.

Marketing

We finalized our new Strategic Framework—our 2040 Vision—which will guide us in the coming years as we continue to tackle the challenges facing the West. We also embarked on a major revamp of our marketing and communications strategy that includes a new website, more robust media outreach, and an enhanced and integrated social media platform. Our goals are to communicate better with our donors, partners, and the communities we work and live in, and to do it in innovative, interactive, and easy-to-access ways.

“The tried and true Sonoran Institute approach of bringing together people with diverse opinions and helping communities solve real, on-the-ground issues, means that my work is making a difference now and for future generations.”

Hannah Oliver, Program Manager, Western Lands & Communities

Making the Business Case for Liveability in the Rockies

In the Rockies, we’re showing communities how to thrive economically by being wonderful places to live, work, and play. People move here to do New West jobs surrounded by Old West natural beauty and rural culture. They’re looking for short commutes and access to amazing recreation opportunities in an unspoiled landscape. They want the option to walk or bike to restaurants and stores and to their kids’ schools. They want a downtown that’s lively and filled with places to gather. They’re looking for *liveability*, and the communities that provide it are attracting high-quality workers and the diverse economic base that can weather downturns. Our years of research and experience in the field give us unique insight into how to build these strong communities. And we’re making a difference. Last year, 224 people from 35 different communities came to us for training, while another 1,248 tuned into our Community Builders webinar series. We also provided on-the-ground assistance with 12 different projects dealing with the nitty-gritty of creating liveability: reclaiming right-of-way, crafting master plans and economic development strategies, improving codes and aesthetics, and building leadership.

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Our Arizona Alliance for Liveable Communities finished three Health Impact Assessments and advised three municipal General Plan updates to encourage healthy and advanced approaches to urban development.

SMARTER COMMUNICATIONS

Our revamped and better integrated social media strategy has resulted in more than a 25% increase in followers and an over 100% increase in interactions.



Financial Summary

FY 2013: July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014

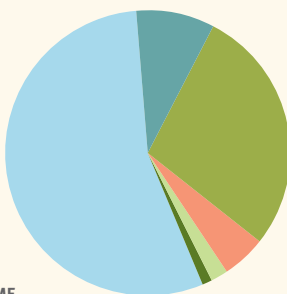
Revenue

Contributions	\$598,880	9%
Foundation Grants	\$1,817,141	28%
Government Grants	\$337,252	5%
Contract Income	\$3,559,885	55%
Program Service Income	\$11,551	0%**
Other Income	\$145,398	2%
	6,470,107*	100%

9%
CONTRIBUTIONS

55%
CONTRACT INCOME

<1%
PROGRAM SERVICE INCOME



28%
FOUNDATION GRANTS

5%
GOVERNMENT GRANTS

2%
OTHER INCOME

Expenses

Colorado River Delta	\$2,622,505	45%
Northern Rockies	\$430,609	7%
Western Lands & Communities	\$692,860	12%
Sun Corridor	\$298,400	5%
Communications	\$144,320	2%
Training & Community Leadership	\$1,970	0%**
Colorado Rockies	\$545,914	9%
Administration	\$827,361	14%
Public Policy	\$0	0%
Fundraising	\$320,656	5%
	\$5,884,595	100%

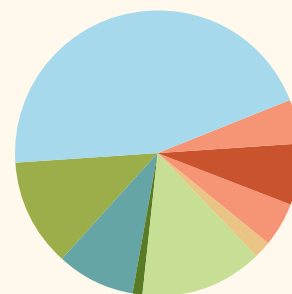
12%
WESTERN LANDS
& COMMUNITIES

9%
COLORADO ROCKIES

0%
PUBLIC POLICY

<1%
TRAINING & COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP

45%
COLORADO RIVER DELTA



14%
ADMINISTRATION

5%
SUN CORRIDOR

7%
NORTHERN ROCKIES

5%
FUNDRAISING

2%
COMMUNICATIONS

Reporting based on most recent available audit. The Sonoran Institute is audited annually by Keegan, Linscott & Kenon, PC.

*In addition, resources for FY'14 include net assets of \$937,304 carried forward from previous years and restricted for use in this and future fiscal years. **Less than 1 percent.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The Sonoran Institute is grateful to all our donors for their support. Please note, these contributions reflect contributions for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. We apologize for any errors or omissions.





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OUR MISSION

The Sonoran Institute's mission is to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them. We work at the nexus of commerce, community, and conservation to help people in the North American West build the communities they want to live in while preserving the values which brought them here. We envision a West where civil dialogue and collaboration are hallmarks of decision making, where people and wildlife live in harmony, and where clean water, air, and energy are assured.