

Eastern Arizona Courier



News

Watershed tries to anticipate forces of nature

By Stephany Mae Robinson
Staff Writer

"May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous and leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds," wrote Edward Abbey, an author/advocate of southwestern land preservation (from the Gila Watershed Newsletter).

With ongoing efforts to restore, protect and plan for the future needs of the local terrain and its hydrology, the Gila Watershed Partnership met like a force of nature at its Jan. 12 meeting.

"It's fascinating what an engineer does," said Jan Holder, executive director of the GWP.

Referring to the hydrology and planning of the Filleman Crossing Project at Eagle Creek Road in Greenlee County, Holder introduced engineer Robert Porter. Porter shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the topographical lines and flood data of the Gila Watershed in regards to the Filleman project.

"The purpose of this project is to enhance the riparian corridor by improving the crossing," Porter said.

After a thorough study of the water flow and potential rainfall, Porter also shared plans for a riprap structure at the Filleman Crossing. The structure, mainly made up of cement and large rocks, is designed to resist erosion under heavy flooding conditions, Porter said.

"It looks like we are going to have a massive structure," Porter said.

Following the Filleman presentation, board members discussed the correspondence sent to state legislators regarding the Arizona Water Protection Fund. Because correspondence was low, Holder urged members to send a letter as soon as possible.

"Seventy-five to 80 percent of our funding has come from the (AWPF). They are going to go away unless we do something," Holder said.

In addition to funding massive watershed projects and several salaries, Holder announced that the final deadline of June 30 will determine the outcome of the fund and will come too quickly.

"I don't care if the rest of the state doesn't care; we should care!" she said.

GWP Chairman Bill Brandau announced that his biology class, Ecology of the Gila River, started in the second week of January. As an overview of water quality and the Gila watershed, Brandau said there are three field trips planned and 22 speakers. This course will run through the end of March, he said.

The GWP also announced an Arizona Riparian Council meeting that will take place in Thatcher at the Eastern Arizona College from March 29 to March 31. The meeting will begin with a workshop on stream restoration projects Thursday, March 29.

This event will culminate with a field trip to the Apache Grove site on Saturday, March 31. For more information go to <http://azriparian.org>.

The next GWP meeting will be Thursday, Feb. 8, at the Graham County General Services building at 7 p.m. Presenters Alec Smith and Jeff Riley of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will address the audience on the new fish barrier project on the Blue River. Contact Jan Holder at 520-419-0374 or through e-mail at watershedholder@gmail.com for details.

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