

Talking Points

Protect the fund that protects our state's waters

The Issue

- The Arizona Water Protection Fund (AWPF) is the primary source of funding for protecting rivers, streams and riparian habitats in Arizona.
- It's the ONLY dedicated funding source to protect and restore riparian resources, and helps to improve our state's water supply and Arizona's sustainable future.
- In 2011, the Legislature voted to permanently eliminate general fund appropriations for the program.
- The Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) provides the primary technical, legal and administrative support for the program and does not receive a general fund appropriation for these services.
- Without funding, come July 1, 2012, the AWPF Commission will not have the ability to award new grant projects. Worse yet, ADWR will not have adequate funding to manage the 30 multi-year projects that are currently underway.
- Protecting the fund is essential to our state's economy, unique quality of life, and the future of our state's water.

Benefits To The State

- Water resources and wildlife are protected, forests, farms, ranches and open spaces are conserved, and outdoor recreational opportunities are enhanced.
- Improvements in water quality, water supply, biodiversity, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, flood control and overall watershed health. Through project implementation, jobs are created and revenue streams in local economies increase.
- Through grants for fencing and off-riparian watering facilities, the AWPF has enabled many farmers and ranchers to enhance operations and remain on the land, while improving water quality and riparian health.
- By properly managing and maintaining riparian areas, water supplies are stabilized and floods moderated. To avoid disasters, funding is critical to maintain appropriate vegetation in floodplains to help slow the speed of floodwaters and reduce the destructive power of water to downstream areas.

Program Information

- The AWPF protects Arizona's most precious resource, water, through revegetation, erosion control and channel stabilization, innovative research and water conservation.
- Arizona Legislature established the AWPF in 1994 to provide monies for the implementation of projects statewide.
- There are projects in most legislative districts around the state and many are located in or near popular recreation sites.
- The program is incentive based and emphasizes local implementation rather than regulation to address water resource issues.
- A grass roots approach is utilized through a competitive grant process that asks the public to propose local solutions rather than having the State dictate specific measures, priorities or areas of concern.
- Grants are available to all types of entities - private landowners, local, state, federal and tribal governments, non-profits, etc. - and we all benefit.

Funding Is Vital

- Less than 0.5% of Arizona's total land is classified as riparian. Approximately 75% of Arizona's resident wildlife species are dependent on riparian habitats to sustain their populations. Without the AWPF, this small land area and the wildlife that depend on it are in jeopardy.
- Riparian areas are the most popular recreation sites because they offer so many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors – hiking, fishing, camping, swimming and birding. These touristy places are critical to our state's economy.

What Needs To Happen

- Understand that water is essential to our existence. Even during difficult budget times, we must invest in water, protect our state's water supply and work toward securing a sustainable future. The cost of losing these valuable riparian areas is immense, and the loss of Arizona's biodiversity is permanent.
- At a minimum, funding for program administration must be made available to ADWR in order to meet its statutory obligation to provide the technical, legal and administrative support necessary to manage the 30 multi-year water resource projects that are currently in progress.
 - This can be accomplished by legislative appropriation via special line item in ADWR's budget, or elimination of the 5% statutory limitation on funding for program administration.
- In order to effectively continue the program long-term, it is imperative that a stable funding source be established.
 - Funding for projects requires reinstating and authorizing statutory general fund appropriations as was originally intended (i.e. to be offset by in-lieu fees collected through Central Arizona Project for water sold to entities outside of its tri-county service area), or authorizing another funding source (e.g. lottery money collected for the Heritage Fund).
 - Funding for program administration requires legislative appropriation, either permanently or via special line item in ADWR's budget, or elimination of the 5% statutory limitation on funding for program administration.