2014 Annual Report
Friends of Saguaro thanks all the members of our Board of Directors and our Advisory Board for their service during the past year.

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  BBVA Compass Bank
- **Marsha Badanes**  
  Attorney (Retired)
- **Kevin Bonine, Ph.D.**  
  University of Arizona
- **Shannon Breslin**  
  Tucson Electric Power
- **Debra Colodner, Ph.D.**  
  Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- **Kevin Dahl**  
  National Parks Conservation Association
- **Ann Gonzalez**  
  Manzo Elementary School (Tucson)
- **Dave Hamra, CFP (Treasurer)**  
  Gordian Advisors
- **Lisa Harris, Ph.D. (President)**  
  Harris Environmental Group
- **Stephanie Healy**  
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- **Libby Howell (Vice President)**  
  Southwest Gas Corporation (Retired)
- **Jane Roxbury**  
  Visit Tucson
- **Louise Spears (Secretary)**  
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  Tucson Electric Power
- **Lahsha Brown**  
  Friends of Sabino Canyon
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- **Peter Chesson**  
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  Friends of Redington Pass
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  National Park Service
- **Jack Gibson**  
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- **Barbara Hawke**  
  Arizona Wilderness Coalition
- **Chris Helms**  
  Former FOSNP Board Member
- **Matt Nelson**  
  Arizona Trail Association
- **Rob Spath**  
  Southwest Conservation Corps
- **Virginia Van der Veer**  
  Tanque Verde Ranch
- **Russell True**  
  White Stallion Ranch
- **Ron Walker**  
  National Park Service Director (Retired)
- **Meg Weesner**  
  National Park Service (Retired)

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Darla Sidles  
(Superintendent)  
Saguaro National Park

Estee Rivera Murdock  
(NPS/FOSNP Liaison)  
Saguaro National Park

Bob Newtson  
(Executive Director)  
FOSNP Executive Director
Dear Friends:

Next year, America will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park System – the oldest, largest, and most diverse park system in the world.

National parks are at the heart of who we are as Americans. They protect our most-treasured natural and cultural resources, tell the stories of our shared national heritage, fuel local economies, and provide educational and recreational opportunities for some 300 million visitors each year.

Our national parks belong to all of us – and they are a living testament to the passion, commitment and support of private citizens who help sustain them through philanthropy, advocacy and volunteerism.

Limited federal budgets have meant that local community and private sector support for specific parks – and their programs – has become absolutely critical. Nonprofit park partner organizations like Friends of Saguaro exist at the local level to help bridge a portion of this gap, and provide financial and volunteer support for essential programs at specific parks such as Saguaro.

Since the founding of FOSNP in 1996, the generosity of our donors has enabled us to provide nearly $3 million in project funding support to Saguaro National Park…and each year, some 400 volunteers provide the Park with more than 35,000 hours of service.

In 2014, our donors enabled the Park to enhance the visitor experience by replacing 55-year-old interpretive exhibits at the Rincon Mountain Visitor Center. Our support funded important wildlife research and protection projects…engaged nearly 10,000 youth in hands-on environmental education activities…improved recreational trails…and encouraged environmental stewardship…for Saguaro National Park.

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Friends of Saguaro National Park, I want to thank all our donors and volunteers, and it is my pleasure to transmit this 2014 Annual Report describing the success of their efforts. The support of our Friends – and the dedication of Saguaro’s NPS employees – are ensuring the enduring legacy of this beautiful park for our children, and for theirs.

Sincerely,

Robert Newtson
Executive Director

“We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people have ever received, and each one of us must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune.”

Theodore Roosevelt
Purpose of Saguaro National Park

*Saguaro National Park* was created to preserve and protect saguaro cacti; diverse biotic communities (including the Sonoran Desert, associated mountain ecosystems, and Rincon Creek); cultural and archeological features; and scientific, scenic, and wilderness values. The Park provides opportunities for research, education, and public enjoyment, and strives to protect its resources from the effects of the encroachment from urbanization and development.

Friends of Saguaro Mission

*Friends of Saguaro National Park* is a nonprofit fundraising partner of the National Park Service, created to help protect wildlife and habitat, preserve cultural resources, promote environmental education, improve recreational trails, enhance visitor experiences, and build environmental stewardship at Saguaro National Park. Our purpose is to help the public **Discover Saguaro** – by reconnecting youth to nature, and encouraging the exploration and discovery of the resources, heritage and recreational opportunities of the Park… **Protect Saguaro** – by assisting the preservation and conservation of the natural and cultural resources of the Park, and sustaining its wilderness character… and **Support Saguaro** – by strengthening community partnerships, and building environmental stewardship through philanthropy, public education, and volunteerism.
National parks sustain us, so we should respond in kind

By Robert Newton

For nearly 100 years, our national park system has sought to preserve and protect what Theodore Roosevelt described as “the most glorious heritage a people have ever received.”

Our parks inspire us, preserve outstanding scenic landscapes, and protect some of America’s most complete ecosystems.

As America celebrates National Park Week through Sunday and we approach the centennial of the National Park Service in 2016, this may be a good time to reflect on what the parks mean to us — and how we can best sustain them.

National parks are powerful economic engines for local communities. Besides protecting wildlife and habitat, preserving history and culture, and providing affordable recreation opportunities, national parks exert strong positive impacts on the economic, recreational and educational life of a community, helping to define a unique sense of place.

Here in Southern Arizona, Saguaro National Park includes superb examples of the Sonoran Desert and Sky Island ecosystems, and it preserves for future generations the plant that has become the iconic symbol of the American Southwest. With 78 percent of its 91,000 acres federally designated wilderness, Saguaro’s close proximity to the Tucson urban area presents a variety of recreational opportunities for the region’s one million residents and 4.5 million annual visitors.

A recent Park Service study found that visitors to Saguaro National Park spent $37.3 million in the Tucson community in 2012 — spending that supported 526 local jobs. And, according to the Outdoor Industry Association, Saguaro and Arizona’s other national parks are fundamental to the state’s $10.6-billion “outdoor recreation” economy and its 104,000 Arizona jobs.

The issue, in this time of federal budget austerity, is how we can best sustain our national parks. The national parks face an annual operations shortfall of more than a half billion dollars, and the deferred maintenance backlog is nearly $12 billion.

While we know that parks funding boosts job creation and economic growth, fosters outdoor recreation, and supports a tourism industry that is critical to many local communities, our national parks remain severely underfunded. For some of our decision-makers in Washington, D.C., (from both political parties), the answer may be to rely on a philanthropic partnership that could leverage federal investments with private sector donations. A bipartisan group has been discussing a national park “endowment,” in which federal appropriations would be matched with private donations, perhaps raising a billion dollars for the parks.

While much of that money would be raised nationally — by the National Park Foundation — local “friends” groups for individual parks, such as Friends of Saguaro National Park, would also have to step up their fundraising capacities. Friends of Saguaro donors are already generous, enabling us to provide over $400,000 in project support over the past three years. Last year alone, nearly 350 individuals provided more than 36,000 hours of volunteer service at Saguaro.

Tucsonans know how important the park is to this community, and I’m confident they will help us meet the funding challenges.

So please, next time you enjoy a visit to Saguaro, I hope you’ll consider what you can do to help preserve this place for future generations.

Robert Newton is the executive director of Friends of Saguaro National Park, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the Park Service at Saguaro. Readers can obtain more information at www.friendsofsaguaro.org online. Contact Newton at fossnp@friendsOfSaguaro.org

“...our national parks have become a reservoir for our spirits…we remember who we are. Not only do we save these lands, they save us.”

Terry Tempest Williams
# 2014 Financial Summary

## REVENUES

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<th>FY 2014</th>
<th>FY 2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Gifts / Donations</td>
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<td>Restricted Gifts / Grants</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUES</strong></td>
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## EXPENSES

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<td><strong>Program Grants to the Park</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$284,278</strong></td>
<td><strong>$253,392</strong></td>
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### 2014 Direct Program Grants to the Park
- $40,000 for the RMD Exhibits project
- $22,011 for Environmental Education program support
- $15,000 for the Water & Wildlife project
- $13,490 for the Bat Monitoring project in the RMD
- $12,200 for Buffelgrass Management expenses
- $12,050 for three Technology Enhancement projects
- $4,840 for the Gila Monster Conservation project
- $4,800 for the Lost Carnivores of the TMD project
- $3,124 to support Saguaro Volunteers
- $1,565 to purchase hand-drying equipment for visitor rest rooms
- $17,313 for the RMD Donor Wall
- $2,270 for the “Art of the Park” Initiative
- $1,303 to support various park events

### 2013 Direct Program Grants to the Park
- $54,000 for the RMD Exhibits project
- $24,447 for Environmental Education program support
- $23,000 for the Water & Wildlife project
- $8,175 for the Accuracy Assessment of the Buffelgrass Aerial Survey project
- $6,800 (in-kind) for a used pick-up truck donated by Tucson Electric Power Co
- $6,400 (in-kind) for a used pick-up truck donated by Tucson Electric Power Co
- $6,000 (in-kind) for the non-government match for the Carrillo Trail re-route project
- $3,124 to support Saguaro Volunteers
- $1,565 to purchase hand-drying equipment for visitor rest rooms
- $17,313 for the RMD Donor Wall
- $2,270 for the “Art of the Park” Initiative
- $1,303 to support various park events
- $2,307 for the park’s Volunteer Picnic
Friends of Saguaro National Park is a Tucson-based nonprofit – operating through a partnership agreement with the National Park Service, and dedicated solely to assisting Saguaro National Park. Since our founding in 1996, Friends of Saguaro has sought to establish collaborative partnerships, develop a broad donor base, and provide both funding and volunteer support for some of the Park’s most critical needs.

Our metrics of success are simple and straightforward: donors engaged, money raised, partnerships sustained, and volunteers involved.

2014 was our most successful fundraising year ever – as we secured a remarkable $297,510 in support through the generosity of our donors. We added 180 new donors in 2014 – an 8.3% increase over 2013 – and we had an amazing 52.2% donor renewal rate for the year.

We strengthened our partnerships – locally, regionally and nationally. The National Park Foundation – the Congressionally-chartered national nonprofit that supports all 407 of America’s national park units and their programs – generously provided us a $90,000 grant in 2014 to support the replacement of the RMD interpretive exhibits. And, we continued as one of only 3,500 nonprofit partners (worldwide) of 1% for the Planet – a network of some 1,200 environmentally-conscious member businesses in 44 countries that donate 1% of their sales to help create a healthier planet.

Again in 2014, a dedicated group of 420 volunteers provided over 37,000 hours of service to the Park – time valued by the National Park Service at more than $835,000.

We continued to balance our operating budget, and we’ve maintained a prudent operating reserve. We continued to devote at least 85% of our total expenditures to programs, rather than fundraising or overhead costs.

And, we continued to be accountable and transparent – posting our complete audited financials and IRS Form 990 on our website (www.friendsofsaguaro.org).

For the fifth year in a row, we were recognized by GreatNonprofits (a national group that develops tools to help people rate charities) by being named a “Top-Rated Nonprofit” – and fewer than 1% of all nonprofits nationwide are able to achieve that distinction.

We maintained our coveted “Gold Participation” recognition from GuideStar Exchange – a leading symbol awarded by GuideStar USA, the nation’s premier sourse of nonprofit information.

Accountability and transparency are important for any nonprofit, as we must compete for a limited pool of charitable donations – from individuals, businesses and foundation – and FOSNP is pleased to receive this national recognition for our work.
Discover Saguaro

Encouraging the exploration and discovery of the resources, heritage and recreational opportunities of Saguaro National Park.

Connecting People & Place

For over 80 years, Saguaro National Park has been protecting exceptional stands of majestic saguaro cacti – but this Park is about so much more than cacti. Through its interpretive programs, the NPS seeks to help visitors understand the “story” of Saguaro National Park, and better appreciate the connection between people, and this very special place. Saguaro’s interpretive themes enable visitors to better understand, and explore, all of the Park’s distinctive features:

• **Saguaro Cacti.** The saguaro is the tallest cactus in the United States, and its distinct form is recognized worldwide as an icon of the American Southwest. The Sonoran Desert ecosystem, represented within the Park, contains superb saguaro stands that are easily accessed by visitors.

• **Ecosystem Diversity.** Saguaro National Park contains the largest roadless Sky Island in North America, encompassing a wide range of elevations that support extraordinary biodiversity within a relatively small geographic area. The Park preserves one of the largest concentration of rare and distinct aquatic micro-habitats (such as tinajas, seeps and springs) in the desert Southwest.

• **An “Enduring Resource of Wilderness.”** Saguaro National Park’s close proximity to a large urban community provides convenient opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to enjoy natural areas and wilderness experiences.

• **The Land & The People.** The Park contains abundant evidence of a wide range, and long history, of human interaction with the land – and has enormous potential for teaching contemporary people about adapting to, and thriving in, an arid environment.

• **Adaptations and Environmental Change.** The plants and animals of Saguaro National Park have developed a variety of fascinating physical features, physiological adaptations, and special behaviors to adapt and survive in the arid environment of the Sonoran Desert. The Park serves as a living laboratory and benchmark, allowing us to monitor and measure environmental change – the understanding of which may be critical to present and future generations.
Enhancing the Visitor Experience

Friends of Saguaro helped enhance the visitor experience in 2014 by enabling the Park to replace the outdated, 55-year-old interpretive exhibits at the Rincon Mountain Visitor Center. The old exhibits – first installed when Dwight Eisenhower was President – had no technological or interactive features to capture the imagination, and engage contemporary park visitors. The beautiful new interpretive exhibits relate the “story” of Saguaro National Park in an interesting, and technologically-current way – describing the iconic saguaro cactus, and its importance to the Sonoran Desert ecosystem…noting the Park’s extraordinary biodiversity…describing the unique Saguaro Wilderness, and its juxtaposition with a growing urban area…and detailing the adaptation, and impacts, of people in this arid environment.

As part of the RMD Exhibits project, Friends of Saguaro also provided the Park with a $17,000 Ceramic Mural Donor Wall to grace the exterior of the Rincon Mountain Visitor Center, and recognize the generosity of donors for a wide variety of projects at both districts of the Park.

FOSNP also helped the Park utilize digital technologies to attract a new generation of visitors – appealing to a younger, more diverse, and urban population that’s more often connected to technology than to the natural world. In 2014, we funded three “technology enhancement” projects at the Park for a total of $12,000: “Blogging the Wild” enabled the Park to create a “from the field” blog to link their Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter, and highlight the efforts of NPS staff and volunteers to protect park resources; “3-D Visualization of Buffelgrass Infestations” enabled the Park to drape aerial video footage over the digital elevation models of the Park, and visually depict the extent and density of some of the Park’s worst buffelgrass infestations (that were not visible to the public from any trail); and “Virtual Hikes” enabled an NPS staff person to hike to several major destinations at the Park, while photo-documenting the journey – allowing visitors who are physically unable to undertake the journey to “experience” the Saguaro Wilderness.

“Surely our people do not understand even yet the rich heritage that is theirs…[We] must preserve [these places] for their children and their children’s children forever.”

Theodore Roosevelt
Engaging Youth With Nature

To enable Saguaro National Park to fulfill its mission as educator, and engage youth with nature, Friends of Saguaro and the NPS have collaboratively developed a diverse array of innovative resource conservation and environmental education activities. These programs include opportunities that are Park-based, School-based, and Community-based, and incorporate a wide variety of resources available at the Park to help students better understand the ecological diversity and rich cultural heritage of the Sonoran Desert region.

- **Curriculum-focused field trips to the Park** engage youth in hands-on activities that allow them to explore and discover the significance of the Park’s resources. Research indicates that the inquiry-based learning methods used in these park-based programs can enhance science proficiency, lead to gender-neutral participation in science learning, and result in a high degree of student engagement.

- **Teacher/Rangers** utilize the Park as a large living classroom, providing a variety of experiential learning opportunities for their students. Saguaro’s Teacher/Rangers have proven to be a powerful bridge between underserved youth and the Park.

- **Youth Hiking Clubs** involve participating students throughout Tucson in regular after-school activities, and monthly hikes at the Park – empowering youth with outdoor recreation experiences that build skills and confidence.

- The **“Lost Carnivores” wildlife research project** in the west district utilizes middle and high school students in a “citizen science” initiative to try to locate six small carnivore species within the Park.

- **Mini-BioBlitzes** also engage students in hands-on wildlife research – enabling them to utilize GIS database platforms to explore biodiversity.

- The innovative **Next Generation Ranger** program is improving internship and entry-level employment opportunities for young people who are interested in potential careers with the National Park Service – with a goal of creating a more diverse agency workforce, representational of the surrounding urban community.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, **Friends of Saguaro** has been able to provide the Park with nearly $50,000 over the last two years to support these multi-faceted environmental education programs – and impact nearly 20,000 youth throughout the community.

“The children and nature movement is fueled by this fundamental idea: the child in nature is an endangered species, and the health of children and the health of the Earth are inseparable.”

*Last Child in the Woods*, by Richard Louv
Improving Recreational Trails

Saguaro National Park offers nearly **200 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails** – presenting visitors of every ability with a variety of recreational experiences. Saguaro’s trails connect with the region’s extensive (and popular) trails network, and are a stone’s throw from “The Loop”, Tucson’s soon-to-be-completed 110-mile urban trail encircling the entire city of Tucson.

Tucson is also well-known as one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in the nation, with more than 730 miles of designated bikeways that connect to popular cycling routes through both the east and west districts of the Park. In 2012, following a lengthy review process, the 2.8-mile Hope Camp Trail in the Park’s east district was opened to bicycle use as a multi-use trail.

In 2013 and 2014 – utilizing funds from a new “Adopt-a-Trail” initiative – **Friends of Saguaro** support allowed the Park to capture a $71,150 grant from the Arizona Trails Heritage Fund and “re-route” a badly-eroded 0.7-mile section of the Carrillo Trail in the RMD’s Cactus Forest. The popular Carrillo Trail is part of a combination of trails called the “Three Tanks Loop” – providing access to a view that is one of the best in the entire park, overlooking the Cactus Forest and the City of Tucson in the distance. The re-routed section had ascended a steep grade, without switchbacks, and had become severely eroded with ruts up to 30” deep. With the new section open, the old segment was closed, and subsequently restored with natural vegetation.

“In every walk with nature, One receives far more than he seeks.”

John Muir
Supporting Scientific Research

To ensure the protection of Saguaro National Park’s extraordinary biodiversity, it is essential that scientific research form the foundation for resource conservation decision-making at the park. In 2014, Friends of Saguaro provided funding for:

• **Water & Wildlife Research.** Over the past two years, FOSNP has provided some $38,000 to enable the Park to initiate a long-term project to examine critical water-related issues impacting the Park and its surrounding eco-region. With this essential support, the Park began: (1) Monitoring seasonal and perennial water in selected springs, streams and *tinajas*; (2) Documenting the use of water sources by medium and large mammals; (3) Conducting extended inventory and monitoring of selected aquatic species; and (4) Analyzing accumulated data to help develop a comprehensive regional water and wildlife monitoring and assessment strategy.

Project researchers were able to analyze (and complete) reports on 17 years of accumulated data on perennial rock pools (*tinajas*) within the Park, as well as collect detailed monthly field data on these *tinajas* during the study. Project researchers collaborated with the University of Arizona to conduct isotope analysis in order to “age” the Park’s spring waters – discovering that some of the Park’s waters are older than previously believed, and suggesting a connection with the regional aquifer. And, project researchers completed a summary of 16 years of leopard frog monitoring data – with results submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal – and continued to collect additional leopard frog data during the study.

The Park’s resource managers are concerned about threats to certain mammal species in both districts, as populations become more isolated due to increased urban development (and the elimination of movement corridors), the diminution of habitat, and the decline in perennial water sources.

This ongoing project is successfully strengthening regional conservation partnerships, and enabling the NPS to better understand, monitor, and develop management strategies for conserving, Saguaro’s critical water sources – and thereby better protect the vulnerable wildlife species that depend on those waters for survival.
• **Gila Monster Conservation.** Although Gila monsters – the largest lizards native to North America – are protected under state and federal law, dramatic habitat loss throughout the species’ natural range is threatening its survival in many areas. For the past six years, **Friends of Saguaro National Park** has been funding a comprehensive Gila Monster Conservation Project, primarily focused in the (east) Rincon Mountain District – providing over $50,000 in support since 2009. Biologists are seeking to determine the size, health and status of the Gila monster population within the Park; better understand the complex relationship between Gila monsters and Sonoran desert tortoises; and develop conservation strategies for the species in the face of habitat loss and fragmentation resulting from increased urbanization within the Tucson Basin.

Project researchers (graduate students from the University of Arizona) search for Gila monsters within the Park – and when an individual animal is spotted, they are photographed and PIT-tagged (with an identifying microchip). Each individual Gila monster has a unique and colorful beaded skin pattern that does not change over its adult life, and photos of Gila monsters can be matched to identify the health, status and movement patterns of individual animals. As a “citizen science” component of this project, park visitors and hikers are encouraged to “go digital” and utilize their smart phones to gather photographic data that will help project researchers identify and track specific Gila monsters at the Park over time. Additionally, an **FOSNP**-funded “burrow camera” has enabled project researchers to document Gila monster burrow behavior.
• **Lesser Long-Nosed Bat Protection.** These bats are a federally-listed endangered species in both the United States and Mexico, and are particularly important in the pollination of saguaro and other columnar cacti. The species’ survival is threatened by the loss of habitat due to development, as well as changes in fire regimes – and a roost site for these bats in the Rincon Mountain District of Saguaro National Park is one of only ten known roost sites for the species in southern Arizona.

With over $25,000 in funding since 2012, *Friends of Saguaro* has supported research to study the nightly and seasonal foraging and roost activity of this migratory species at the Park – including bat foraging activity at hummingbird feeders in the Tucson metropolitan area. Bats foraging at local hummingbird feeders were captured in mist nets, carefully implanted with PIT-tags, and released. Antennae and readers attached to those hummingbird feeders subsequently detected and identified returning PIT-tagged bats, as well as the date and time they visited the feeder. These data are then used to address basic questions about the importance of hummingbird feeders as a food source, and Lesser Long-Nosed bat movements and phenology.

In 2014, FOSNP funding support enabled the purchase of a PIT-tag antenna and reader system for installation at the RMD bat roost, in order to document the use and movements of the PIT-tagged bats within the Park. *This is the first Lesser Long-Nosed bat roost to be monitored with this technology in the United States.* The results, of course, will complement the data collected from hummingbird feeders on the nightly and seasonal activity patterns of the bats.

With the important data from the Saguaro bat roost, researchers will be able to expand the project to monitor other roosts in Arizona. Understanding the timing and movements of these bats to and from different roosts throughout the summer and fall will aid resource managers in identifying and protecting bat habitat. For example, do bats at Saguaro National Park come directly from the maternity roost in Organ Pipe National Monument, or do they visit the agaves around Coronado National Memorial before heading to Saguaro to take advantage of the hummingbird feeders in the Tucson area? This project will also provide insights into the impacts – beneficial and/or detrimental – of the bats’ use of hummingbird feeders, a relatively new food source of undetermined nutritional benefit that brings them closer into human contact.

“Our national heritage is richer than just scenic features; the realization is coming that perhaps our greatest national heritage is nature itself, with all its complexity and its abundance of life, which, when combined with great scenic beauty as it is in the national parks, becomes of unlimited value. This is what we would attain in the national parks.”

Fauna of the National Parks of the U.S., 1933
Maintaining Native Habitat

Utilizing specific “study plots”, NPS staff and volunteers regularly monitor the health and status of the Park’s iconic saguaro cacti; some of these plots have been continuously monitored since 1941 – making the effort one of the longest vegetation monitoring programs within the National Park Service. Since saguaros are such slow-growing plants, this long-term monitoring project is essential for a clear understanding of the plant’s ecology and life cycle. **Friends of Saguaro** supports this ongoing work through funding secured from the popular “Adopt a Saguaro” program.

The Park’s native habitat, of course, is negatively impacted by invasive vegetation – and the overriding invasive species problem at Saguaro National Park is African buffelgrass (as it has the potential to fuel intense, destructive fires in a Sonoran Desert ecosystem that is not fire-adapted). **FOSNP** has been assisting the NPS with buffelgrass control activities since 2006, providing over $20,000 in funding support in just the last two years alone.

In July and August, 2014, a lightning-ignited wildfire burned nearly 1,100 acres near Spud Rock Spring – at an elevation of approximately 7,500 feet in the Rincon Mountain District of the Park. Firefighters were able to manage the fire for multiple objectives, including using fire to achieve natural resource benefits, and to reduce hazardous fuels. They tied in unburnable rock outcroppings with hand ignitions to create buffer zones and reinforce the fire line. Fire crews were based at Manning Camp – about a mile away from the fire line – and relied heavily on pack mules to carry gear and supplies (including the pack mule purchased by **Friends of Saguaro**).

“Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife, are in fact plans to protect man.”

Stewart Udall
Support Saguaro

Promoting environmental stewardship for Saguaro National Park.

A record 293 million visitors to America’s national parks in 2014 translated into $29.7 billion in economic activity that supported nearly 277,000 jobs across the country. National parks, like Saguaro, are vital economic assets to local communities. As southern Arizona’s most-visited tourist destination, we know that Saguaro National Park generates millions of dollars in economic activity, and supports hundreds of jobs, in the Tucson community…but we also know that Saguaro – and all our national parks – are economic assets at risk.

Our national parks remain chronically underfunded. Over the last five years, the total budget for the National Park Service has declined by 12% (or $364 million in today’s dollars); over the last decade, the NPS budget has declined by 22% (or nearly $500 million in today’s dollars). In 2014, the NPS appropriations represented just one-fifteenth of one percent of the total federal budget – meaning that the average American household pays only $2.56 in income tax each year to support all our national parks…or about the cost of a cup of coffee at Starbucks. That’s one cup…each year.

Limited federal budgets have meant that federal appropriations alone are not enough to sustain our treasured national parks. Increased community and private sector support for specific parks has become a critically-important supplement for resource protection, environmental education, visitors’ services, and park support programs.

Friends of Saguaro seeks to ensure that the Tucson community understands that Saguaro National Park is vital to the economic health of this region. Through community outreach and collaborative partnerships, we’re building our capacity to create a better connection between “people and place” at Saguaro National Park. With our stewardship support for this special place, we express our collective faith in the future…and fulfill our promise to succeeding generations.

“As long as you’re on the side of parks, you’re on the side of angels.”

Robert Moses
Increased Donations & Volunteers

2014 was a record-breaking year for FOSNP, as we continued to build our capacity for community engagement in conservation and resource stewardship at Saguaro National Park. The generosity of our donors provided Friends of Saguaro with $297,510 in revenue in 2014 – our largest single-year fundraising total to date. And, in 2014, a dedicated group of 420 volunteers donated 37,061 hours of service to Saguaro National Park – another all-time record. Based on the Independent Sector’s value of volunteer time, those hours represented another $835,725 donated to the Park.

Enhanced Public Awareness

As part of our effort to build public support for Saguaro National Park, Friends of Saguaro continued to enhance the public’s awareness of the Park’s biological diversity, and the ecological threats posed by urbanization and climate change. We sought to increase the public’s understanding of the Park’s role as a natural laboratory, and why science-based resource management is important. And, we continued to increase the public’s understanding of the Park’s economic significance to the region – and what the specific stewardship needs are at Saguaro National Park.

Strengthened Collaborative Partnerships

In 2014, Friends of Saguaro continued to grow, strengthen and leverage our collaborative partnerships. We continued to build the FOSNP Advisory Board, and enhanced cooperative (resource) research partnerships with organizations such as the University of Arizona and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. We maintained a strong (local) issue advocacy voice by continuing our participation in the (41-member) Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, and in 2014, we pursued (national) issue advocacy through the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition. FOSNP is one of 55 participating organizations nationwide, working to promote the protection, restoration, and operation of the National Park System as it enters its second century of service.

“The national parks are expressions of who we are as a society, and what we deem important.”

Jon Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service
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*Friends of Saguaro National Park* acknowledges its donors throughout the year in *The Saguaro Rib* newsletter, as well as in our Annual Report and on our web site (www.friendsofsaguaro.org). We greatly appreciate the generosity of these individual donors during the past year, and we apologize for any errors or omissions.

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