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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“I see great days ahead, great days possible to men and women of will and vision.”

From “America” by Carl Sandburg
Dear Friends:

When creating his PBS documentary – “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea” – filmmaker Ken Burns emphasized that the story of our national parks is really the story of people . . . “people who were willing to devote themselves to saving some precious portion of the land they loved.”

People are still the key to protecting places like Saguaro National Park – and the truth is that today’s national park system simply would not exist if not for the passion, commitment, and support of private citizens.

Today, as we celebrate the Centennial of the National Park Service, limited federal budgets have meant that federal appropriations alone are not enough to sustain America’s national parks – community and private sector support for specific parks, and their programs, has become absolutely critical. Nationwide, there are over 200 nonprofit park partner organizations like Friends of Saguaro to help bridge a portion of this funding gap, and sustain financial support for essential programs.

Since our creation in 1996, FOSNP has raised over $3.5 million to support Saguaro National Park. The generosity of our donors enabled us to provide the park with over $270,000 in project grant support last year alone: (1) In cooperation with the National Park Foundation and other park partners, we supported the launch of the FIND YOUR PARK centennial engagement campaign; (2) We helped the NPS roll out its Urban Agenda at Saguaro – designed to help our urbanized constituency discover that finding a park is easier than they might think; (3) We supported the national “Every Kid in a Park” campaign – to introduce 4th graders to national parks and public lands; and (4) As you’ll read in this Report, Friends of Saguaro helped the park connect children with nature…improve recreational trails…maintain native habitat…support wildlife research and protection projects…and nurture the next generation of park rangers.

The visionaries who established America’s national park system a century ago did so for us, and with the expectation that we would embrace our responsibility for protecting these national treasures – ensuring that they will continue to thrive for future generations.

We’re grateful for the generous engagement and support of our donors and volunteers, and it is my pleasure to transmit this 2015 Annual Report describing the extraordinary success of their efforts in the past year.

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.

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**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...
- **Support Saguaro** – by strengthening community partnerships, and building environmental stewardship through philanthropy, public education, and volunteerism.

---

“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*
Celebrate Park Service’s birthday by supporting our public lands

By Robert Newton
SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Tuesday, Americans will celebrate what Theodore Roosevelt described as “the most glorious heritage a people have ever received,” as the National Park Service marks its 99th birthday.

When the NPS was created in 1916, some 36 national parks, monuments and reservations were brought under the new agency. Those 36 units encompassed a total of 6 million acres, and received about 350,000 annual visitors.

Today, the National Park Service manages 408 units — some 85 million acres of national parks, monuments, seashores, recreation areas, historic parks and battlefields — that receive nearly 300 million visitors each year.

Our national parks preserve our most beautiful landscapes, as well as our greatest historic and cultural sites. They protect some of the nation’s most complete ecosystems, and many of the areas of greatest biodiversity. Our national parks are living classrooms for our children, and they help all of us pursue healthy, active lifestyles.

And, our national parks are engines for local economic growth, as Park Service visitation last year generated nearly $30 billion in economic activity that supported nearly 277,000 jobs in surrounding communities.

Yet, our national parks are economic assets at risk, cumulatively, the overall budget for the NPS has shrunk by 12 percent over the past five years. In March, 2015 the Park Service reported an $11.5 billion backlog of deferred maintenance projects.

Limited federal budgets, combined with the ongoing growth in the NPS mission and responsibilities, has meant an ever-increasing reliance on philanthropy and nonprofit partnerships to help sustain our parks. Since our founding in 1916, Friends of Saguaro has raised nearly $3 million to support essential programs at the park, and each year, some 400 volunteers provide over 35,000 hours of service.

So as we approach the Park Service’s centennial in 2016, the agency and its nonprofit partners have launched Find Your Park — a nationwide public engagement campaign to celebrate all of America’s parks and public lands while urging increased public and private investment in these places that tell our shared American story, protect our natural and scenic treasures, and offer exceptional recreational opportunities.

The privately funded Find Your Park campaign is advancing three core areas of the Park Service mission: (1) Protect America’s special places by conserving natural habitats, open spaces, and their wildlife, and mitigating the effects of climate change; (2) Connect people to parks by increasing community access to many sites (especially urban sites), and enriching the visitor experience; and (3) Inspire people to become better stewards of our parks through increased financial support, volunteerism and advocacy.

Early this year, Tucson was selected as one of 10 “model” cities for the Park Service’s “Urban Agenda” — to ensure our national parks are relevant and accessible to all Americans, by utilizing innovative, collaborative approaches. To establish a better connection with the Tucson community, Saguaro National Park selected Diana Rhoades as its NPS Urban Fellow — and she is ably serving as an effective catalyst between the park, its programs and its community partners.

Find Your Park is a comprehensive effort to help prepare the Park Service for the next century, and protect our parks and public lands for future generations. Some of us have already found our park — or at least one of them — as Saguaro is the special place that inspires us, and restores us.

At Friends of Saguaro, we hope that more people will “Discover Saguaro, and work with us to sustain essential programs to support this park, which is such an important part of the Tucson community.

Robert Newton is the executive director of Friends of Saguaro National Park, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of the National Park Service at Saguaro National Park. Contact him at fosp@friendsofsaguaro.org

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

Native American Wisdom
In 2015, Friends of Saguaro joined with the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation to launch FIND YOUR PARK – a nationwide public engagement campaign to introduce the national park system to the next generation of visitors, supporters and advocates, while seeking renewed and enhanced support from those who already know and love the parks.

The FIND YOUR PARK campaign recognizes that the NPS Centennial presents an ideal opportunity to generate broad national awareness about the work of the National Park Service, and to encourage stewardship support for all national park units, and their programmatic priorities. The campaign is designed to inspire new visitors, and increase participation in NPS recreational, cultural, ecological, educational, and volunteer programs throughout the nation. The FIND YOUR PARK campaign allows us to showcase the exceptional recreational experiences that can be found in the parks, while providing us an opportunity to invest in public/private partnerships that can help prepare the parks for another century of conservation, preservation, recreation and enjoyment.

Looking towards its second century, the National Park Service recognizes that it’s facing formidable challenges: (1) Defending our parks against infringing development and mounting environmental concerns; (2) Reaching a younger and more diverse population; and (3) Revitalizing the role of philanthropy and volunteerism, and shaping the conservationists and preservationists of tomorrow.

Also in 2015, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) launched “Find Your Voice” – a nationwide initiative to educate, engage and empower Americans to speak up on behalf of their national parks. Find Your Voice seeks to connect more people to parks, and inspire a new generation of park supporters and advocates.

This innovative effort includes hands-on learning and conservation projects in national parks nationwide – with a special emphasis on connecting young people with our parks, helping them build the memories of a lifetime, and showing them the importance of forging a strong parks’ legacy for themselves and future generations.

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

Robert Moses

NPS “Urban Agenda”

In 2015, as part of the National Park Service’s preparations for its Centennial in 2016, the agency selected Tucson and Saguaro National Park as one of 10 cities and affiliated park units to serve as a pilot program for developing more collaborative and sustainable working relationships between national parks and urban communities. The NPS “Urban Agenda” highlights youth connections, outdoor recreation, historic preservation, economic vitality, health, and urban design and sustainability – all to ensure that our national parks are relevant and accessible to all Americans, in an increasingly urban society.

- **Activate “One NPS”** – by aligning parks, NPS programs, and partnerships so that communities understand the full portfolio of the National Park System.

- **Nurture a culture of collaboration** – by working more cooperatively with the community, so that parks can better contribute to the social, environmental and economic goals of urban areas.

During the past year, FOSNP and Saguaro National Park have been actively engaging the park’s stakeholders – reaching out to diverse communities to listen, learn and activate the next generation of visitors, supporters and advocates.

Recognizing that 80% of all Americans now live in cities, the NPS Urban Agenda seeks to:

- **Be relevant to all Americans** – by reaching new audiences, and creating an NPS workforce that represents the nation’s diversity.
2015 was our most successful fundraising year ever for *Friends of Saguaro* – as we secured over $440,000 in donor support, and provided the park with more than $270,000 in project grant assistance. Over the last three years, **FOSNP** support has generated project assistance for Saguaro National Park totaling $706,833. We added 123 new donors in 2015 – a 5.2% increase over 2014 – and achieved a remarkable 58.1% donor renewal rate, up from 52.2% in 2014.

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

For the sixth 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 have been able to achieve that distinction.

We continued to ensure transparency, and accountability to our stakeholders, by posting our complete audited financials and IRS Form 990 on our website (www.friendsofsaguaro.org).

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

We strengthened our partnerships in 2015 – locally, regionally and nationally. In cooperation with the National Park Foundation and other park partners, we supported the launch of the FIND YOUR PARK centennial campaign, and we were one of the first recipients of an **NPS Centennial Challenge Grant** ($20,000 to support our Next Generation Rangers).

And, we continued as one of only 3,500 worldwide nonprofit partners of **1% for the Planet** – a network of some 1,200 environmentally-conscious member businesses in over 40 countries that donate 1% of their sales to help create a healthier planet.

“*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
# 2015 Financial Summary

## Revenues

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<tr>
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<th>FY 2014</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Gifts / Donations</td>
<td>$179,117</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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<th>FY 2014</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Payroll Taxes</td>
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<td>Expenses for Annual Dinner</td>
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<td>Dues/Memberships/Donations</td>
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<td>FOSNP Capacity-Building Expenses</td>
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<td><strong>Operations Expense Subtotal</strong></td>
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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>$298,860</strong></td>
<td><strong>$420,862</strong></td>
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### 2015 Direct Program Grants to the Park

Included $138,537 for establishment of the Saguaro Next Generation Ranger Corps; $37,254 for Environmental Education programs (including Teacher/Rangers, school transportation reimbursements, Youth Hiking Clubs, and Jr. Rangers); $31,000 for the Water & Wildlife project; $11,639 for Volunteer Recruitment, Coordination and Support; $7,966 for Community Outreach; $6,280 for Trails Support; $4,000 for water sampling; $3,900 for Tropical Cat Surveys; $3,400 for the Spring Mini-BioBlitz; and $10,411 for other scientific research support (including development of data sets, Gila monster conservation, and bat monitoring equipment).

### 2014 Direct Program Grants to the Park

Included $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; and $1,565 to purchase hand-drying equipment for visitor rest rooms. We also paid $17,313 for the RMD Donor Wall, $2,270 for the “Art of the Park” Initiative, and $1,303 to support various park events.
Next Generation Ranger Corps

In 2015 Friends of Saguaro joined with the NPS at Saguaro to create a dynamic career development program for a diverse group of college-age local youth. The innovative Next Generation Ranger Corps was designed to enable young people interested in a career with the NPS to discover the agency, and its different operational divisions, by providing college students an experiential, engaging, and supportive learning and working opportunity at Saguaro National Park.

A diverse group of sixteen NextGen Rangers worked at the Park throughout 2015. Each worked for a specific department, developing valuable skills and work experiences. All participants shared a broad range of training experiences, and were provided a basic understanding of NPS history, the Saguaro Wilderness, resource management, safety, interpretation, outreach, and visitor protection. In addition, each NextGen Ranger had the opportunity to work with a mentor on an individualized project in a specific skill area.

Just like the NPS Urban Agenda, the focus of the Next Generation Ranger Corps has been to reach out to underrepresented audiences in the community, and get them involved in Saguaro National Park. Each NextGen Ranger is selected by the Park, but paid through an Independent Contractor Agreement with Friends of Saguaro. This unique partnership between the Park and FOSNP is empowering young people to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities to truly make a difference in the Park – while simultaneously allowing them to gain new knowledge, skills and abilities to pave the way to a future career. When NextGens work at least 16 weeks, they are eligible for Public Land Corps hiring authority, making their opportunity to learn with park professionals a meaningful step along the pathway to becoming an NPS employee.
The National Park Service and **Friends of Saguaro** invested nearly $150,000 in 2015 to establish this innovative program – securing support grants from the National Environmental Education Foundation, the Outdoor Foundation, and the National Park Foundation among other donors. Those funds enabled the recruitment, training and mentoring of a vibrant first-year cohort of 16 NextGen Rangers.

Saguaro National Park is committed to the task of creating a workforce that is representational of the surrounding urban community. And, the Park is determined to remain relevant in the midst of a changing national demographic. Ultimately, this Next Generation Ranger Corps program will help the Park connect with Tucson-area youth, foster their environmental ethic, help them strengthen their skills, and bolster their confidence to be competitive in the workforce.

“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
Discover Saguaro

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

Connecting People & Place

The FIND YOUR PARK centennial campaign seeks to connect people to the outdoors – particularly young, urban, multicultural audiences – and introduce them to the nation’s shared history and iconic landscapes preserved in our national parks. At FOSNP we’ve found our Park – Saguaro is the special place that inspires us, and restores our spirit. Through its interpretive programs, Saguaro National Park seeks to help visitors better understand, and explore, all of its distinctive features:

- **Saguaro Cacti.** The saguaro is the tallest cactus in the United States, and its distinctive form is recognized worldwide as an icon of the American West. It engages our imagination and scientific curiosity with its size, shape and age, while intriguing us with its similarity to the human silhouette.

- **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.

- **Wilderness in an Urban Area.** 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.

- **Ecosystem Diversity.** The 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 concentrations of rare and distinct aquatic micro-habitats (such as tinajas, seeps and springs) in the desert Southwest.

- **Adaptations & Environmental Change.** The Park’s plants and animals 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 researchers to monitor and measure environmental change.

“Contemplating the flow of life, and of change through living things, each of them tied to cloud, stone, and sunlight, we may make new discoveries about ourselves.”

Ansel Adams
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. Part of the FOSNP mission is to help the National Park Service with the (often expensive) task of maintaining and improving these trails, to ensure visitor safety.

In 2015, we assisted the Park in the construction of a side “loop” from the popular Cactus Forest Trail in the RMD, in order to provide visitors with easier (and safer) access to two historic (century-old) limestone kilns.

Also in 2015, FOSNP funding allowed the NPS and the Arizona Trail Association to install two new trail gates on the Arizona Trail in the RMD – one at the Loma Alta Trailhead, and one at the Park’s boundary near Hope Camp – providing added convenience for cyclists, as well as hikers and equestrian users.

Construction work on Saguaro’s trails is often made possible by the park’s pack mules, as they are often used to haul supplies and equipment to (sometimes remote) construction sites. The generous funding support of FOSNP donors has enabled the Park to replace three of its (aging) pack mules over the past three years.

Finally, Friends of Saguaro donors helped the Park secure nearly $90,000 in funding to upgrade the popular Mica View Trail into an ADA-compliant trail (per the 2007 General Management Plan). For people with disabilities, children in strollers, and the elderly, the 0.7-mile Mica View Trail – linking the trailhead near the eastern end of Broadway with the Mica View Picnic Area – could be daunting. Work on the newly-rebuilt trail was scheduled for completion in May, 2016 – and will enable visitors of all capabilities an opportunity to experience the Park beyond the Visitor Center.
Engaging Youth With Nature

Saguaro National Park’s youth engagement and environmental education programs are designed to actively connect young people to nature; promote hands-on experiential learning, recreation and conservation activities; and enable all children – including currently-underserved youth – to achieve a greater understanding of environmental stewardship and the Park’s conservation mission. Program implementation is assisted by part-time “Teacher/Rangers” drawn from local schools, and Saguaro’s innovative and culturally-diverse “Next Generation Ranger Corps” of college-age interns.

Curriculum-focused field trips to the Park actively engage students in a variety of hands-on activities, and introduce them to the national park system and its conservation mission. The national “Every Kid in a Park” initiative seeks to introduce every American 4th grade student (and their family) to national parks and public lands – places where they can run and play, explore and learn. Youth Hiking Clubs involve students in healthy outdoor activities, provide them valuable map-reading skills, and teach them about “leave no trace” principles and the Park’s fragile ecology.
The “Lost Carnivores” wildlife research project in the west district utilizes middle and high school students in “citizen science” efforts, to try to locate six small carnivore species within the Park. Mini-BioBlitzes also engage middle and high school students in hands-on wildlife research – enabling them to utilize GIS, student-driven database platforms such as iNaturalist to enhance their science proficiency and explore the region’s unique biodiversity.

The “Park Stewards” program enables high school students to participate in a variety of experiential learning opportunities at the Park to help restore habitat, survey saguaros, and monitor wildlife. The projects help teach scientific skills, expand student awareness of how their actions can lead to a more sustainable society, and empower students to evaluate their own actions to ensure they are consistent with a sound conservation ethic.

All of Saguaro’s environmental education initiatives encourage creative problem-solving and increase critical-thinking skills, by addressing real-world conservation issues – engaging youth in a variety of enjoyable, hands-on activities that allow them to explore and discover the scientific and historic significance of park resources.
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-running vegetation surveys in the National Park Service, and providing 75 years of data on this unique species. 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.

Centennial Saguaro Survey. One of the goals of the NPS in celebrating its Centennial is to “connect urban communities to parks…and give people access to fun outdoor experiences close to home.” Saguaro National Park pursued this Centennial goal by engaging the Tucson community in a citizen science initiative entitled the “Centennial Science Survey.”

Beginning in September, 2015 and continuing through April, 2016, the Park enlisted ten local citizen science interns to serve as group leaders – six undergraduate students, three high school students, and one recent college graduate. Citizen scientist volunteers – students, retirees, and workers from local nonprofits and businesses – gathered data to help the Park determine how factors such as weather, climate change, and invasive species are impacting the Park’s signature saguaros. Volunteers surveyed saguaros in about 40 study plots, each measuring 200 by 200 meters, in both the east and west districts of the Park. Saguaro data was then compared with data gathered in those same study plots going back decades – in some cases, back to 1941.

Among other things, these citizen scientists and NPS managers wanted to learn if there is any increase in saguaro germination in higher elevations – which could be an indication of the plants adapting to the changing climate. Overall, the project provided data to inform research, management, and education relating to the saguaro and climate change – including addressing questions of saguaro recruitment, response to precipitation and temperature, and changes in distribution.
Buffelgrass Management & Control. 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 management and control activities since 2006, providing nearly $25,000 in funding support in just the last three years alone.

Using helicopters equipped with computers and sophisticated mapping software, the Park has mapped more than 1,800 acres of buffelgrass infestations over the past several years – much of it located in remote canyons and cliffs, miles from the nearest trail.

In 2015, Saguaro National Park, the Coronado National Forest, and the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center received “Resilient Landscape Program” (RLP) funding from the Department of the Interior to help address the buffelgrass problem throughout the southern Arizona region. With its generally sparse plant life, the surrounding desert has largely protected the communities of southern Arizona from the threat of wildfire. This has been changing, however, as buffelgrass spreads further into the desert; ecologists fear that wildfires starting in the surrounding mountains may be able to quickly move downhill, using continuous stands of buffelgrass for fuel.

Ensuring resilient landscapes and fire-adapted communities depends on the implementation of a regional, broad-based, collaborative, and cohesive strategy to better address the mounting challenges of escalating fire behavior, increased risk to people, greater home and property losses, and increased threats to communities.
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 2015, Friends of Saguaro provided funding for:

**Water & Wildlife Research.** When thinking about the Sonoran Desert, water might not be the first thing that comes to mind. But because water is so important for wildlife in Saguaro National Park, Friends of Saguaro and the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust have provided more than $130,000 over the past four years to support water and wildlife research at the Park.

Research efforts have primarily focused on the Park’s unique tinajas and springs; particularly in the higher elevations of the Rincon Mountain District, these rare waters are extremely important. They are the main water source for backpackers, campers and wildlife – especially during the dry season – but for the past several summers, a number of once-reliable springs (such as Deer Head Spring, Spud Rock Spring, Mint Spring, and Mud Spring) have gone dry, or nearly dry.

Working with field partners in the NPS Sonoran Desert Network and the Sky Island Alliance, biologists at Saguaro National Park have been studying the Park’s water sources, and developing methods for long-term monitoring. Through all of these partnerships, monitoring activities, and field research, the NPS hopes to learn much more about the sources, and dynamics, of Saguaro’s water resources, and determine how best to maintain them into the future.
**Gila Monster Conservation.** To better understand the natural history, population ecology, and conservation biology of Gila monsters in the Sonoran Desert ecosystem, **Friends of Saguaro** initiated a comprehensive research and conservation project at Saguaro National Park in 2009. With nearly $60,000 in **FOSNP** support over the past seven years, the National Park Service has joined with the School of Natural Resources at The University of Arizona to study the health, characteristics, and movement patterns of the Gila monster population within Saguaro National Park – assessing the negative impacts from habitat loss and fragmentation in areas adjoining the Park, estimating the size of the Gila monster population within the Park, and determining the specific needs for Gila monster conservation in an urban environment.

In 2015, Saguaro’s Gila monster research was supported with a grant from Western National Parks Association. The extensive and comprehensive data secured through this long-term field research will ultimately provide NPS staff with the information necessary for management decision-making, and more broadly, will enable biologists to better understand this reclusive species within its Sonoran Desert Uplands habitat.

**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 Mountains of Saguaro National Park is one of only ten known roost sites for the species in southern Arizona.

With nearly $30,000 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. In 2015, **FOSNP** funding enabled the Park to purchase a PIT tag antenna and reader system to seasonally install at the roost site, in order to document the use and movements of 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.

**Organizing Scientific Data Sets.** Friends of Saguaro funding in 2015 allowed the National Park Service to organize, prioritize, archive and summarize scientific data sets produced by some 70 years of research at Saguaro National Park, and then make those data sets publicly available through the NPS “Data Store.” These data sets included saguaro census data dating back to 1941, more than 18 years of leopard frog monitoring data, and literally thousands of photos from remote wildlife cameras throughout the Park.

Collectively, these data sets will enable NPS scientists, field researchers, teachers and students learn more about the resources protected at Saguaro National Park, and how they are changing over time.
Support Saguaro

Promoting environmental stewardship for Saguaro National Park.

When the National Park Service was created a century ago, some 36 national parks, monuments and reservations were brought under the new agency. Those 36 units encompassed a total of 6 million acres, and received about 350,000 annual visitors. Today, the NPS manages 410 units – some 85 million acres of national parks, monuments, seashores, recreation areas, historic parks and battlefields – that receive over 300 million visitors per year.

We know that our national parks preserve America’s most beautiful landscapes, as well as our greatest historic and cultural treasures.

We know they protect some of the nation’s most complete ecosystems and many of the areas of greatest biodiversity.

We know that our national parks are living classrooms for our children, and they help us all pursue healthy, active lifestyles.

And, we know that our parks help diversify local economies by fueling broader economic development. Communities like Tucson are able to attract high-quality entrepreneurs, employers, and retirees in part because Saguaro National Park and other public lands make the region such an appealing place to put down roots.

America’s national parks received more than 307 million visitors in 2015 – a 5% increase over 2014 – and higher visitation numbers are expected this year due to the NPS Centennial celebration.

Friends of Saguaro seeks to ensure that the Tucson community understands that Saguaro National Park is vital to the economic health of this region. By building community engagement and strengthening collaborative partnerships, we’re creating a better connection between “people and place” Saguaro National Park, and promoting enhanced environmental stewardship support for this very special place.

“. . . the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear, Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

Pete Gregoire
Building Community Engagement. Through the FIND YOUR PARK centennial campaign, and the NPS Urban Agenda, FOSNP aggressively supported the Park’s community outreach efforts in 2015 – particularly in underserved communities.

We greatly enhanced our volunteer engagement and support activities in 2015 – providing the Park with funding to support a full-time volunteer coordinator position, and funding to enable the Park to host its annual Volunteer Recognition Picnic. During the year, Saguaro engaged 554 volunteers (a 30% increase over 2014), and those volunteers devoted 43,948 hours of service. Based on an “Independent Sector” valuation, those volunteer hours represented over $1 million worth of time and talent – equivalent to more than 21 FTE positions.

Strengthening Collaborative Partnerships. We joined with the National Park Foundation, and over 200 other park partners, to launch the FIND YOUR PARK campaign to celebrate the NPS Centennial. This campaign has provided a catalyst for the NPS and all its collaborative partners to assess what the highest Park Service priority needs are, and then determine where philanthropic support can best assist. The campaign had a $350 million goal, and as of January, 2016 more than $210 million had already been raised to support America’s national parks.

We became a supporting partner of the web-based National Parks Traveler – a site dedicated to “educate the general public about the National Park System, increase awareness and understanding of issues affecting the national parks and the National Park Service, and build a stronger advocacy for protection and sound stewardship of the parks.”

We joined the Association of Partners for Public Lands (now called the Public Lands Alliance) – an organization of more than 100 friends groups, cooperating associations, educational institutes, and other nonprofit partners of America’s public lands.

We continued as a member of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) – an organization with approximately 350,000 members nationwide – to increase our overall advocacy on behalf of the national parks.

We continued to participate in the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition – led by the NPCA and supported by more than 55 organizations nationwide – as we collaboratively sought to “promote the protection, restoration, and operation of the National Park System as it enters its second century of service.”

And, we continued to grow our partnerships within the Tucson community in 2015, maintaining our participation in the (35-member) Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection.
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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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- Pastiche
- P.F. Chang’s China Bistro
- Philabaum Glass Gallery & Studio
- Phoenix Zoo
- Picante
- Pizza Hut of Arizona
- Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak, Phoenix
- Owen Rose Fine Art
- Mark Rossi Studio
- Saguaro Employees Association
- Saguaro Horseman’s Association
- Saguaro National Park Volunteers
- Southwest Airlines
- Summit Hut
- Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin West
- Tanque Verde Ranch
- Togwotee Mountain Lodge
- Tohono Chul Park
- Total Wine & More
- Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
- Tucson Balloon Rides
- Tucson Botanical Gardens
- Tucson Children’s Museum
- Tucson Subaru
- Tucson Symphony Orchestra
- Tumacácori National Historical Park
- UA Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium
- UA Science
- Verde Canyon Railroad
- Western National Parks Association Store
- Westward Look Wyndham Grand Resort
- White Stallion Ranch
- Xanterra at the South Rim
- Xanterra at Yellowstone
- Zion Canyon Field Institute
- Zion Lodge