



# **Friends of Saguaro National Park Strategic Plan 2022-2027**

**Approved by Board of Directors on July 14, 2022**

Friends of Saguaro National Park is the official 501(c)(3) nonprofit philanthropic partner of the National Park Service, created to help preserve, protect, and enhance the fragile environment and unique cultural heritage of the Sonoran Desert at Saguaro National Park. We help protect natural and cultural resources, preserve native landscapes, promote environmental education, improve recreational trails, enhance visitor experiences, strengthen community partnerships, and build environmental stewardship for Saguaro National Park through philanthropy, education, volunteerism, and public awareness.

Our mission and shared strategic vision with Saguaro National Park focus on three distinct priorities of discover, protect, and support. This Strategic Plan describes our collaborative vision and steps that will be taken through 2027 to advance our mission driven work and remain accountable to our stakeholders.

### **Discover**

Saguaro National Park represents complex ecological communities of native plants and animals that have developed over thousands of years. They present unique opportunities to educate the public about biodiversity, climate change, sustainability, and the need for environmental protection. In addition to teaching contemporary people about the rich cultural and ethnographic heritage of the Sonoran Desert people. Through its education, interpretive, and recreational experiences, Saguaro National Park provides visitors the opportunity to discover our collective natural and cultural heritage.

### **Protect**

Saguaro National Park is a vital part of a network of public and private lands that allows for the sustainability of the ecosystems of the Sonoran Desert. These lands preserve biodiversity and serve as natural laboratories that develop ecological baseline data and research to insure the sustainability of the region. Saguaro National Park also contains 523 known archeological sites. This demonstrates the important cultural heritage and necessity for conservation of the Park's archeological, historic, and ethnographic resources, which preserve the heritage of southern Arizona.

### **Support**

Saguaro National Park has a significant impact on the economic, recreational, and educational life in Tucson. Through community outreach, advocacy, and collaborative partnerships, we will build greater public understanding that stewardship for the park is a shared, and mutually beneficial responsibility for us all. These efforts will protect Saguaro National Park for future generations.

### **Strategic Priority: Discover Saguaro**

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

#### **Objective A: Provide opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy Saguaro National Park and keep the Park relevant.**

- 1) Support the Park's update of interpretive exhibits and other features to enhance visitor experiences
- 2) Support the Park's update of wayside interpretive exhibits
- 3) Support technology enhancements to keep the Park's interpretive resources relevant
- 4) Utilize social media to engage younger and more diverse audiences
- 5) Strengthen the community's connection to the park and expand the focus on underrepresented populations

#### **Objective B: Connect children with nature at Saguaro National Park and promote environmental education throughout the community.**

- 1) Support the Teacher/Ranger Program
- 2) Build relationships with southern Arizona schools, neighborhood recreation centers, and increase youth participation
- 3) Support Every Kid in a Park Initiative
- 4) Support Environmental Education Programs at Tucson-area schools
- 5) Develop, and grow, Youth Hiking Clubs at schools throughout Tucson
- 6) Encourage diversity, and engage Tucson-area youth in hands-on, place-based conservation activities at the park by expanding financial support for school transportation subsidies
- 7) Strengthen community partnerships and increase underrepresented youth involvement in conservation activities at the park; fund Junior Ranger/Cactus Ranger Programs, improve Junior Ranger/Cactus Ranger participation
- 8) Support environmental education curriculum development at the park, including technology enhancements
- 9) Increase lifelong learning opportunities at Saguaro National Park. Promote diversity and broaden civic engagement

**Objective C: Enable diverse local young people interested in an NPS career to discover the agency and its operations through the Next Generation Ranger Corps Internship Program at Saguaro National Park.**

- 1) Support the Park's efforts to recruit motivated and well-qualified applicants that reflect the local Tucson community
- 2) Support the Park's efforts to provide an experiential, engaging, and supportive working and learning opportunity for each NextGen
- 3) Support the Park's efforts to ensure that each NextGen has a designated mentor and receive a broad range of training experiences

**Objective D: Support the maintenance and improvement of recreational trails at Saguaro National Park.**

- 1) Seek funding support for the Park's trails from state and federal transportation-related sources
- 2) Seek private donor support for the Park's trails by expanding the number of Adopt-a-Trail donations
- 3) Support the Park's efforts to provide accessibility upgrades for selected trails in both districts
- 4) Seek volunteer support for the Park's trails from collaborative partners to work with Park management to keep trails open and safe
- 5) Support the Park's Mule Packing Program

**Strategic Priority: Protect Saguaro**

To assist the preservation and conservation of the natural and cultural resources of Saguaro National Park and sustain its wilderness character.

**Objective A: Support scientific research at Saguaro National Park.**

- 1) Strengthen research partnerships with collaborative organizations within the community and support the Park's scientific research priorities
- 2) Promote student research, and foster the next generation of resource professionals, by supporting the Next Generation Ranger Corps Program
- 3) Support species-specific inventories and assessments at the park
- 4) Support the monitoring of ecologically sensitive areas in the park and assist the Park in the assessment of the evolving impacts from climate change on Park resources

- 5) Support long-term water & wildlife research at the park
- 6) Support saguaro research and protection at the park
- 7) Support wildlife research and protection at the park
- 8) Protect the Park's congressionally designated Wilderness

**Objective B: Maintain the native habitat(s) of Saguaro National Park and help manage/control invasive species.**

- 1) Support Park efforts to monitor the health and status of saguaro cacti
- 2) Support Park efforts to manage/control buffelgrass and other invasive species
- 3) Recruit volunteers to assist with saguaro monitoring and buffelgrass control activities at the park

**Objective C: Support efforts to preserve the significant archeological, historic, and ethnographic resources of Saguaro National Park.**

- 1) Support the Park's inventory and preservation activities

**Objective D: Promote landscape-scale conservation and protect critical wildlife corridors, by supporting boundary expansions at Saguaro National Park.**

- 1) Work with the Park to identify willing sellers
- 2) Work with the Park and the state's Congressional representatives to secure necessary federal funds from the Land & Water Conservation Fund
- 3) Collaborate with other organizations to enhance protection and expansion efforts

**Objective E: Support the application of Park-lead research and sustainability efforts to local communities.**

- 1) Support the Park's Water Harvesting and Pollinator Gardens Projects
- 2) Support the Park's Dark Sky Lighting Project
- 3) Support sustainability awareness and education for Park staff and in the community

**Strategic Priority: Support Saguaro**

Build environmental stewardship for Saguaro National Park.

**Objective A: Enhance public awareness of the Park's biological diversity – and the ecological threats posed by urbanization and climate change.**

- 1) Increase the public's understanding of the Park's role as a natural laboratory, and the need for science-based resource management
- 2) Increase the public's understanding of ecological threats to the park presented by increasing urbanization and the changing climate
- 3) Increase the public's understanding of the Park's economic significance to the region – and why the park's resources need to be protected as economic assets
- 4) Increase the public's understanding of the specific stewardship needs at Saguaro National Park. Utilize web-based and printed materials and participate in community outreach events

**Objective B: Build community engagement in conservation and resource stewardship.**

- 1) Support the Park's community outreach and engagement efforts to connect the community to the park
- 2) Support the Park's volunteer program, help recruit volunteers, and fund recognition events
- 3) Build long-term conservation relationships with the community

**Objective C: Strengthen collaborative partnerships.**

- 1) Build the FOSNP Advisory Board and increase participation from collaborative organizations
- 2) Enhance resource research partnerships
- 3) Strengthen cultural resource partnerships with tribes in southern Arizona
- 4) Maintain local and regional issue advocacy through participation in the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
- 5) Collaborate on national issue advocacy through the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition

**Objective D: Generate enhanced public support for FOSNP.**

- 1) Increase the public's understanding of federal funding realities, and the evolving role of philanthropy in national parks

- 2) Increase the visibility of FOSNP within the community and enhance public understanding of how FOSNP supports the Park
- 3) Increase individual donor support for FOSNP
- 4) Increase corporate/foundation support for FOSNP
- 5) Make FOSNP technology enhancements (website, social media, etc.) and increase the organization's exposure to younger demographics
- 6) Increase the diversity of the FOSNP Board and expand the organization's reach into underrepresented communities
- 7) Increase the FOSNP endowment through planned giving