



**American Rivers**  
*Rivers Connect Us*

**Riparian Systems**  
*Consulting*

## THE VERDE RIVER BLUE TRAIL ACCESS PLAN

FUNDED BY THE WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

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The Verde River begins 100 miles north of Phoenix, Arizona, and flows 200 miles southeast until it meets the Salt River. One of the few perennially flowing rivers in the Southwest, the Verde is vital to central Arizona, providing fresh water to thousands of people, as well as habitat for a wide array of plants and wildlife, including river otters, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and North America's smallest deer, the Coues white-tail.

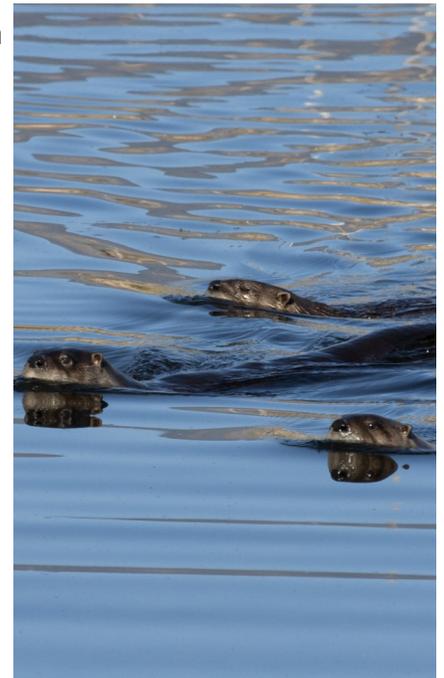
To protect this important natural resource, American Rivers and Riparian Systems Consulting are working with local partners to establish the Verde River Blue Trail, which will provide greater access to the river and its recreation opportunities. By creating stronger community connections, the Blue Trail will also be an important step toward protecting the river's health.

The Verde River is threatened by unregulated diversion irrigation and extraction of groundwater. Old and inefficient dams prevent fish from migrating naturally. By creating a Verde River Blue Trail, we will raise awareness these issues.

Through new parks, boat launches, and informational kiosks and signage, the Verde River Blue Trail will connect Arizona's residents and visitors to the river in new and exciting ways. Greater access to the Verde allows residents and visitors alike to easily engage in activities such as kayaking and fishing, and help them to see the river's importance firsthand. Not only is the Verde River Blue Trail connecting people to their river, but it is a model that is helping to shape the Department of the Interior's new National Blueways Initiative.

The Verde River Blue Trail Access Plan has been created to help communities along the river plan for future river recreational access in a way that balances two common yet conflicting natural resource management objectives: providing public recreational access and protecting the ecological, scenic and historic values of this significant regional resource.

It consists of several interconnected plans, each are synergistic with the others. They include the Town of Clarkdale's "Verde River @ Clarkdale" project, the U.S. Forest Service's "Verde Front" trails plan, the Verde River Valley Nature Organization river events, the Department of the Interior's "Blueways Initiative," and the overarching American Rivers Blue Trail designation for the Verde River, which ties all these plans together into one cohesive, effective river master plan.



The Verde River Blue Trail Access Plan provides guiding principles and practices on planning and constructing low-impact, environmentally sensitive infrastructure common to river access points, such as boat launches and primitive campsites. It is our philosophy that by appropriately planning, designing, and managing river access along the Verde River, we can proactively protect this invaluable resource.

### **Low-Impact River Access**

The Guiding Principles for planning and constructing environmentally sensitive recreational river access are as follows:

- **Smart Access Planning:** River access points are planned from a regional perspective, focused on not only providing non-duplicative recreational opportunities but also on conserving natural and historic resources.
- **Corridors for Wildlife:** Riverside corridors are protected to provide habitat connectivity for wildlife dispersal, migration, and breeding habitat.
- **Natural Heritage:** The conservation areas of rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals are actively avoided to preserve these species and their habitats for generations to come.
- **Clean Water & Healthy Flow:** Water quality and quantity is protected for recreational uses, aquatic life, wildlife, the production of edible and marketable fish and shellfish, and the drinking water supply.
- **Go Native:** Non-native, invasive plants and animals are not intentionally introduced to new sites, and unintentional introductions are quickly controlled.
- **Scenic Integrity:** The natural visual quality and the sense of place is preserved.
- **Historical Resources:** Historic features are respected as part of the landscape and are not disturbed.



### Smart Access Planning

“Smart Access Planning” is a planning approach based on a regional perspective rather than a single landowner or county basis. Why plan with a regional focus? A regionally-based plan can balance the desire for additional public river access points while also protecting the ecological, historic and scenic values of the river and its surrounding landscapes.

- **Practice:** Promote regional planning to avoid non-duplicative access. An example of duplicative access is adjacent counties or landowners installing boat launches on either side of their boundaries.
- **Practice:** Develop regional river access plans from a “Green Infrastructure” philosophy rather than from a built infrastructure perspective. Green infrastructures are our natural landscapes – an interconnected network of natural lands and waters that supports native species, maintains ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health, quality of life, and recreational opportunities for people. The placement of canoe launches is best planned from a regional perspective.
- **Practice:** Develop a plan for the long-term maintenance and management of the proposed recreational infrastructure. Public river access sites need a plan for continual maintenance. Before building new infrastructure, first work on committing the resources (funding and manpower) necessary to keep the future infrastructure clean and maintained. This also applies to volunteer efforts to build improvements such as trails. Plans for future river access sites should not be approved by the jurisdictional authority unless a long-term management plan has been developed and appropriate resources have been committed for maintenance activities.

### Corridors For Wildlife

Riverside land linkages are key to connecting natural areas and features, connecting habitats for wildlife movement, and connecting people to a “magical and wild” river experience. Intact corridors provide biodiversity protection by serving as dispersal routes between natural landscapes for migratory birds, fish, and butterflies and by providing habitat for many common and unique plants and animals. Without these corridors, wildlife populations may decline and isolated populations even may experience loss of genetic diversity.

These riverside land corridors also mitigate flood impacts, control erosion and sedimentation rates, and filter out many pollutants before they reach waterways, thus protecting clean water. Additionally, natural corridors offer many recreational opportunities in our increasingly suburban and urban environments. Many cities and towns choose to protect their “greenbelts” as a valued community resource and include riparian corridors as part of their cultural identity and natural heritage.

- **Practice:** Preserve the connectivity and width of existing riverside land corridors (forests, shrublands, wetlands, and natural grasslands).
- **Practice:** Prevent the loss of corridor connectivity by prohibiting clearing of natural habitat, minimally within a 30-m buffer on both sides of waterways to protect water quality, but preferentially within a 100-m buffer zone to provide a wildlife corridor.
- **Practice:** When necessary to build recreational infrastructure within a 30-m riverside buffer (e.g., canoe launch), minimize the width of open area along the waterway to 20 feet.

### **Preserving Our Natural Heritage**

Natural heritage is the biodiversity of the natural environment surrounding us – the plants, animals, and ecological communities that characterize the lands and waters of Verde River Valley. Humans are also part of the natural environment but our modern impacts, such as land development for shopping malls, are not. The way we live on the land can cause habitat loss, and this habitat loss is often the leading cause for population declines of many types of plants, animals and ecological communities. Many species or ecological communities have become rare in recent times, and thus there are many organizations and government agencies worldwide that work to protect them from future extinction.

- **Practice:** Prevent or minimize impact to species listed as threatened or endangered by federal/state authorities by requesting guidance from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Arizona Department of Natural Resources.
- **Practice:** Prevent or minimize impact to sensitive habitats of rare plants, animals, and ecological communities by requesting guidance from the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

### **Clean Water**

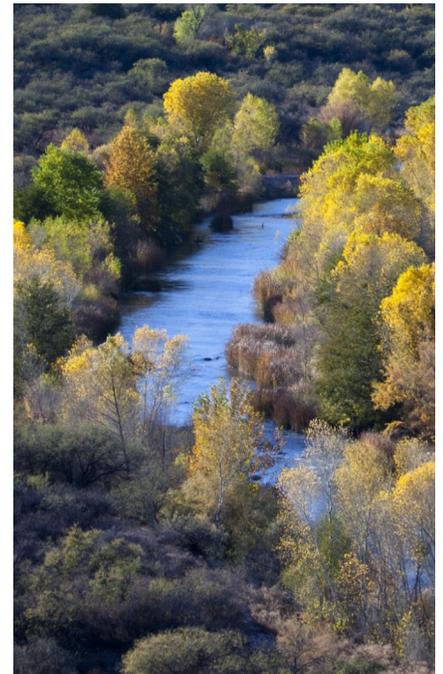
Healthy waters are defined as waters that are “swimmable and fishable.” Clean, unpolluted water is not only necessary for our drinking water supply, but also supports the biological health of fish and other aquatic life. “Healthy waters” depends on both good water quality and water quantity. In this plan we focus on aspects of protecting water quantity since this is the ecological attribute of river systems that is more likely to be affected by recreational river access features.

### **Healthy Flow**

“Flow” refers to the water running in a river or stream. There are two important aspects to a river’s natural flow. First, there is the amount of water that flows in the river. Some rivers, like the Verde, get enough water from their headwaters, tributaries, groundwater discharge and rain to flow all year round. Others go from cold, raging rivers to small, warm streams as the snowpack runs out, or even stop flowing completely. A river’s natural ups and downs are called “pulses.” Like a human being’s pulse, a river’s natural flow of water is life support for animals, plants and fish, delivering what they need to survive at the right times. When we divert water away from a river, we change the river’s natural flow.

The second component of natural flow is how water moves through a river’s channel. In a natural, wild river, the water runs freely. But in more developed or degraded rivers, dams and other structures can slow or stop a river’s flow. When a river’s flow is blocked, migratory fish like salmon can suffer, unable to move up or downstream.

Because the Verde River’s flow are fragmented and even interrupted by numerous agricultural diversions, we will focus efforts on improve the flow regimes by encouraging improved ditch efficiency practices, providing effective fish passage, and assisting organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, in its projects to educate and assist diverters in water delivery efficiencies. At the same time, we will remain aware of opportunities that may arise to improve flows by replacement of diversion dams with modern and effective water delivery systems that help conserve downstream flows.



### **Riverside Buffers**

Riverside buffers are naturally vegetated lands stretching along rivers and streams and they provide several important ecological services:

- **Practice:** Filter stormwater runoff. Pollutants and sediments are removed before the runoff from adjacent lands reaches the waterway.
- **Practice:** Reduce flooding of developed areas. Flood waters spread into the riverside buffer forests, losing energy.
- **Practice:** Reduce erosion problems. The vegetative roots hold soils on stream banks against the erosive force of moving water.
- **Practice:** Shade streams. Streams lacking shade-giving vegetation on its banks suffer higher water temperatures, detrimentally impacting aquatic life. Shaded, cooler waters also can absorb higher levels of oxygen and thus, critical to supporting aquatic life.
- **Practice:** Provide corridors for wildlife. Wildlife often use natural corridors, such as forested riverside buffers as dispersal or migratory routes.

These ecological services vary by the width of the riparian buffer, with generally wider buffers along a river having greater ecological benefits for the river and adjacent lands. Buffers should at least be 100 feet wide to provide water quality benefits. To provide wildlife habitat functions, buffers should be at least 300 feet wide.

### **Scenic Integrity**

The Verde River, especially above and below the Verde Valley, wanders through some of the most beautiful and pristine landscapes in the nation. Spectacular vistas of geologic formations and riverside and desert ecosystems support hundreds of species of birds, mammals and insects dot the length of the river. These scenic values provide the Verde River's most compelling reasons for people to visit and admire the river's surroundings. The simple plan for preserving these values is "first, do no harm." Since the river is blessed with well-preserved scenery today, the primary goal is to prevent its degradation.

- **Practice:** Encourage local and state governments to consider the impacts of planning decisions on the viewscales of the Verde River and make every attempt to protect that viewscales for the recreationists.
- **Practice:** Encourage elected officials and policy makers to consider river corridor protection ordinances and zoning districts that will help protect the riverside and viewscales zones from encroachment.
- **Practice:** Any interpretative or directional signs should be minimal and unobtrusive. To the extent practical, do not include any unnecessary signs. Let people "discover" natural and historic features for themselves so that they may be enchanted by their own river encounters.

### **Historical Resources**

Historical remnants still can be found throughout the Valley from Native American sites to early American industrial enterprises. Preserving these historical resources at their original location allows interested enthusiasts and scholars to continue to "discover" these traces of human occupation on their own. We recommend that river users respect these historic resources are part of the landscape – leave these features undisturbed for future "explorers."

- **Practice:** Do not disturb, remove or dig at any historic resources on publicly or private lands
- **Practice:** Leave historic resources for others to discover – do no harm.

## **Recreation Infrastructure**

### ***Non-Motorized Boat Launches***

This section is applicable for landings of non-motorized boats (e.g. canoes, kayaks, etc.) in the Verde River Valley. The information below is focused mainly on practices to minimize environmental impacts. New or relocated non-motorized boat launches must be designed to minimize their impact on the rivers. When building a boat launch, various factors need to be considered: site selection, permits, design, and construction methods and materials.

#### **Site Selection**

- **Practice:** When selecting a site for a boat launch, first determine whether public launches are already present nearby in the region of interest. If so, the new launch may not be needed.
- **Practice:** The site should have sufficient space for the boat landing and also a modest parking area, but not exceed 500 feet.
- **Practice:** Choose a site for the launch at a naturally gentle slope on the river or stream bank. This will minimize erosion and make construction of the launch easier. It also will help provide an accessible launch to paddlers (significant height difference between the river level and the bank level can make climbing in/out of boats difficult). Natural features, such as gently sloped riverbanks, rock outcrops, and sandy or rocky beach provide the simplest and most cost-effective sites for a launch, requiring little or no construction.
- **Practice:** Select a site where the launch is easy to find for take-out but where it will not distract other river users from the scenic enjoyment of the river, such as on a tributary stream where it joins the river. Launches located at the mouth of a tributary typically are protected from the stronger river currents allowing for better paddler stability during put-in/take-out and also minimizes the scenic intrusion for other paddlers on the river.
- **Practice:** Avoid environmentally-sensitive areas such as habitat for endangered, threatened, or rare species and wetlands.



Additional recommendations for where to locate a launch are areas that have:

- Minimal exposure to strong currents and winds, such as river eddies, at the mouth of a tributary, on the inside of a meander bend, or below a meander on the opposite side from a river's cutting side;
- A moderate level of deposition that forms a natural beach suitable for launching;
- No physical barriers, such as impassable sections, dams, or weirs;
- Water levels enabling year-round use; and
- Good water quality.

## Recreation Infrastructure

### *Non-Motorized Boat Launches*

#### Design Aspects

- **Practice:** Develop a sound plan on the design of the boat launch, parking area, access trails and roads.
- **Practice:** Maintain or preserve stream bank vegetation. Minimize the clearing width of trees along the river bank for non-motorized boat landing to no more than 20 feet wide.
- **Practice:** Choose a launch design that minimizes impacts to the river and blends into the natural environmental. River bank features such as a gently-sloped bank, a sandy beach or a rocky outcrop are natural launches that can be utilized. Where natural features are not available, wooden boat slides are often an ideal design. Protecting banks from erosion and providing safe passage for boaters. Also, an eroding bank chosen as launch site can be restored with rock outcrops installed in a series of “steps,” allowing for a “natural-looking” river access at varying water levels.
- **Practice:** Avoid making any channel modifications such as reshaping a stream bottom with construction equipment.

Additional recommendations for designing an accessibly canoe/kayak launch:

- Launch should be between 9-24 feet from highest expected water level;
- At least 5 feet wide, preferably 6-12 feet;
- At least 25 feet to allow paddlers “dry” access for entire length of a boat;
- Do not exceed 8% whenever possible (a slope exceeding 15% makes the transition from land to water difficult);
- Handrails and other support structures help paddlers keep their balance during put-in and take-out; and
- Locate in areas without heavy flow, erosion, heavy boat traffic or fragile riverside habitat.

#### Boat Landing Construction Methods and Materials

- **Practice:** Use soil and erosion control methods during the construction phase.
- **Practice:** Use environmentally-suitable materials for constructing the landing. Pre-fabricated or poured concrete will destroy stream habitat on which it is placed. Use alternatives such as gravel or timbers.

#### Primitive Campsites

- **Practice:** Design hike/paddle-in primitive campsites to minimize environmental and scenic impacts by:
  - ⇒ Placing campsites at least 30 feet away from river bank;
  - ⇒ Choosing a location adjacent to a gently-sloped river bank to minimize foot traffic impacts (erosion is more problematic on steep slopes);
  - ⇒ Limiting width of foot trail from the river bank to the campsite to a maximum of 5 feet and curve the foot trail from the river bank to the campsite to protect the scenic view; and
  - ⇒ Remove only the vegetation needed to construct the footprint for the campsite and the foot trail.
- **Practice:** A “no open campfire” policy should be adopted to prevent human-caused forest fires and to Leave No Trace of a camper’s presence.



### ***Inventory and analysis of existing condition of the river***

#### **Access & Amenities**

Most of the formal access points on the Verde River are within the Verde Valley, between the Towns of Clarkdale and Camp Verde. In this area, there are 8 sites that have parking areas and various amenities including picnic tables and trash barrels. Only a few have restrooms or constructed launch areas for paddlers to put-in and take-out.

#### **Primitive Campsites**

There are numerous primitive campsites in the areas above and below the Verde Valley. Most of these are on National Forest Service lands. In the lower Verde, especially the section designated Wild and Scenic, camping is in wilderness and regulated to avoid pollution, trash, and campsite degradation. Many of these sites are tens of miles from any road, and are accessible only by long hikes or paddling trips. A typical paddle from Camp Verde downstream through the Wild and Scenic stretch of river can take 5 days and each night is spent at very primitive camp sites.

#### **Signs**

Until recently, signage to access points was minimal to non-existent but with the help of the Walton Family Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service, new recreational signage is being erected for all the access points in the Verde Valley. Signs will be located at: Broadway in Clarkdale pointing to the “Verde River @ Clarkdale” (way finding and recreational logos); Tuzigoot Road in Clarkdale pointing to the 2 river access points (4 signs with way finding and recreational logos); AZ Hwy 260 at Prairie Lane, Black Canyon, Bignotti, and White Bridge (recreational logo signage added to existing way finding signage); and way finding and recreational logo signs on Prairie Lane indicating river access and recreational logos at the turnoff to the Prairie Lane and Skidmore river access points.





### *Inventory and analysis of existing condition of the river*

#### Attractions & Points of Interest

The Verde River Valley has a number of unique attractions and points of interest that are historically and culturally significant, most of which are appropriate for both families and individuals of all ages. These attractions and points of interest, which will be marketed through the Verde River Blue Trail, include:

- **Sycamore Canyon**, a pristine wilderness area with spectacular hiking and prehistoric ruins.
- **Verde Canyon Railroad** is a tourist excursion train operating 6 days a week, serving more than 100,000 visitors per year. The trip begins at Clarkdale and ends about 20 miles upstream at Perkinsville, then returns to Clarkdale. The rail runs immediately adjacent to the Verde River, and visitors are treated to views of red rock canyons, Bald Eagle nesting sites, Common Black-hawks, and spectacular prehistoric Indian ruins along the way. The train's popularity has steadily increased since it started operations 20 years ago, until the train today is operating at full capacity for all trips. Special excursions are provided from time to time, including wine tasting trips, birding trips, and moonlight rides.
- **Dead Horse Ranch State Park** is one of Ariona's most popular parks. Sited on the Verde River, this park has fishing lagoons, river walks, plenty of campsites, RV spaces and rental cabins.
- **Town of Clarkdale** is host to the new "Verde River @ Clarkdale" river access park. When completed, the park will provide paddlers access to several sites over 4.5 miles of beautiful river, and will host a shuttle to take paddlers upstream to put-ins. Soon canoeists and kayakers will also be able to shuttle 10 miles upstream to the confluence with Sycamore Creek, one of the most beautiful and pristine perennial streams in the Southwest.
- **Hiking trails** connect nearly the entire Verde River corridor through the Verde Valley, but many of these are social trails that are un-maintained. In order to improve the utility and accessibility of these trails, the Verde Front process is analyzing each of them, and will make formal recommendations to the USFS and the other land management agencies. This recommendation should be completed within the next year.
- **Tuzigoot Important Bird Area** stretches between Dead Horse State Park and the Tapco River Access Point, 4 miles upstream. The IBA provides nature lovers with outstanding opportunities for birding, hiking, fishing, photography, paddling and contemplation. More than 200 species of birds have been recorded in the riparian corridor, and the Verde Valley is home to the first ever designated in Arizona.
- **Verde Valley Wine Trail** offers an impressive destination for wine enthusiasts, and the viticulture/winery business in the valley is growing quickly. Yavapai College, in Clarkdale, is the home of the Southwest Wine Center – a new institute of higher learning for viticulture, winemaking and wine-oriented hospitality. The beautiful Verde Valley of Arizona, with towering cottonwood trees and ever-changing skies, is a far cry from the hustle and bustle of better known wine areas such as California's Napa-Sonoma Valleys.





### ***Inventory and analysis of existing condition of the river***

#### Attractions & Points of Interest (continued)

- **Town of Jerome**, an old mining town and once a ghost town, is perched precariously on the hillside overlooking the Verde Valley, and attracts between 500,000 and 1 million visitors each year, who come to shop in unique boutique stores and dine in its great restaurants. The visitorship to Jerome is climbing fast, and the town is now one of the Arizona's major tourist destinations. A great way to wander the streets of Jerome is to attend the town's First Saturday Art Walks.
- **Native American history** is rich in the Verde Valley. The people that settled the valley came for the water and the rich life along the river. Visitors can enjoy the massive Montezuma Castle National Monument, cliff dwellings, drive a little farther north and hike in to see Montezuma Well and take a side trip to Tuzigoot National Monument with some great ruins to explore and a visitors center.
- **Sedona**, 20 miles from the Verde River, attracts a huge number of tourists to its red rock vistas, great hotels and restaurants and quaint shops.

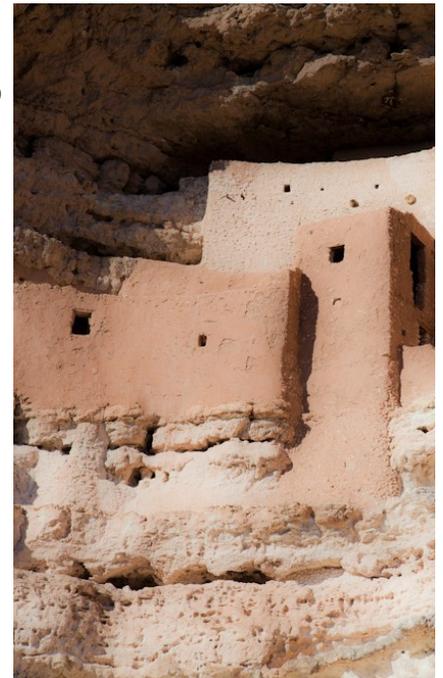
#### ***Needed Access & Amenities to Foster Boating, Fishing & Hiking***

There are two new sites in the upper Verde Valley that are in the planning stage. These two sites are in the "Verde River @ Clarkdale" project being created by the Town of Clarkdale. When completed, these two sites will provide recreationists with restrooms, picnic areas, interpretive signage, put-in, take-out facilities and parking and may be attended by a supervisor.

The Verde Front, an effort to coordinate and facilitate better trail use in the Verde Valley, is examining which of the other sites needs improvements and what those improvements should consist of. The U.S. Forest Service, Yavapai County, and Towns of Clarkdale and Camp Verde are cooperating to see that these improvements meet the needs of the public.

Additionally, the Town of Clarkdale is considering whether camping may be appropriate in some spots from the Tapco river access point downstream to Tuzigoot Bridge river access point. Within that area, especially at the upstream end are sites that could accommodate camping, although none is allowed there now.

While paddlers can find places along the river to put in and take out, these are by and large informal, unimproved sites that are unattractive and difficult. For the Verde River to reach its full potential as a paddler's destination, especially for family-oriented uses, access points will need to be improved and publicized. The "Verde River @ Clarkdale" project will focus on providing convenient kayak/canoe access, including shuttle services and educational opportunities. If these efforts by Clarkdale are encouraged and supported, the river could become a major paddling attraction in Arizona and the Southwest.



### ***Diversion Ditch Re-Engineering/Removal***

One of the biggest challenges facing the Verde River is the number of essentially unregulated agricultural diversions that reduce river flows and create fish and boating barriers throughout the Verde Valley. The Nature Conservancy has undertaken a concerted local effort to work with the diverters to improve their efficiencies and to modernize their systems so as to keep more water in the main river channel. These efforts are proving extremely promising. The Blue Trail can support these efforts and help sustain and enhance Verde River flows.

### ***Recreationalist/Landowner Conflicts***

Private property rights and public access are very important to residents and visitors alike. Stretches of the land along the river is privately owned and at times, conflicts can arise between river recreationists and landowners. Landowner concerns include issues such as illegal camping and campfires, disrespectful behavior and trespass on private property. Recreationist concerns include issues such as fences spanning the river or the presence of undesirable viewsheds. Effective relationships and cooperation between recreationists and landowners have been and will continue to be important to the long-term viability of river recreation and stewardship of the Verde River.

Management Direction: Recreation should occur in a manner that minimizes potential conflicts between private landowners and recreationists. Appropriate authorities should communicate with both groups to monitor trends in concerns and seek ways to protect the public's recreational opportunities while acknowledging private landowner concerns.

INDICATOR: When there is an increase in the type and/or trend of and owner/recreationist conflicts.

- Landowner Reports
- Recreationist Reports
- Field observations
- Staff reports
- Potential management actions

Refine information to specifically address private landowner concerns.

- Work with landowners to facilitate the public's right to access the river under the stream access law.
- Increase informational contacts with the public at access sites and on the river to heighten awareness of respect for private property rights.
- Increase law enforcement contacts with a "zero tolerance" approach toward violations.

### **Traffic Volume & Litter**

Current traffic volume on the Verde River is relatively light and easily managed. The goal, however, is to responsibly increase traffic, and with that traffic will come increased impact. The current plan for handling this increase is adaptive management that closely monitors impact and responds appropriately. The Town of Clarkdale, Town of Camp Verde, and U.S. Forest Service can assist land managers and owners in minimizing impacts as they occur.

While currently some litter can be found, it is minimal and can likely be controlled by signage and patrolling river stretches that are impacted most. This will be carefully monitored in the coming months so that land managers and river users can identify stretches that are impacted to an unacceptable extent. As areas are identified, the appropriate land managers will be notified and urged to provide trash pickup bags and signage. If litter continues to be a problem, entities such as the Friends of the Verde River Greenway, U.S. Forest Service, and the responsible municipalities will be engaged in addressing litter problems, which may involve organizing monthly cleanups and educational campaigns designed to decrease abuses.



INDICATOR: When unacceptable levels of litter and glass cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of administration by the responsible authority.

- Surveys
- Public input
- Landowner reports
- Staff reports
- Professional judgment
- Recreationist satisfaction
- Refine information to specifically address litter and glass.
- Increase informational contacts with the public at access sites and on the river to share information about rules and regulations and encourage appropriate Leave No Trace ethics.
- Increase law enforcement contacts with a “Zero Tolerance” approach toward violations.
- Temporarily or permanently close specific locations where litter and glass are prevalent.



The Verde River Blue Access Plan can be managed by the appropriate entities including the Town of Clarkdale, Town of Camp Verde, and U.S. Forest Service. A primary goal will be to engage the “Verde River @ Clarkdale” project at the upper end and a similar project near the Town of Camp Verde at the lower end of the Verde Valley. These two “anchor” projects will model the access we would like to see all along the river. The Clarkdale project is key to this process. American Rivers has secured funding to build a boat launch on the Tapco property, improve access at the Tuzigoot Bridge boat launch, install trash cans and pads, create and groom trails made of decomposed granite for handicap accessibility to the boat launches, and create interpretative, directional and regulatory signs. These projects will take place in the summer of 2013. As this project grows and becomes a center for river recreation in the upper Verde Valley, it will assist other jurisdictions in improving their access plans. The implementation of the overall access plan will proceed in an adaptive, evolutionary way so that the result will be durable, robust and organic in nature. American Rivers will assist the U.S. Forest Service, Town of Clarkdale and Town of Camp Verde in their access projects by providing expertise in funding, building and managing new access.

There is a need of an overseeing organization that maintains the vision and helps to coordinate the various projects along the Verde River. At present, this is done by American Rivers, Riparian Systems Consulting, and a few other dedicated organizations. Perhaps the Verde River Institute or the Friends of the Verde River Greenway could do this in the future. This is a need that should be addressed by the region as a whole, and the “collective impact” being held by the Walton Family Foundation grantees in the area may be able to address this need as well.

