



SANTA CRUZ WATERSHED COLLABORATIVE

SantaCruzWatershedCollaborative.net

People working together to ensure a healthy urban watershed with flowing rivers and streams

For Immediate Release

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A Watershed Restoration Plan Adopted for the Santa Cruz River

A Watershed Restoration Plan was formally adopted in March 2022 by the Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative. At a time of water scarcity and declared shortages along the Colorado River the Collaborative, through its Watershed Restoration Plan, has identified opportunities to improve coordination and collaboration of partners working to protect and restore our rivers, streams, springs and associated riparian habitats, and sustain water supply for our local human and natural communities.

The Plan assists in **aligning partner efforts to leverage additional investment in watershed restoration** actions. Recently, through a partner organization, Sonoran Institute, the Collaborative received a \$100,000, two year, restoration project planning grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to convene stakeholders and develop project opportunities to expand seasonal and annual flows in the Santa Cruz River downstream of Green Valley and through Sahuarita.

The 35 tribal, governmental, and organizational partners of the Collaborative convene voluntarily through monthly Coordinating Team and Working Group meetings and semi-annual forums. Our partners have committed to achieving a shared vision of “People working together to ensure a healthy urban watershed with flowing rivers and streams.” This plan is intended to **complement the plans, planning processes, and programs of partner agencies.**

The communities within the Collaborative’s planning area of the Santa Cruz River watershed recognize the loss of perennial flow and riparian ecosystems as a central watershed issue that affects quality of life. Unsustainable groundwater pumping has been the primary cause of the loss of perennial and seasonal flows along the Santa Cruz River and its tributaries.

Specific and general restoration strategies listed in the Plan are organized into four themes:

1. Restore Springs and Mountain Uplands
2. Replenish Shallow Groundwater Areas
3. Integrate Urban Forests and Greenways
4. Connect Santa Cruz River Flows

The Collaborative acknowledges that the lands and waters included in our planning area were stewarded for thousands of years by the Hohokam and Sobaipuri people, and those of the Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O’odham people whose relationship with their ancestral land continues to this day. The



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continued stewardship by the Tohono O’odham Nation’s San Xavier District of reserved lands and water, and the setting of a vision by their elders many decades prior, to restore farming and river heritage guide us in our approach.

The Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative acknowledges that watershed management and stewardship decisions were historically made in a non-inclusive manner and by non-indigenous peoples. The Collaborative is committed to including Indigenous voices moving forward and the continuous improvement of our understanding, actively promoting the application of traditional ecological knowledge, and to aiding residents and visitors in understanding these values.

To equitably address community and watershed health issues **five priority strategies were identified** by participants from semi-annual watershed forums held in 2021. These five crosscutting priority strategies are to:

1. Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Watershed Residents
2. Advocate for Recharge to Revive Stream Flows
3. Support Strategic Invasive Species Efforts
4. Advance Watershed Recreation and Education Master Planning
5. Expand Green Stormwater Infrastructure and Water Harvesting Practices

The Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative welcomes and actively works to foster diverse participation and representation which reflects our watershed. To learn more please visit our website

(<http://santacruzwatershedcollaborative.net>) and reach out to a partner or Coordinating Team member.

A link to the Plan in both a visual story format and downloadable document can be found at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/santacruzcollaborative/plan-resources/plan>.