



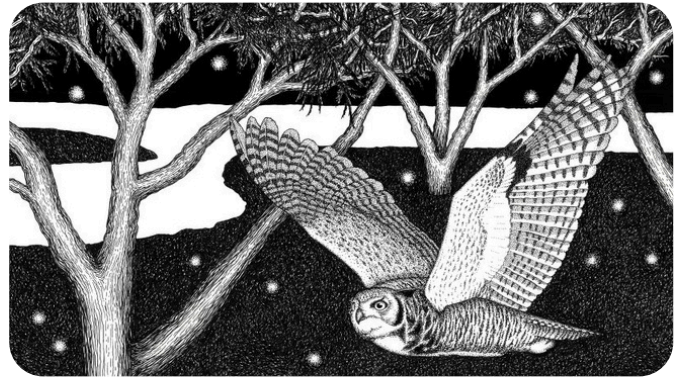
In this edition of the **Sonoran Post**, we celebrate communities coming together to celebrate years of success and plant the seeds for future collaboration. You can help us celebrate our 35th anniversary

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SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY AT WORK

The Connecting Waters: Sketching the Santa Cruz River event on February 16, 2025, was a resounding success. Hosted by the Sonoran Institute and led by artist [Maria Renée Johnson](#), the workshop at Crossroads at Silverbell Park in Marana provided participants with an opportunity to enhance their observation skills and practice various drawing techniques inspired by the river's natural landscape.

Our next [Santa Cruz River cleanup on Saturday, March 15](#), from 9 AM to noon at Verdugo Park—an ADA-accessible, hands-on event to remove 2,000 pounds of trash and restore the beauty of the Santa Cruz River. This event is made possible through a strong partnership between Sonoran Institute, Tucson Clean & Beautiful, and Tucson Water, working together to engage the community in meaningful environmental stewardship. Sign up today to volunteer and be part of this impactful day of conservation, food, music, and community engagement.



COLORADO WATER AND LAND-USE UPDATES

On March 6, Growing Water Smart Director Meryl Corbin moderated a panel at the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute Conference at Denver University. Representatives from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Denver Water, and the City of Fort Collins discussed how local water adequacy policies have been developed and implemented. In Colorado's local-control framework, unlike other Western states, local governments decide on water adequacy. With increasing water stress, collaboration between local governments and water providers is crucial for ensuring resilient water supplies and aligning land use with water resource management. This leads into April's Colorado Growing Water Smart workshop set in Montrose.

[Technical Assistance Applications](#) are in the works or opening soon for communities from the recent Arizona Growing Water Smart workshop, California Growing Water Smart workshop, and Border workshops with the University of Sonora. Sonoran Institute and Brendle Group continue to work with The Little Thompson Water District and the City of Thornton on their Colorado Metrics projects.

CONNECTING FLOWS IN MEXICALI

The Mexicali Fluye team with the Baja California Peninsula Basin Agency of the National Water Commission partnered with federal, municipal and educational institutions to finalize the restoration plan for Mexicali's agricultural drains. During February, the Mexicali Fluye Team also held an urban garden workshop for the garden managers in Mision del Angel and Colonia Solidaridad. This workshop covered native seeds, edible plants, and how to care for these gardens in the hot climate of Mexicali.

The Laguna Grande Restoration site has added a [MOTUS](#) bird monitoring antenna with our friends at Pronatura Noroeste. This antenna is part of an international radio monitoring collaborative that tracks tagged birds' migration and the sixth in the Colorado River Basin. In addition, the first *Sabado Familiar* event of the year was held the last weekend of February with staffers Juan Carlos Muñoz and Celia Alvarado leading tours hiking and kayaking throughout the extensive restoration area.



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35 YEARS OF CONSERVATION - CELEBRATING OUR TUCSON ROOTS

The Sonoran Institute marked a significant milestone on March 7, celebrating 35 years of dedicated community engagement on conservation issues in Arizona and western North America. The anniversary event brought together long-standing partners, including the City of Tucson, Pima County, the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, and other key organizations that have supported our mission. Tucson Mayor Regina Romero gave an impassioned speech on the impact that Sonoran Institute has had on its engaged community members gathered to honor our enduring impact in the Colorado River Basin.

The event was sponsored by Tucson Electric Power, Cox Communications, Tucson Water, AZ Litho and our partners Whiskey del Bac and the Agave Heritage Festival.

Since 1990, the Sonoran Institute has played a pivotal role in conserving and revitalizing the natural landscapes of the western United States and northern Mexico. Together with



our partners, we have secured over \$320 million to conserve more than 500,000 acres of land. These projects have restored vital waterways, revived delicate ecosystems, and strengthened our communities.

As we look ahead to the future, our commitment remains unwavering: to create a sustainable, resilient West where people and nature coexist and thrive. The 35th-anniversary celebration was more than just a reflection on past achievements—it was a reaffirmation of the ongoing mission to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them.

You can help us continue this work and more at our 35th anniversary celebrations in Denver and Mexicali.



SONORAN INSTITUTE LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: CESAR FELIX

Cesar Felix is the Environmental Education Coordinator at Sonoran Institute. Since high school, his passion for education was awakened when he was a catechism teacher, leading him to a degree in Education Sciences at ITSON in Cd. Obregón, Sonora, Mexico. In addition, he has always been very curious about nature and how climate change will affect nature, and he wants to do his part to help solve this problem.

Cesar has a Master of Science in Ecosystem Management in Arid Zones at UABC, where he was an instructor inclusive science education group "Serendipia," a program on climate change taught elementary schools in and around Ensenada, Baja California. While working with *Serendipia's*, his master's project focused on training teachers about the effects of climate change in arid-coastal zones, which was implemented in the last quarter of 2022 in Ensenada.

His current work at the Sonoran Institute includes workshops with communities in the Mexicali Fluye project and leading educational field trips to Laguna Grande.



A MESSAGE FROM CEO MIKE ZELLNER

I am proud to share the incredible work and milestones the Sonoran Institute has achieved recently. From the success of Connecting Waters: Sketching the Santa Cruz River and our *Sabados Familiares* (family Saturdays) events, to impactful conservation efforts across the region, our mission to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them continue to thrive.

In Colorado, we are leading crucial conversations on water adequacy and land-use planning. The Mexicali Fluye team is finalizing an ambitious restoration plan for agricultural drains and educating local communities on sustainable urban gardening. In Laguna Grande, our collaboration on bird migration tracking marks another step in international conservation efforts.

March 7 marked a significant moment—our 35th anniversary, a celebration of decades of community engagement on conservation issues. With this event we celebrated our partners that help us engage our communities and restore nature across the Colorado River Basin and raised over \$40,000 towards continuing this mission. This anniversary is not just about reflecting on our successes but reaffirming our commitment to a resilient future.

We look forward to continuing this journey with you—whether at our upcoming anniversary events or through hands-on conservation efforts. Thank you for being part of this mission!

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 15 Santa Cruz River Clean up, Tucson AZ

MARCH 15 - 16 **Tucson Festival of Books**, Tucson AZ

MARCH 20 **Green Drinks Tucson**, Tucson AZ

APRIL 1 Arizona Gives Day!

APRIL 17 Green Drinks Tucson, Tucson AZ

APRIL 28 - 30 Growing Water Smart Colorado, Montrose CO

APRIL 29 - MAY 1 Santa Cruz River Research Days, Tucson AZ

JUNE 6 **35th Anniversary**, Denver CO

NOV 7 **35th Anniversary**, Mexicali, MX

At Sonoran Institute, we believe that by connecting people and nature today, we can create a positive future for all. We are dedicated to protecting and restoring the Colorado River Basin, and to ensuring that our communities have access to the water they need to thrive. Join us in our mission to create a sustainable future for the Colorado River Basin and beyond.

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