SONORAN
INSTITUTE

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2027–2030

## A Future Where People and Nature Thrive Together

### Thriving Together

We envision a future where communities prosper alongside the landscapes and water systems that sustain them. By aligning land use with water realities and restoring natural systems, we can build resilient communities, protect rivers, and sustain both economic vitality and ecological health.

### The Moment & Our Vision

The Colorado River Basin is at a tipping point. Increasingly dry conditions are reducing river flows as population growth drives rising demand. Cities, farms, Tribal Nations, and ecosystems are competing for limited water. This is not a temporary crisis—it is a long-term shift that demands urgent, innovative solutions.

Within this challenge lies a historic opportunity. Through cross-border collaboration, smarter water management, restored rivers, and community-driven solutions, the Basin can become a global model for resilience.

Since 1990, Sonoran Institute has been putting our vision into action. We have:

**Protected**
more than 500,000 acres of land

**Restored**
over 530,000 acre-feet to rivers

**Invested**
more than $320 million for conservation

**Launched**
over 20 partner organizations to amplify impact across the West



# OUR 2030 GOALS

**The four pillars guide our work through 2030:**

### Restore Rivers

We increase river flows, reconnect ecosystems, restore critical habitat, and secure long-term agreements to protect water and ecological health.

### Build Water-Secure Communities

We help communities adopt conservation, reuse, and land-use strategies that secure reliable water supplies, support responsible growth, and produce measurable water savings.

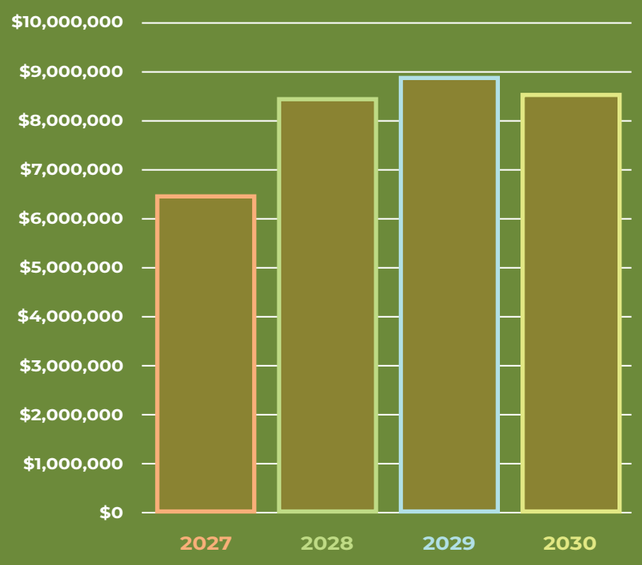
### Empower Local Leadership

We empower communities and Tribal Nations to develop locally driven solutions and replicate successful models across the Basin.

### Lead with Excellence

We foster strong partnerships, sustainable funding, and transparent governance to ensure effective, scalable, and lasting conservation outcomes.

## Sonoran Institute Projected Investment




**Total: $32,386,079**





## How We Deliver Results

Across our Santa Cruz River, Colorado River Delta, and the Growing Water Smart programs, we combine science, collaboration, and community leadership to turn ideas into action. We restore rivers and habitat, help communities make smarter water and growth decisions, and build trusted partnerships that sustain progress and strengthen water security across the Colorado River Basin.

## Santa Cruz River

**Arizona and Sonora**

More than 35 miles of the Santa Cruz River now flow from Nogales to Tucson. Our goal is to secure permanent water for the river and expand its benefits for people and nature.

We are advancing binational agreements in Ambos Nogales, supporting new effluent flows in the Green Valley reach, and working toward permanent water allocations in Tucson. Combined with restoration, education, and community engagement, these efforts will protect and extend living stretches of river that provide wildlife habitat, recharge groundwater, and create valued community spaces—building a resilient ribbon of green from Mexico to Marana.





## Colorado River Delta & Mexicali Fluye

**Baja California**

Building on more than two decades of work in the Colorado River Delta, we are restoring habitat, strengthening communities, and working toward a future where the Colorado River once again reaches the sea.

At Laguna Grande, our flagship restoration site, we will restore an additional 500 acres, bringing the total to more than 1,000 acres, and improve connectivity along four miles of the river's main channel to create a more self-sustaining ecosystem. We are also working with federal agencies, NGOs, and the Cucapá community to secure long-term river flows and permanent protection for restored lands. Our long-term goal is to help water reach the Upper Estuary and Gulf of California, sustaining more than 14,000 acres of habitat and strengthening the region's ecological and cultural vitality.

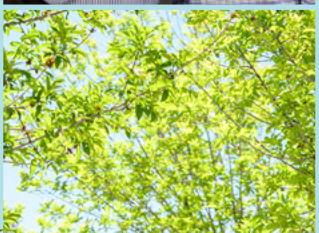
Through Mexicali Fluye, we are bringing this approach to the urban environment, transforming the New River and its tributaries into healthier, more accessible community assets across 10 miles of river corridor. By combining restoration, data, and community engagement, Mexicali Fluye offers a model for urban river recovery across the US-Mexico border.












# Growing Water Smart

**Colorado, Arizona, California, and US-Mexico**

Growing Water Smart (GWS) helps communities across the Colorado River Basin plan growth around available water supplies. As populations grow and water supplies become increasingly constrained, GWS equips local leaders with training, technical assistance, conservation strategies, and planning tools to make informed decisions that support growth and water security.

In the coming years, we will expand Growing Water Smart and deepen its impact through Water Secure Communities, connecting planning with implementation. Targeted technical assistance will help communities overcome barriers, advance projects, policies, and partnerships, and produce measurable results. By tracking what works and sharing successful approaches, we can broaden our impact throughout the Colorado River Basin.



# Shape the Future With Us

You can help move this work forward. Invest in solutions that protect water, land, and communities. Partner with us to put proven solutions to work across the Basin. Bring your expertise, resources, and commitment to accelerate lasting, measurable results.

Together, we can create a future where rivers flow, nature thrives, and communities prosper.

SONORAN
INSTITUTE

**Photo Credits**

**Cover Photo:** Kayaking on Laguna Grande by **Sonoran Institute**
**2:** AZ GWS workshop participants by **Julius Schlosburg**; Dragonfly Festival participants at El Rio Preserve by **Julius Schlosburg** **3:** View from the Laguna Grande Wetlands by **Sonoran Institute**; Dragonfly enthusiasts by **Julius Schlosburg**; Planting native flora for Laguna Grande by **Sonoran Institute**
**4:** Left top: AZ GWS partipants by **Julius Schlosburg**; left bottom: Hummingbird Circle in Grand Junction by **Kashja Iler**; photos on the right by **Julius Schlosburg**