



Shaping the Future of the West

westword

Sonoran Institute Newsletter

Summer 2011



### Note from the Executive Director

Over the course of just the last four weeks, our dedicated and hard-working Sonoran Institute staff have demonstrated our broad reach across the West, as well as our capacity to advance **community-based leadership** to protect wildlands and wildlife, better manage water and create more sustainable and prosperous communities.

#### Preserving the Essence of Arizona

On May 25 in **Arizona**, we helped to launch an ambitious land conservation effort. Called the [Sonoran Desert Heritage Proposal](#), we are asking Congress to protect approximately 700,000 acres of pristine desert land, all of it public land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The conservation region is located west of the growing Phoenix metropolis, primarily in Maricopa County. This area includes rugged terrain that provides an escape for hikers, hunters, birders, and outdoor enthusiasts of every kind. It is also home to a wealth of wildlife, from the bighorn sheep to the desert tortoise and the Gila monster, bobcat, and more than 300 species of native birds.

An exciting aspect of the effort is the diverse and bipartisan citizens and organizations that have come together to support the plan. Business leaders, city and county elected officials, landowners, hunting groups, interfaith groups, organizations that advocate for the military (nearby Luke Air Force Base depends upon these lands for training over-flights), educators and conservation groups are all working together to ensure that these vital landscapes are protected forever. Click on the link below to learn more about this initiative.

#### Protecting the North American Nile

In **Baja California, Mexico**, we are asking the public to lend a hand to help preserve the Colorado River Delta. The greatest desert river in the Western Hemisphere, the Colorado once formed a vast, lush delta as it flowed into the Gulf of California. Ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau called the Gulf of California "the aquarium of the world," as it is home to a tremendous diversity of fish, birds, and whales and other mammals.

Years of upstream water diversions from the Colorado River have reduced what was once two million acres of wetlands to less than 10 percent of its original size. But the Delta has proven to be surprisingly resilient.

Working with many partners, our vision is to have a healthy Delta ecosystem that provides recreation and economic development opportunities for local and indigenous people and supports healthy populations of freshwater and marine wildlife species. By the year 2022, our goal is to double the amount of wetland and estuarine habitats and ensure regular connectivity between the river and the sea. Click on the link below to read more about the Delta. [Find out how you can join in our efforts to save "the Nile" of North America.](#)

### People, Community Development and Wildlife

In **Montana**, the Institute convened a well-received workshop in early June to share tools, ideas and inspiration on how best to protect wildlife populations and habitat as communities grow and develop. Held in Helena, our workshop brought together teams of community and county leaders, government officials, conservation groups and citizens, to learn more about the latest thinking and techniques associated with managing growth to protect wildlife. The actionable outcome is to jump-start local efforts to develop or refresh community-based wildlife protection plans.

These initiatives and our vital conservation work across the West depend on your continuing support. If you have contributed to the Sonoran Institute recently, I thank you for your support. If not, please consider [contributing today](#) to help us shape the future of the West. Together, we can continue this amazing work.

Sincerely,



Luther Propst

### Donate to the Sonoran Institute

Conservationist and hunter Bill Mitchell is impressed at how the Institute gets different groups to work together.

[Read Bill's story »](#)



### Save the Colorado River Delta

We need your help to support the preservation of an essential life-supporting ecosystem - the Colorado River Delta.

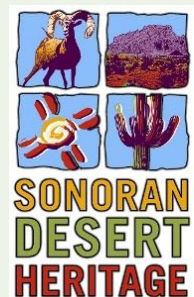
[How you can help »](#)



### Preserving the Essence of Arizona

The Institute helped to launch one of the nation's most ambitious land protection initiatives in 50 years!

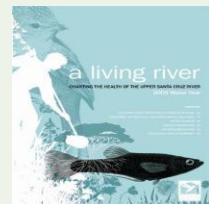
[Check it out »](#)



### Reclaiming an Oasis in the Desert Video

Sonoran Institute scientists Emily Brott and Claire Zugmeyer provide a tour of our restoration work on the Santa Cruz River.

[View the video »](#)



## An Enduring Partnership

The Institute has a special relationship with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to address challenges in the West.

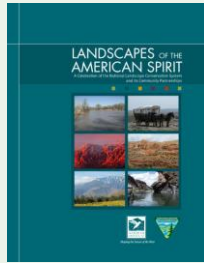
[Read about our work »](#)



## Landscapes of the American Spirit

BLM and the Institute celebrate the National Landscape Conservation System and its community partnerships.

[Read and be inspired »](#)



## Housing Crash Spawns Zombie Subdivisions

The Institute's Jim Holway discusses revival options in the West for the "living dead" of real estate.

[Read the media story »](#)



## Opinion - Sky's the Limit for Building a Better Future

The Institute's focus on investing in Mainstreet inspired this Bozeman Chronicle editorial.

[Read the editorial »](#)



## Read the Sonoran Institute Annual Report



### 20 Years: Time to Reflect and Reset

Preserving what is special about the West - our open space, wildlife, scenery, and vibrant, walkable downtowns - not only protects our quality of life but also attracts the human talent needed to build this new economy and bring prosperity back to our communities. This is our vision for a sustainable future in the West, and we look forward to working with you and our neighbors to help shape it.

[Read our 2010 Annual Report >>](#)

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