

Hope For Two Rivers

“Running water is something for a southwesterner to get excited about. It’s scarce, it’s cool, it’s wet, and it creates an oasis of shade, a retreat from the desiccation of the surrounding country.”

Richard Shelton

A Wellspring Of Support

Alfonso Gonzalez was a sheep farmer in San Lazaro, Sonora, Mexico, a small town on the Santa Cruz River, perhaps 12 miles south of the U.S. border. Gonzalez depended on the river, so he collected data on bird migrations, river temperatures, and riverside vegetation and shared his information with the Sonoran Institute.

A grassroots organization in Tubac, Arizona, the Friends of the Santa Cruz River, focuses on river flow data. The Institute and the Friends bring riverside landowners into a collaborative task force to develop and implement conservation strategies.

This is the work. In restoring health to the Santa Cruz—so crucial to landowners on both sides of this water-starved border—the Institute facilitates a delicate international collaboration by collecting data, analyzing it, researching the science, and then reporting the

“We do conservation work the hard way, from the inside out, by developing partnerships and relationships.”

Francisco Zamora Arroyo, Director of the Upper Gulf Legacy Program

findings in conferences and workshops along the river’s length. **Throughout this process, we build relationships**, so that when we formally present a plan it’s the result of countless exchanges and agreements; and precisely because of that, it can easily be adopted by our partners to impact the river’s future.

We need you to partner with us.

A River Revived, A Culture Restored

Several years ago, a local geographer grabbed a couple of friends and headed to the top of the Gulf of California for a look at the land. There, they were stranded in a Colorado River flood, and rescued by a local Cucupá Indian.

That geographer was Francisco Zamora Arroyo, now the director of our Upper Gulf Legacy Program. **He saw first hand how the Hoover and Glen Canyon dams had upset the natural balance of the Colorado River and effectively destroyed the Cucupá’s way of life and livelihood.** He was also introduced to Pronatura, a Mexican conservation group that now partners with the Sonoran Institute in a cross-border effort to restore the Colorado River delta.

The delta’s problem is simple: there’s not enough water flowing in from the Colorado. **The solution is far from simple:** dedicating at least 50,000 acre-feet of water every year from the Colorado for conservation, and restoring an indigenous people’s way of life. Taking a typical Sonoran Institute approach, we have worked with our international partners to chop this enormous task into many local restoration projects that local citizens can adopt. **This creates a series of small successes. It enlists people in stewardship of the river. And it brings water naturally into the delta and the gulf.**

With your support, we can continue to restore the delta.

Smart Is The Only Way To Grow

“Growth is inevitable. The trick is balancing respect for economic growth with reverence for the environment and the immeasurable significance of the landscape.”

Karen Wade, Sonoran Institute Board Member

Bringing Growth Into Balance

Let’s say you just want to get away from it all. Montana is just the place: sweeping views, miles from anywhere, and tidy little 40-acre lots called “ranchettes.”

Multiply that sale by many thousands, spread it across Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado, stir in a 40% drop in the real estate market, and you’re looking at an environmental disaster. And a nightmare for local counties and municipalities. **What the Sonoran Institute has been fighting in the northern Rockies is the worst kind of sprawl—**spread along valleys, miles from the nearest towns, erasing local tax revenues from producing ranches and farms, and requiring support services across impossible distances.

We have been hard at work. Thanks to our Montana Smart Growth Coalition, the Legislature passed seven new laws aimed at helping counties and communities grow in a smarter way. In Wyoming, we tag-teamed with the Partnership for Wyoming’s Future to push for passage of a large-tract subdivision law, boosting local authority and curbing poorly planned developments. And in Colorado, we helped secure new funding to address alternative transportation and reduce the traffic on local roadways.

It wasn’t easy. We worked with conflicting interests: water boards, developers, ranchers, cities, utility districts, environmentalists, transportation agencies, and educators. **Because everything was at stake—their land, their wildlife, their communities, and the inheritance of their children.**

Your dollars make this collaborative work possible.

Gathering And Galvanizing

Hunted to the point of extinction in the eastern United States by 1900, the North American Mountain Lion has proved to be an accomplished western survivor—which means its habitat could include a tree in your backyard.

For some people in the Mojave Desert this is a distinct possibility. A place of stark beauty, the Mojave is also a wildlife corridor for Bighorn Sheep and the Desert Tortoise. The conflict between wildlife and sprawling rural growth became so severe by 2008 that residents called for help.

The Institute responded with land use planner Stephanie Weigel, who moved to the area, picked up the phone, got out and met people, and asked questions. Stephanie and the Institute have been working with a grassroots organization, the Morongo Basin Open Space Group, to stitch together a land use and wildlife conservation plan that writes protection measures into local codes and ordinances. Together, we have **enlisted some 22 local, regional, and national allies—**from Joshua Tree National Park to the United States Marine Corps, from the City of Twentynine Palms to the Mojave Desert Conservation Association—to accept stewardship of this unique and magnificent area.

Morongo Basin is now a model for solving a specifically western issue in a distinctly Sonoran Institute way—from the ground up.

“One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, ‘What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?’”

Rachel Carson

Keeping Our Boots On The Ground

Together, we can continue this important, amazing work.

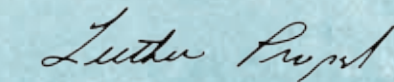
The four projects you’ve read about here are making a crucial difference in how we live in better balance with this land.

As we celebrate our 20th anniversary, I must repeat Theodore Roosevelt’s words. He said we have inherited a “glorious heritage” and that we all have to do “our part.” As a Westerner, I take these words very seriously. The “glorious heritage” he mentions is found largely in the West, and I take the responsibility he notes as a personal responsibility to our children and grandchildren.

I know you do, too. For two decades, your donations have fueled the Sonoran Institute’s “boots on the ground” approach, and for that I am deeply appreciative.

Each year, however, the unknown distance is still before us. *The importance of your contributions cannot be overstated.* Your gift today of any amount—\$50, \$100, \$250, \$500—will make it that much easier for all of us in the West to preserve the heritage with which we have been entrusted.

Many thanks,



Luther Propst
Executive Director, Sonoran Institute



Alfonso Gonzales points to a flock of birds.



2010 SPRING



Shaping the Future of the West

The Unknown Distance

The people we work with—the communities, the agencies, the foundations, the policy makers—know us as a “boots on the ground” organization.

This is how we work. If a river is dying, we want to see it, float it, feel the riverside mud and vegetation, talk to the people who depend on it. Then, we ask: How can it be brought back to life?

Everything has a say: the people, the river, the wildlife, the seasons, and the land. The work begins with understanding nature’s basic rules, applying science, then gathering all the resources that can bring about a future that’s in balance.

But really, it begins with you.



Shaping the Future of the West
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“Politics at the local level is what affects and shapes your life.”

Louise Glasser, Sonoran Institute Board Member

Two Decades Shaping The West

In 1990, the Sonoran Institute began with a vision. It was a vision for the country from Mexico to Montana, up the spine of the Rocky Mountains. We call it simply, “the West.”

The West demands a rare form of love. In return, it shapes us, roots us, gives us hope, and for that we are indebted.

Theodore Roosevelt acknowledged this debt when he said, “We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune.”

We need you to do your part.

Donate online today. Go to www.sonoraninstitute.org.



Photographs

Front Cover: The Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park

Back Cover: Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge near Roman, Montana

Inside Pages: Photo of Alfonso Gonzales, Lorne Matalon; Historical photo of the Colorado River, courtesy of San Diego Museum of Natural History; Luther Propst and Eric Goresgner; Ian Wilson

“We have an unknown distance yet to run, an unknown river to explore.”

John Wesley Powell