



The Sonoran Institute promotes community decisions that respect the land & people of the West

Sonoran Institute, National Geographic team up for Sonoran Desert geotourism



GEOTOURISM conveys sense of place

Geotourism, as defined by the National Geographic Society, “sustains or enhances the character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.”

In its Sonoran Desert MapGuide for geotourists, the Society will feature natural areas; cultural sites or experiences; festivals; historic districts; arts and crafts venues; performing arts; local restaurants, shops, markets and accommodations; ranches or farms; museums; archaeological sites; outdoor recreation; and other distinctive sites or activities.

Find more information at www.sonorandesertgeotourism.org or by contacting the Sonoran Institute at 520-290-0828 or joaquin@sonoran.org.

A couple of years ago a friend invited the Sonoran Institute’s Joaquin Murrieta and Monica Durand to lunch with Jonathan Tourtellot, the director of the National Geographic Society’s Center for Sustainable Destinations. It was the beginning of an exciting new project.

In December the National Geographic Society (NGS) signed a charter with regional partners — Sonoran Institute, Arizona Office of Tourism, Sonora Office of Tourism and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management — making the Sonoran Desert region the Society’s fifth geotourism project and the first to cross an international border. The others are in Appalachia, Norway, Honduras and Romania.

Geotourism encourages both visitors and hosts to appreciate

what makes a place distinctive — its flora and fauna as in ecotourism, but also its history, archaeology, scenery, architecture, music, cuisine, crafts, festivals and arts. Visitors enjoy an enriching, quality experience, which is an incentive for local stewardship and protection of assets that create authenticity and “sense of place.”

A regional council will promote geotourism and encourage local stewardship. Next spring the National Geographic Society will publish an informative geotourism mapguide featuring sites and activities selected from hundreds of nominations.

This great collaboration respects the land and people in the area, holds the promise of sustainable economic opportunities, and broadens and shares knowledge about the Sonoran Desert.



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Energy Impacts & Policy — *coming soon*
Land & Water Policy
Northern Rockies
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Sonoran Desert

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Dear Friends,

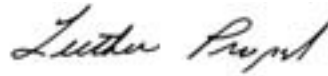
Spring is all about renewal, and that's certainly true at the Sonoran Institute this year.

We have some great new people and projects you'll read about in this issue. The newsletter itself has new elements — a lighter look and streamlined content to make it easier for you to get an idea of what we are doing around the West and in northern Mexico. The newsletter's new name reflects that the focus of our work is the West, and that we want to give you the latest word about how the use of land and resources is shaping western North America.

You can always find additional information on our Web site: sonoran.org. Our staff is improving that, too, and by late summer the site will have a new look and easier navigation.

Of course, many things remain the same. We continue to devote our energy and resources to promoting community decisions that respect the land and people of the West. As growth in the region accelerates, we are working to give communities tools, training and information to plan for and manage change and to protect natural and cultural assets.

I can't tell you enough how much I appreciate your support for this work.

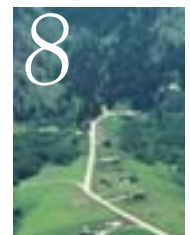
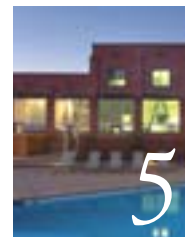
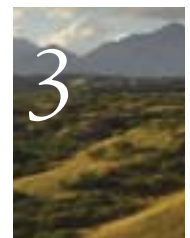


Luther Propst
Executive Director



Index

Page 1	Desert Geotourism
Page 3	Community Conservation
Page 4	Power Donor
Page 5	Best Building Awards
Page 6	Decision Tools; Energy Impacts
Page 8	Protecting Montana's Assets





Developer embraces conservation

Jeffrey Cooper worked at the library in Patagonia, Arizona, in 2003 when two landowners came in to talk with him about a residential development they were planning near the town. They figured that Cooper would have helpful insights about the area based on his 15 years as a land steward for The Nature Conservancy's Patagonia-Sonoita Creek and Hassayampa nature preserves.

David Parsons and Denny Hubbell own Conservation Properties, a unique real-estate development company committed to community involvement and long-term conservation. Cooper listened to their ideas for a project that would conserve and regenerate the land, which had been heavily grazed. He thought, "If half of what they are saying comes true, this project will be incredible."

Today, Conservation Properties is developing Three Canyons with 198 lots on 1,700 acres. An integral part of the project is La Semilla (The Seed) Community Stewardship Organization (CSO) with Cooper as its executive director. Parsons and Hubbell learned about the Sonoran Institute's CSO program in 2004 when they attended a workshop at the Santa Lucia

Conservancy, a CSO in Carmel, California.

Cooper reports that all of what Parsons and Hubbell described at the library is coming true — and more. Eighty-percent of Three Canyons is protected — including a planned 25-acre farm — under a conservation easement held by the Sonoran Institute to be transferred to La Semilla in the future. La Semilla will conduct environmental education and conservation and restoration activities within Three Canyons and throughout the Sonoita Creek watershed. Transfer fees on the sale and resale of lots and homes will generate long-term funding for La Semilla.

Many area residents shared expertise and knowledge about local culture, history and landscapes with Parsons and Hubbell during the project's planning. This winter the developers hosted a celebration to honor the community's involvement and delivered a \$24,600 grant from La Semilla to the Patagonia Regional Community Foundation.

The Sonoran Institute welcomes La Semilla to the CSO network and Three Canyons to the growing family of communities that embrace conservation.

Eighty percent of the land in the Three Canyons development in Patagonia, Arizona, is protected through a conservation easement.

NEW DIRECTOR LEADS CSO PROJECT

Kristine Bentz wants to help communities create a "vivid sense of place."

She's in the right place to do that as the new director of the Sonoran Institute's new Land Conservation and Development Program. The program encompasses the Community Stewardship Organization (CSO) Network, which integrates conservation and long-term stewardship into the real estate development process.

The Network has six models operating across the country, and Bentz is expecting CSOs to become more common. "The West is growing rapidly, and people increasingly want to live near natural areas and open spaces. The CSO idea encourages wise land use where people interact with nature," she says.

For more information, visit sonoran.org or contact Kristine Bentz at 520-290-0828 or kbentz@sonoran.org.



Kristine Bentz

Tucson Electric Power encourages green building



The Audubon Society's Mason Center uses solar energy thanks to Tucson Electric Power and its customers.

Corporations, organizations and individuals bring the work of the Sonoran Institute to life with their financial support, empowering Institute staff to monitor invasive species, research the economic value of conservation, train local officials throughout the West about growth management and — well, the list is long.

For three years, Tucson Electric Power (TEP) has been a generous sponsor of the annual Sonoran Institute Celebrates event. Two of those events featured Building from the Best awards to honor building design and development that respect the environment (see story, opposite page).

“We think *Building from the Best* sets a good example for what should happen in our community,” said Betsy Bolding, TEP’s director of consumer affairs. “Energy-efficient building, in particular, is in the best interests of the company and its customers, and we encourage that with TEP’s Guarantee Home program.”

In fact, several TEP programs promote conservation and renewable energy. Bolding’s favorite is GreenWatts, which encourages customers to add \$2 or more to their monthly bill for the creation of “green” power. For each “GreenWatt” a customer adopts, TEP produces 20 kilowatt hours of electricity per month from renewable energy resources.

Funds collected through GreenWatts have allowed the company to install photovoltaic solar panels at several public schools and other community sites, such as the Tucson Botanical Gardens, the Audubon Society’s Mason Center and Tohono Chul Park. Such projects reduce the need to burn coal, gas or other traditional fuels to generate electricity. For more information, visit greenwatts.com or tep.com.

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Environmental Defense
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Montana Association of Conservation Districts
Montana Audubon Society
Montana Environmental Information Center
Montana Wildlife Federation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
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National Park Service Desert Southwest
Cooperative Studies Unit
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
The Nature Conservancy
Northern Plains Resource Council
Park County Environmental Council
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Pronatura
Santa Lucia Conservancy
Sonora Office of Tourism
Sublette County, Wyoming
Town of Apache Junction
Town of Sahuarita
U.S. Air Force Legacy Program
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The Edith Ball Aquatic Center, which uses solar water heating and requires no artificial light or mechanical ventilation, took top honors for Green Building.

Transforming an old ice manufacturing facility into residential condos, the Ice House Lofts team won the Creative Reuse award.

Smart, innovative designs earn kudos

Two things good for the environment happened in Tucson, Arizona, on the evening of March 11, 2006.

First, in the midst of a multi-year drought, rain fell in the desert city for the first time in months. Second, enjoying every drop, nearly 500 people came to a downtown hotel ballroom for the *Building from the Best* awards ceremony.

The Sonoran Institute initiated the biannual awards program in 2004 to celebrate design and development that respect the environment and the character of the community. Tucson and many other western communities are realizing that smart design and land-use contribute significantly to prosperity, vitality and sense of place. *Building from the Best* salutes the innovative and responsible architects, builders, owners and developers who are making their community a better place to live.

Building from the Best celebrates vision, partnership, creativity, beauty, community, and respect for land and people.

Trophies were presented to the judges' choices for urban infill development, green building, mixed use and four other categories. A complete list and photos of the winners are at sonoran.org.

Building from the Best is an excellent example of partnership and collaboration. It has grown quickly with leadership and support from the City of Tucson. Respected sponsors have stepped forward to ensure the finalists are recognized and honored. Rio Development, Desert Diamond Casino and Tucson Electric Power (see page 4) were major sponsors of the March event.

The Institute is expanding the popular program to the Northern Rockies, presenting awards in Bozeman, Montana, next fall.

It's a lot to ask from one awards program, but *Building from the Best* celebrates vision, partnership, creativity, beauty, community, and respect for land and people. All of that — and more — are embodied in the glass, brick and steel of the finalist projects.

It was a great night — honoring *Building from the Best* winners and smelling rain in the desert once again.

Rural leaders prep for growth and change in Rockies

By Marjo Curgus, WCSF Project Manager

“If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail.”

Chris Duerkson thinks Mark Twain’s words help explain why 47 decision-makers from eight counties came to Grand Junction, Colorado, for a Western Community Stewardship Forum (WCSF) in mid-March. Duerkson, an attorney and land-use consultant, and his fellow facilitators made sure participants returned home with multiple tools for addressing a surge of newcomers and changing economic conditions in their communities.



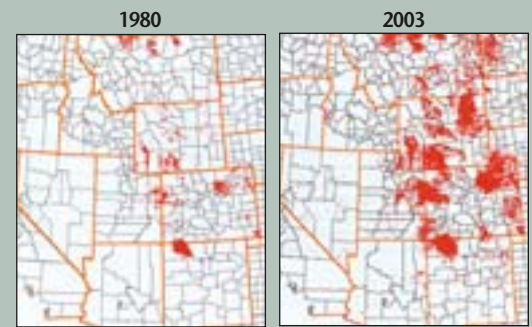
Representatives from eight western counties find common issues at Stewardship Forum.

The Colorado, Idaho and Montana counties represented at the forum face challenges typical in many western communities today. Historically dependent on mining, agriculture or timber, the West’s economy is now driven by retirees, second home owners, investors, and businesses able to operate anywhere. Rural communities are struggling to manage explosive growth, radical changes in the global market, and less isolation due to communication and information technology.

While growth can strengthen and diversify local economies, it creates a long list of issues for local governments. WCSF participants expressed concerns about threats to community identity, loss of open space and agricultural lands, higher costs of providing services, increasing demands on infrastructure, and affordable housing. As one county commissioner said, “it’s great knowing we are not the only ones out there confronting these issues.”

During the three-day workshop, the group learned how to engage and educate citizens, assess and manage the costs of growth, plan where growth should occur, and provide leadership for change. Each county developed an action plan to address its specific issues. Networking and a trip to the Colorado National Monument were other highlights of the forum.

In its seventh year, WCSF is a partnership between the Sonoran Institute and the National Association of Counties (NACo) that has provided more than 300 local officials in the West with training and tools for managing and balancing community, economic and environmental issues.



Gas Development in the Rockies

SONORAN INSTITUTE TACKLES ENERGY IMPACTS

A fast-growing crop is sprouting on the land in western Colorado, northeastern Utah and southwestern Wyoming. It’s not alfalfa or pinto beans; rather, drill rigs and oil and gas wells are popping up as though they’d had a mega-dose of Miracle-Gro.

A traveler crossing southern Wyoming recently couldn’t find a room for the night. Energy workers had filled the motels and hotels for hundreds of miles around.

The Sonoran Institute’s Central Rockies program director, Jim Spehar, recognizes that energy development is having wide-ranging social, economic and environmental impacts on the land and communities across the region.

“The West is in the bullseye for development of traditional energy resources and for alternatives such as biofuels and wind power,” Spehar says. “To effectively help communities make decisions that respect land and people, we must be engaged in energy issues.”

In March he proposed the Sonoran Institute initiate a new program to assist those communities; the board of directors agreed.

The Energy Impacts & Policy Program will offer training, information and technical assistance to help communities assess and plan for the impacts of energy development — an influx of new workers, a shortage of housing, threats to quality of life, loss of wildlife habitat and other natural assets, degradation of water, and the potential for a boom/bust economic cycle. The program will also work to help the region benefit from alternative energy.

The Institute is seeking support for this major new endeavor, with work expected to begin this summer to help communities handle this latest resource development boom, while protecting natural and cultural assets that will assure prosperity and quality of life into the future.

AROUND THE WEST ...

in a word

At a recent state capitol event, the Sonoran Institute's Diana Rhoades thanked Governor Janet Napolitano for her support of Conserving Arizona's Future, the citizens' initiative for state trust-land reform. "We're going to win it, aren't we!" the governor said confidently. Diana reports the petition effort is on track to assure the 183,917 valid signatures necessary to put the measure on the November ballot.

Building from the Best of the Northern Rockies will make its debut at a special event in Bozeman, Montana, on September 8. The event will recognize and honor builders, architects, developers and projects that respect the environment and character of the region.

Shopping at hundreds of stores online can help a cause close to your heart — the Sonoran Institute! The Institute is now listed with igive.com. It's free and private. A portion of what you spend is donated to the Institute at no extra cost to you.

The Sonoran Institute Board of Directors will have two new faces in June. Martha Hunter of Phoenix is a partner in Strategies, which specializes in strategic marketing, media relations and public policy plans. She has previously worked on transportation, land-use and development issues and as a public policy analyst. David Parsons of Tucson is a principal of Conservation Properties Inc., which is developing the only master planned community in Arizona where conservation is the central amenity (see story, page 3). Previously, Mr. Parsons was COO of a group that created "ranch preservation subdivisions" in New Mexico.

La Ruta Geotours will offer two new trips beginning next fall, along with its existing Sonoran Desert tours. La Ruta will explore:

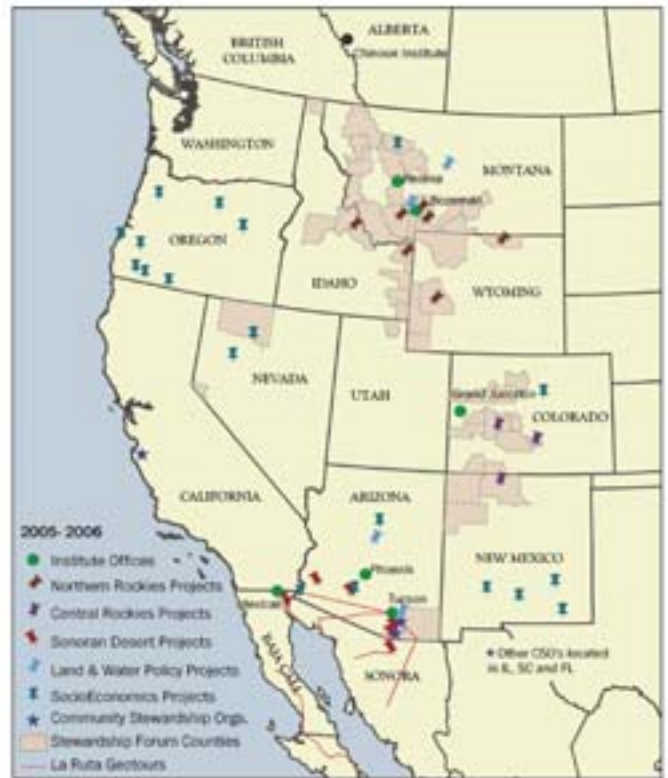
- the unusual flora and other wonders of Baja California;
- ranching, archaeology, birds and food from Bisbee, Arizona, to Hermosillo, Sonora.

Check schedules this summer at laruta.org.

Working in collaboration with groups across Arizona, the Sonoran Institute will use a \$75,000 grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust and a \$15,000 grant from the Kenney Foundation to develop a state-wide water-management policy that protects free-flowing rivers and streams and future water supplies.

Three sites have become pilot projects for the Sonoran Institute and Bureau of Land Management partnership for collaborative conservation formed last fall. Our work in:

- Eastern Oregon is with communities on a range of issues including recreation, transportation planning, sustainable forestry, and wild and scenic river management.
- Arizona is with communities to minimize the impacts of growth and development along the Sonoran Desert National Monument boundaries.
- Nevada is on sustainable development strategies in several northern counties and to help support the Friends Group for the Black Rock/High Rock National Monument.



Superstition Vistas – a 275-square-mile parcel of state trust land in the path of growth in Pinal County, Arizona, is the setting for a new report that's been getting considerable media attention in the greater Phoenix area. *The Treasure of the Superstitions: Scenarios for the Future of Superstition Vistas* describes three possible scenarios to illustrate how today's choices impact tomorrow's results. It was created when the State Trust Lands Joint Venture (a partnership of the Sonoran Institute and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy) and several other public and private entities asked Arizona State University's Morrison Institute for Public Policy to stimulate innovative thinking about land development. See the full report at www.asu.edu/copp/morrison/SV.htm.

The Town of Sahuarita, Arizona, has a vision. Or, it will by next fall. The Sonoran Institute is leading a process that brings citizens and landowners together with the Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to create a vision for the town center and Main Street in the rapidly growing community. The first public meeting in February had a great turn out!



Sonoran Institute

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Montana exploring antidote to rampant land consumption

Wide open spaces, stunning scenery, productive agricultural lands, unparalleled wildlife habitat — the natural assets of the West are attracting more people, and many are building bigger homes on bigger lots.

A study of the Greater Yellowstone area underscores the consequences. Since 1970, its population increased by 62 percent, while rural residential land consumption grew by a staggering 350 percent. Such land-use patterns are altering the character of the West and its communities.

Adjustments to policies, land planning, and infrastructure investments can produce alternative development patterns, according to *Yellowstone 2020: Creating Our Legacy*, published in 2005 by the Sonoran Institute and the Montana State University Landscape Biodiversity Lab.



Development near the Bridger Mountains in Gallatin County, Montana, illustrates land use that fractures wildlife habitat and open space.

Several Montana counties—Beaverhead, Madison, Lewis and Clark, Lake, Missoula and Ravalli—are comparing future development scenarios based on current and alternative land-use plans. With this information county decision-makers can evaluate policies and generate support for managing growth and protecting community assets.

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

also uses the model to evaluate policies for state trust lands and how their development would impact local communities and the environment.

This innovative model is helping Western counties, cities, public agencies and citizens think strategically about guiding growth and protecting the amenities that bring growth in the first place. For more information or a copy of the Yellowstone report, visit sonoran.org.