



In this edition of the *Sonoran Post*, we deepen our commitments to environmental education and community stewardship. You can be involved by sharing our work and **donating today!**

CLEANING AND CELEBRATING THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER

March highlighted our leadership in community-based restoration, public engagement, and applied science along the Santa Cruz River. Key milestones included the launch of Tucson's first litter capture infrastructure, a successful large-scale volunteer cleanup event with over 500 pounds of trash removed despite extreme heat conditions, and continued momentum toward Santa Cruz River Research Days. These efforts reflect a growing emphasis on combining infrastructure, stewardship, and research to improve river health. Strong partnerships with local governments, private sector partners, and community organizations were central to these successes. Collectively, these activities advanced both on-the-ground impact and regional awareness of water quality and watershed stewardship in the Santa Cruz River system.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, WORLD WATER MONTH, AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN MEXICALI

During March, our Delta team focused on education in Mexicali. Presenting at AGROBAJA and Expo Ambiente on our work with Raise the River Coalition on restoration of the Colorado River Delta and our Laguna Grande restoration site, as well as our initiatives to engage youth in environmental protection initiatives. We also presented at the Autonomous University of Baja California for their Water Month activity "Youth and Water Forum" on "Urban Wetlands of the Colorado River Delta: Laguna Grande, the Las Arenitas Wetland, and the Drains Feeding the New River."

Outside of presenting on our efforts, we engaged with the community of Mexicali for hands-on education experiences including student birdwatching on Camino Real, students from CECYTE high school visiting the Laguna Grande site, *Sabados Familiares* where families connect with the river at Laguna Grande, and a "Women of the Delta" event, commemorating International Women's Day. The Women of the Delta event concluded with the presentation of awards to women who have dedicated over 15 years to the conservation of the Delta—most notably, our colleagues Edith Santiago and Celia Alvarado.

WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS; DEVELOPING A WATER SMART WEST.

At the beginning of March, we hosted the Growing Water Smart Peer Network Webinar: "Local Policies for Large Water Users" Which explored the impact of data centers and related policy tools available at the local level. Our panel of experts were: Lindsay Rogers, Policy Manager for Municipal Conservation at Western Resource Advocates; Mary Ann Dickinson, Policy Director of Land and Water for the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, a center of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; and Zach Sugg, Associate Director for Research, also representing the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy.

The 2026 Arizona Growing Water Smart workshop was held in Tucson from March 23-25 through the partnership of the Sonoran Institute and the Babbitt Center for Land & Water Policy. The workshop was attended by five community teams: Bullhead City; a regional county team including representatives from the Towns of Pima, Safford, and Thatcher; the City of Nogales, Sonora; Santa Cruz County; and the City of Willcox. Informed by case studies in water and land use integration across the state and guided by facilitators, participants worked in their teams to develop 12-18 month water resilience action plans that were unique to their local conditions and community values. This also marked the first time a Mexican community attended an Arizona Growing Water Smart workshop, made possible by simultaneous interpretation and enabling cross-border dialogue between Nogales, Sonora and Santa Cruz County about binational water issues.



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SONORAN INSTITUTE
TUCSON CLEAN & BEAUTIFUL
DRAGON BREWING CO.

RIO 5K RELAY

Join us for the first annual Rio Relay 5k River Clean Up in the Santa Cruz

Start at Juhan Park and clean to Bonita Park, with an after party and awards at Dragoon Brewing Company

Saturday, April 18
 Starts at 8 am
 After party ends at 2pm

Join as a team!
 \$25 person
 2 to 25 friends
 1 raffle person, T-shirt with team name, racer goody bag

Join as a Volunteer!
 FREE
 you'll be assigned an aid station to work
 1 raffle person, T-shirt with team name

REGISTER HERE

Santa Cruz RIVER RESEARCH DAYS



WHISKEY DEL BAC
 AMERICAN DISTILLERS

EARTH DAY
 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 • 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

DEATH FREE DEL BAC
 LIMITED BOTTLE RELEASE PARTY

PHOTO PRESENTATION
 W/ JULIUS SCHLOSBERG PHOTOGRAPHY

LIVE MUSIC W/
 DJ HANS HUTCHISON

FOOD TRUCK
 SCRATCHING THE PLATE

A PORTION OF PROCEEDS FROM BOTTLE SALES WILL BE DONATED TO THE SONORAN INSTITUTE AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

WHISKEY DEL BAC • 2100 N. FORBES BLVD SUITE 102, TUCSON

EARTH DAY IS ALL MONTH AT SONORAN INSTITUTE

For conservation nonprofits like ourselves, April is a very special month! We work to ensure everyday feels like Earth Day, but you too can get involved and connect to the Sonoran Desert through a number of events we have this month!

Last weekend, we held Tucson's first ever **Santa Cruz River 5k Trash Clean-up** on April 18, put on by Sonoran Institute and Tucson Clean & Beautiful. Starting in Juhan Park and ending at Bonita Park, volunteers and racers cleaned the Santa Cruz River and connected with the Tucson Community on a balmy spring morning!

Wednesday, April 22 is **Earth Day, and we will be at Whiskey del Bac** celebrating with Watershed Management Group, Death Free Foodie, and long-time photographer and friend of Sonoran Institute, Julius Schlosberg. Scratching the Plate will be offering locally inspired vegetarian bites and DJ Hans Hutchison will be spinning tunes. Proceeds from this event will benefit Sonoran Institute and Watershed Management Group.

And finally, we will be ending April with **Santa Cruz River Research Days**, held fully hybrid and bilingual at Pima Community College Downtown Campus. This year's theme, A Watershed of Protection, invites speakers, creators, researchers and community members to speak about their work on the Santa Cruz River.



A MESSAGE FROM CEO MIKE ZELLNER

March underscored our leadership in community-based restoration, public engagement, and applied science throughout the Santa Cruz River and beyond.

In Tucson, we launched the city's first litter capture infrastructure, hosted a volunteer cleanup removing over 500 pounds of trash under intense heat, and advanced preparations for Santa Cruz River Research Days. These achievements reflect our commitment to integrating infrastructure, stewardship, and science—made possible through strong collaboration with local governments, businesses, and community partners.

Across the border, our Delta team deepened environmental education and community connection in Mexicali. Through presentations at AGROBAJA, Expo Ambiente, and the Autonomous University of Baja California, we shared our restoration work and youth engagement efforts. Hands-on learning experiences, from student birdwatching at Camino Real to family days at Laguna Grande, cultivated a new generation of environmental stewards. A special highlight was the "Women of the Delta" celebration, honoring colleagues Edith Santiago and Celia Alvarado for over 15 years of dedication to Delta conservation.

Regionally, our Growing Water Smart initiatives continued to expand impact. Our March webinar on "Local Policies for Large Water Users" gathered leading experts, and the 2026 Arizona Growing Water Smart workshop in Tucson brought together five community teams—including Nogales, Sonora, our first Mexican participant—to develop tailored water resilience action plans, marking an important step in cross-border collaboration.

As we move into April and celebrate Earth Month, I invite everyone to participate in our upcoming Santa Cruz River 5k Cleanup, Earth Day celebration, and Research Days—continuing our shared journey toward a thriving, resilient watershed.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 18 Rio Relay 5k Trash Cleanup, Tucson, AZ

APRIL 22 Earth Day at Whiskey del Bac, Tucson, AZ

APRIL 28 - 30 Santa Cruz River Research Days, Tucson, AZ and online



SONORAN INSTITUTE LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: Rosa Gonzalez Gomez

Rosa Gonzalez joined the Sonoran Institute in 2015 and works as a field assistant in the Colorado River Delta program, where she supports restoration work such as clearing, collection and production of native riparian species, planting, irrigation, maintenance and support for ecological monitoring activities at restoration sites. Rosy used to devote herself to household chores before working in the fields and since then she has enjoyed balancing her work, caring for trees and learning about the natural world around her. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family and children.

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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