



In this edition of the **Sonoran Post**, we focus on community connections and our expanding Colorado River programs, you can help our work go further by **donating today!**

COLORADO GROWING WATER SMART

Planning is underway to hold a Growing Water Smart workshop for Denver Water customers in spring 2027. Growing Water Smart is working in partnership with Denver Water to design a workshop for the unique context of its service area and hopes to serve 5-7 communities at the workshop – bringing the benefits of this workshop to approximately 330,000 Coloradans.

The Growing Water Smart team is also preparing a single-day event with Northern Water that will bring together past participants in Growing Water Smart to celebrate lessons learned. This event will serve as a test of a new single-day format for the program as well as renew connections with allottees in Northern Water's service area.

Growing Water Smart was selected by the Town of Alamosa, Colorado to help develop the Water Element for its upcoming Comprehensive Plan. mid-September, Growing Water Smart Program Managers will facilitate discussions regarding Alamosa's water challenges and opportunities, and will then provide Water Element recommendations for the final Comprehensive Plan.



MONSOONS ON THE SANTA CRUZ RIVER

The Santa Cruz River team had a busy month of monsoon response, research, outreach planning, and grant development. Monsoon storms gave the team and University of Arizona interns, Hannah and Delaney, an opportunity to visit all three trash traps to remove, sort, and categorize collected trash. Results from this work will be available this fall through the Sonoran Institute Trash Database.

The team also continued planning for September's month-long Dragonfly Festival, which will share the Santa Cruz River with the public through tours, virtual lectures, and events in Tucson and Santa Cruz County. Finally, the team secured a Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area grant to support work in Santa Cruz County, particularly in Oso Wash, and the annual Living River Report for the Nogales Reach, scheduled for release in December.

PARQUES DE MÉXICO VISITS MEXICALI FLUYE

The consultancy **Parques de México** visited Mexicali Fluye: The organization joined the initiative to support community participation in the Colector del Norte community corridors. Over the course of two days, they conducted two focus groups with the Misión del Ángel and Francisco I. Madero communities, toured the community corridors, and collaborated with the Sonoran Institute team to refine their approach to community engagement.

To continue publicizing the Mexicali Fluye project's achievements—specifically the community corridors along the Colector del Norte and amenities such as the garden, "llanero" (street) golf, and viewing decks—the Mexicali Fluye team appeared on the Televisa program *Hola Mexicali* (Local Channel 4). The segment included an interview covering general information and environmental education activities. The campaign featured 12 on-air mentions, L-shaped screen banners, and two dedicated segments within the program's lineup, deepening our visibility across Mexicali!



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SANTA CRUZ RIVER DRAGONFLY FESTIVAL



ALL
SEPTEMBER
2026
PIMA AND SANTA

SANTA CRUZ RIVER DRAGONFLY FESTIVAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Santa Cruz River Dragonfly Festival is underway! This month-long celebration of the Santa Cruz River, filled with tours, virtual lectures, and events throughout Tucson, Pima and Santa Cruz Counties.

While halfway through the event, there are still plenty of ways to get the whole family involved! This weekend is the Family Nature Exploration at El Rio Preserve, the Sonoran Sashay science-based cabaret (21+), and the Santa Cruz River Guided Dragonfly Tours.

Next week, make your own dragonfly kits will be showing up at all Pima County Libraries, and Family Dragonfly Activities and Art will take place at Mission Garden. The Dragonfly Festival will close with the Pima County Tours at 4 locations along the Santa Cruz River – Marana Heritage Park, El Rio Preserve, downtown near the Heritage Site, and Mission Garden.

All registration links and information on remaining events can be found here: [Santa Cruz River Dragonfly Festival/Festival de las Libélulas](#).

Additionally, a Santa Cruz River Refuge Community Design Workshop will be held September 25, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., in the CAPLA building at the University of Arizona. This free, public open-house workshop is part of the America the Beautiful Challenge grant and will gather community preferences and values around the Santa Cruz River in Tucson to inform future design and greenspace implementation. Food and drinks will be provided. Sign-up and details can be found here: [Santa Cruz River Refuge-Join us!](#)



A MESSAGE FROM CEO MIKE ZELLNER

As monsoons offer our communities a bit of summer reprieve, we're working hard across the Colorado River Basin to ensure resilient water resources for communities.

In Colorado, we're continuing work with our Growing Water Smart program, planning for next spring's workshop, and bolstering our communities like Alamosa through comprehensive plan reviews.

In Arizona, we celebrate a flowing Santa Cruz River and welcome the monsoon with increased trash research, outreach events and a month of Dragonfly Festival Festivities.

In Mexicali, we host partners like consultancy Parque de Mexico along our Mexicali Fluye green spaces and spread the word of our work on local television. Continuing community engagement and green spaces in Mexicali is possible thanks to leadership from staff like Carolina!

Stay tuned for our coming fall programming, including the return of Sábados Familiares (Family Saturdays) and Days of Connection-bringing folks closer with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them!



UPCOMING EVENTS

ALL September: [Dragonfly Festival](#), Pima and Santa Cruz County AZ

17 September: [MOCA presents Green Drinks](#), Tucson AZ

19 September: [Sonoran Sashay](#), Tucson AZ

20 September: [Santa Cruz Guided Dragonfly Tour](#), Santa Cruz County AZ

26 September: [Pima County Guided Dragonfly Tours](#), Pima County AZ

26 September: [El Tour Loop de Loop](#), Tucson AZ

26 September: [Sabados Familiares](#), Mexicali BC

15 October: [Green Drinks Tucson](#), Tucson AZ

17 October: [Days of Connection at Verdugo Park](#), Tucson AZ

SONORAN INSTITUTE LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: CAROLINA VALDEZ



Carolina is a Civil Engineer and graduated from the Autonomous University of Baja California where she studied a master's degree in architecture with a focus on urban development. During her studies she developed strategies to reforest the city of Mexicali with native vegetation and vegetation adapted to the climate planted in key areas to reduce the temperature of the area through green infrastructure. Before joining Sonoran Institute, she worked in the Ministry of Public Security and later in the Attorney General's Office for the State of Baja California as a works and projects engineer, where she monitored the progress of the construction of units and the major maintenance of properties; she also worked at the architecture firm MV Arquitectos as an executive project engineer. In her free time, she loves going for walks with her husband, playing with her Chihuahua, Martina and being with her family and friends.

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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