



DESERT FOOTHILLS
LAND TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

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Trail accessibility improvements at Jewel of the Creek Preserve!

Beautiful Jewel of the Creek Preserve is one of our most-loved properties. Protected in 2001 through the support of generous donors and state grant funding, the preserve protects important riparian habitat along Cave Creek. It is also home to a trailhead and heavily used trails that connect to Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, Tonto National Forest and the Maricopa Trail.

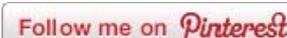
We identified the upper portion of the Harry Dalton Trail as a candidate for a universal access trail for users of all abilities, including wheelchairs. This was particularly appealing to Member Relations & Operations Manager, Mary Warren and her family. Mary's son, Travis Warren, passed away in 2012, and a number of generous gifts to the Land Trust were made in his memory. Travis was an Iraq war veteran, and found solace in natural areas like the Jewel. It was the family's wish to dedicate these contributions to improve trail access that would benefit other veterans.

Matt Woodson of Okanagon Trail Construction (OTC) visited the Jewel to

discuss the project. He pointed out that the rugged portion of the trail down to the creek could also be made accessible. It would be the most challenging level of difficulty for a universal access trail, but it would be possible for those in wheelchairs with assistance to reach the riparian area along the creek.

Matt and the OTC trail crew began work on the trail improvements in the fall of 2014. The trail was originally strewn with large boulders, requiring careful footing and a bit of scramble up and down the hill for hikers. The crew removed the boulders, placing many of them along the trail as a safety barrier. Rock was drilled out to level the trail, and the entire length was compacted. The accessible portion of the trail ends at the rock "amphitheater" near the creek.

At the top of the trail, from the trailhead parking area to the bluff overlook, the trail was also smoothed, graded and compacted. That work was generously donated by OTC, who were enthusiastic about the purpose behind the project. *(continued, page 2)*



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Planning for the Future

Perpetuity is a long time!

The Land Trust has enjoyed many years of stability, even in the midst of a recession. However, we wanted to look at opportunities for expanding our land conservation work, improving access to our preserves and other features of our mission. In late 2013 through 2014, we undertook a comprehensive planning process to do just that.

Significant results included a revised mission statement, a renewed focus on building our capacity for additional land acquisition efforts, and an increased focus on connecting people to land.

We also developed a new Sonoran Guardian giving circle for annual donors of >\$1,000, our Virtuous Legacy Circle for donors who have left a bequest or other planned gift to the Land Trust, and we focused on developing our base of support to enable land acquisition fundraising. Additionally, as described in the article in this report, a map-based conservation plan will guide the Land Trust's landowner outreach and land conservation efforts.

Mission (revised April 7, 2014)
Desert Foothills Land Trust connects people to nature by working with communities and partners to conserve and steward sensitive lands and species for the survival of our fragile Sonoran Desert.

So what does this all mean "on the ground?" It means the Land Trust is focused on strengthening our continued direct land protection efforts, including acquiring more land. As part of that commitment, we believe it is crucial that we develop the next generation of land stewards to advocate for and protect these lands. This will mean expanded efforts to connect people to the remarkable Sonoran Desert.

I am incredibly grateful to all of you who continue to support this important work. This was my last year as president, but I will remain on the board, and I know our new president, Richard Burns, will help us accomplish great things as we move forward. Meanwhile, please contact us if you would like to talk further about participating in this work!

With sincere thanks,



Pat O'Brien, President

FY 2014 Financial Report

(10/1/13-9/30/14; excluding FORCE revenues and expenses)

GENERAL OPERATING REVENUE	
Annual Fund/Membership	\$ 104,287
Special Events	\$ 280,642
General Contributions	\$ 49,362
Bequests	\$ 101,299
Other Income*	\$ 57,604
Total Revenue	\$ 436,650

GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES	
Compensation	\$ 174,420
Professional Services**	\$ 38,044
Organizational Expenses**	\$ 150,983
Occupancy	\$ 17,772
Stewardship and Properties	\$ 10,344
Other Expenses	\$ 7,625
Total Expenses	\$ 399,188

***includes some Sonoran Stars expenses*

ASSETS	
Total Cash/Cash Equivalents	\$ 841,932
Investments	\$ 359,742
Land Holdings	\$ 9,792,400
Other Assets	\$ 36,078
Total Assets	\$11,030,152

NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	\$ 853,249
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 279,889
Permanently Restricted	\$ 9,897,014
Total Net Assets	\$11,030,152

Please contact DFLT for a copy of our audited financial statements or our IRS Form 990.

Upcoming Events

Guided preserve tours - through May. Tours are free but registration is required. Visit www.dflt.org for the full schedule and registration information.

Sonoran Stars - Sat. May 2, 5:00 pm; dining and dancing under the stars in the Desert Foothills

Desert Discovery Day - Sat. 11/21

Visit www.dflt.org for our full event schedule. Events are also widely shared on our Facebook page!

Jewel Trail Improvements

(continued from page 1)

In total, the work improved ¼ mile of the Harry Dalton Trail. We're still working on a few "wayfinding" signs along the improved trail, as well as an entry sign with information about the preserve. Once that work is complete, we will host a re-dedication event to celebrate the preserve.

Connecting people to land is a crucial part of the mission of Desert Foothills Land Trust. Our preserves protect sensitive resources, wildlife habitat and cultural resources. They also support the people who live and work here – the people who will protect and steward the land in the future. Now, through the support of generous donors, we are pleased to make this incredible desert landscape accessible to even more people. We are also pleased that this work will serve as a tribute to those who serve our country, including Travis Warren.



Additional 2014 Highlights

Desert Discovery Day

With the help of our incredible non-profit and agency partners, volunteers and financial supporters, we hosted our third annual Desert Discovery Day on November 15, 2014 at the Jewel. Guests explored the preserve, learned about local natural and cultural history, and visited discovery stations to learn about the incredible Sonoran Desert. This free community event allows us to share conservation with a broad audience, and has been incredibly well-received by participants!



Approximately 450 children of all ages attended Desert Discovery Day for free outdoor fun. Photo by Jon Klas.

Maricopa Trail Stewardship Day

DFLT “adopted” the section of Maricopa Trail in Anthem and New River. In order to draw awareness to this recreational resource and other conservation activities in the area, DFLT, Anthem Community Council

and Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department hosted a Trail Stewardship Day for clean-up and exploration along the trail. Approximately 70 people attended with an enthusiastic response. Similar events will be held twice each year.

Preserve Stewardship

Staff and volunteers conducted preserve monitoring and management activities, including trail maintenance, boundary identification and marking, and sign installation. Work also began on a project to use trail cams to monitor wildlife use of preserves. Trail accessibility was also improved at the Jewel of the Creek Preserve.

19th Annual Sonoran Stars

For the first time in the history of the event, weather forced us to move most activities indoors, but we were thrilled to have such a lovely indoor option! The volunteers rallied to relocate auction and dining tables into the stables at Los Cedros. The weather even cleared long enough for us to hold the horse show and owl release outdoors before coming inside to warm up with a wonderful dinner and auction. Our generous guests raised approximately \$150,000 for our conservation mission! Save the date for the 20th anniversary of Sonoran Stars – May 2, 2015 at our new venue!

Preserve tours

Our preserve tours are one of the ways many people first learn about the Land Trust and our conservation work. They also inspire a love of the Sonoran Desert! More than 100 people joined us on guided visits to preserves and our field school program, Focus on the Foothills. Hundreds of guests also visited Land Trust preserves that are open to the public.

Mountains of the Land Trust Photo Contest

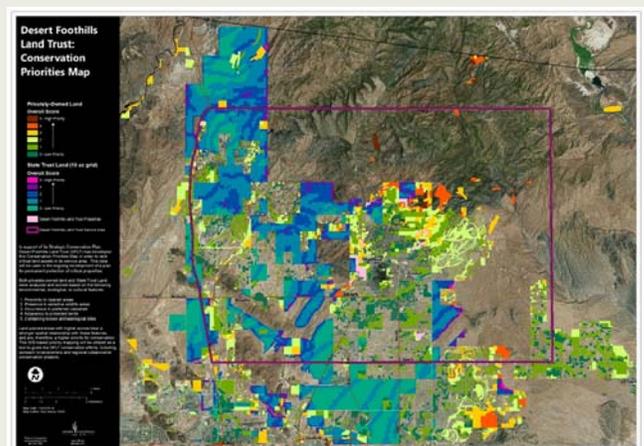
The Land Trust moved to a digital photo submission and voting platform, and received more entries than ever before! The event allows us to feature Daisy Mountain and Black Mountain as focal points of our community. The photo contest and the public Peoples’ Choice Award voting allow us to share our conservation work with a new and diverse audience.



Peoples’ Choice Award winner, 2014. Photo by Tammy E. Manganelli.

Conservation Planning

Thanks to generous funding assistance from the Land Trust Alliance, DFLT has a new tool to aid in conservation efforts. Our newly-designed conservation prioritization plan helps us be more effective in our efforts to protect the “right” lands. DFLT worked with Alex Wood from Precision Geographic Inc. to examine a variety of conservation value data, including cultural resources, riparian habitats, wildlife corridors, scenic views, adjacency to other protected parcels, and rare species. Parcels were evaluated and given a conservation score based on the presence of the attributes listed above. Additionally, the model was applied to State Trust Land parcels, which were broken into more meaningful 10-acre segments. This map-based planning tool will guide our landowner outreach and our work with local government agencies. It will also help ensure our land protection efforts are strategic, science-based and mission critical. We are grateful to the Land Trust Alliance and Precision Geographic for making this possible!



Data about conservation values was used to create a map-based conservation prioritization strategy for the Land Trust. The plan will guide landowner outreach and regional land protection strategies.

