

PROTECTING THE LANDSCAPE YOU LOVE



DESERT | FOOTHILLS
— LAND TRUST —



PHOTO BY THOMAS M. BAKER

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FEBRUARY 1991

Desert Foothills Land Trust, Inc.
incorporated in Arizona.

MARCH 1992

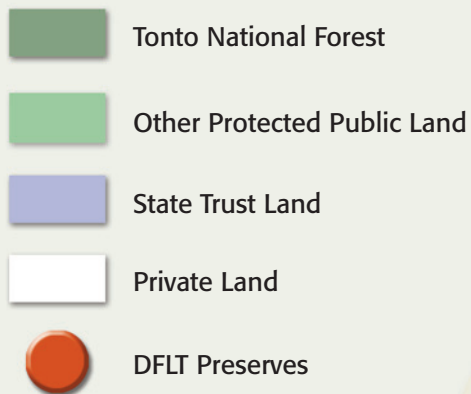
First preserve established —
7-acre Watt Preserve
was donated.

MARCH 1996

First conservation easement
donated — 15-acre
Preserve at the Cave.

FEBRUARY 2001

First purchase from State
Land Dept. — P.A. Seitts
Preserve at Go John Canyon.



APRIL 2001

26-acre Jewel of the Creek Preserve purchased.

DECEMBER 2008

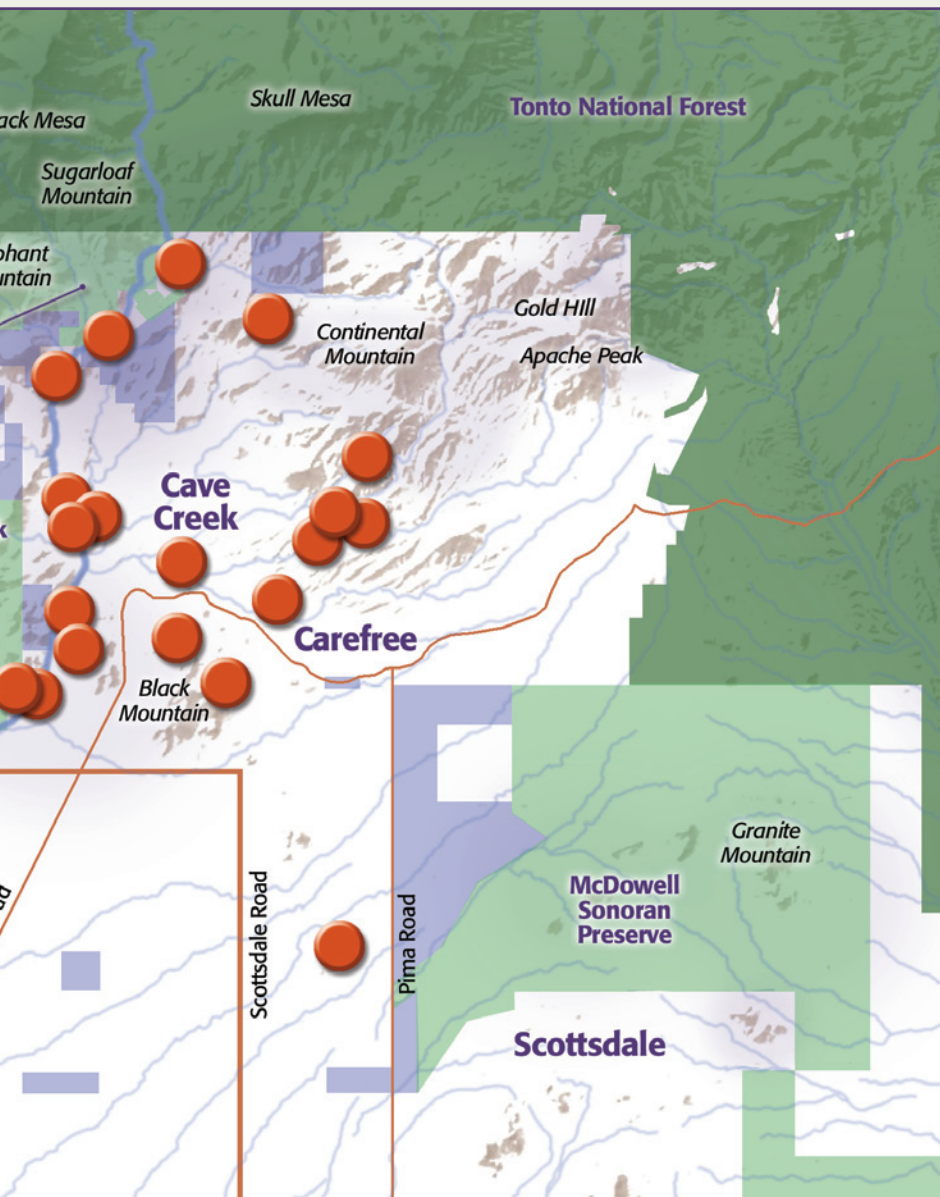
Largest DFLT conservation easement donation — 80 acre Sierra Vista Sanctuary.

SEPTEMBER 2009

Merged with Black Mountain Conservancy.

NOVEMBER 2012

First Desert Discovery Day event.



Communities We Serve

Founded in 1991, Desert Foothills Land Trust focuses conservation efforts in the communities of Anthem, Carefree, Cave Creek, Desert Hills, New River, North Phoenix and North Scottsdale.

To date we have permanently conserved 680 acres on 23 sites.



JANUARY 2013

Carefree Heritage Preserve protected.

MARCH 2013

Merged with North Country Conservancy.

OCTOBER 2013

9th Preserve along Cave Creek Wash established.

OCTOBER 2014

Barrier-free streamside access on trail at the Jewel.



PHOTO BY TAMMY MANGANELLI



Dear Friends,

We are fortunate to live in an area so closely connected to the natural world, with wildlife, dramatic vistas, and the fabulous plants and natural areas of the Sonoran Desert just outside our door. Desert Foothills Land Trust is continuing its work to protect these natural features that we all cherish, but we need your help!

This organization, while focused on land, is also fundamentally about people – the landowners who conserve their properties, the volunteers who look after preserves and seal envelopes, the preserve visitors who share their thoughts and photos, the community members who ask questions and challenge us to think about new opportunities... And it's about the donors - people like you who contribute generously to protect the landscape they love.

Your financial support of Desert Foothills Land Trust will conserve this legacy for generations to come. It is a way to strengthen our community's connection to the natural world, and to involve more people in this important effort.

We ask for your support to help us celebrate and conserve this special place.

With thanks for your personal role in this work and community,

Richard Burns
Chair

Sonia Perillo
Executive Director

The Incomparable Upland Sonoran Desert

Imagine for a moment that there were no saguaros, standing as if on sentry on rugged hillsides. No red-tailed hawks circling overhead. No towering cottonwoods, gone golden in early winter. No shimmering spider webs on buckhorn cholla. No Gila monsters wandering across a trail. No brightly blooming prickly pear in the spring. No petroglyphs etched on centuries-old rock. No staccato chatter of cactus wrens. No blue-green glint of chrysalis in sunlight. No creosote perfume after a cleansing monsoon rain. No thrilling discovery of a bobcat's paw print.

Unimaginable, isn't it?



PHOTO BY MARIANNE S. JENSEN

The very reason we live in the foothills of the Sonoran Desert is for the singular and unforgettable beauty of this unique place. Ours is a lush desert—the most “tropical” of the North American deserts—teeming with wildlife and riotous with vegetation, memorable for intensely colored sunrises and sunsets silhouetting the raw beauty of the land. We all have such an unshakable connection to this special place. Surely it deserves our most impassioned protection.

However, the survival of the Sonoran Desert is not assured; it is saved acre by acre, with reverence and reason, by engaged conservationists like you. In doing so, we save the earth and ourselves in equal measure.

Our Mission

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.

Ours Is Sacred Land

The Sonoran Desert covers 100,000 miles in southern Arizona, southeastern California and much of the state of Sonora, Mexico. It supports one of the most diverse arrays of desert plant and animal species in the world.

For millennia, encounters in the wild have fueled our humanity and replenished our spirits. Just as it did for the ancients, the Sonoran Desert continues to serve as a place for contemplation, restoration and healing for our friends, our families and ourselves. Significant archeological sites that include petroglyphs and pictographs, human dwellings and pottery sherds, offer clues to our rich Southwestern history. Desert and rare riparian habitats provide a necessary, life-sustaining habitat and a movement corridor for wildlife to flourish.

But the landscape that often looks formidable is actually fragile. The delicate ecosystem of the Sonoran Desert is threatened by poorly-planned development. We must all play a role in balancing the impact of development with meaningful conservation.

Not only is open space good for our bodies and spirits, but it also advances outdoor recreation — driving tourism, generating jobs and revenue and attracting businesses, residents and visitors. In the northern reaches of the Sonoran Desert, housing values continue to rise, partly because lower-density development balanced with open space is highly desirable. Open space is a competitive advantage that helps ensure our economic stability.



PHOTO BY THOMAS M. BAKER



Desert Foothills Land Trust – Acting Together for Common Good

Land trusts such as Desert Foothills Land Trust are a uniquely American idea, born from an instinctive, deeply rooted desire to protect the land we love and call home.

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that works to actively conserve land through a variety of methods, including purchase, donation, conservation easement and stewardship. Land trusts succeed by building successful partnerships between conservation groups, business owners, real estate developers, private land owners, local governments and neighbors. The common goal that galvanizes such cooperation? To create more vibrant and sustainable places for us to live.

Today, more than 1,700 land trusts operate in the U.S., saving rivers, forests, family farms, ranches and deserts treasured in local communities. The impact of this work is enormous — collectively, the land trust community has protected more than 47 million acres of land in the U.S.!

The reason we save land is simple: we are not separate from our surroundings. These ecosystems provide critical natural wildlife habitat and abundant and enriching recreational, historical or agricultural value for people.

While most land trusts are leanly staffed, they are abundantly powered by optimism, a shared sense of purpose and the support of dedicated volunteers. Land trusts like ours foster community and inspire advocacy among engaged citizens.

In a time when open space is increasingly threatened, land trusts counter the economic model of poorly planned development and sprawl. Saving land for its beauty and natural resources — not just for today, but for tomorrow — is the reason land trusts exist...the reason Desert Foothills Land Trust exists.



PHOTO BY JON KLAS

PHOTO BY MICHAEL FUNKE

"Since I was a young child, Nature has been food for my soul; I know many of us feel that way. Even 20 years ago, it was obvious that the Sonoran Desert was disappearing. If we don't want to end up like Los Angeles, we need to speak out and act now to ensure large tracts of our land are connected and protected. Pocket parks won't do here."

Sue Clement, *former DFLT board president and current board member*



Every year in the late fall, we welcome families and friends to the Jewel of the Creek Preserve in Cave Creek for a free day of outdoor experiences and hands-on education. Working with partners such as the Arizona Archeological Society, Cave Creek Museum, Desert Awareness Committee, Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center and Wild At Heart, the day includes exploration of the geology and history of area, along with a chance to “meet” many of the Sonoran Desert’s residents, including reptiles, birds and small mammals. The event has grown in attendance since its inception in 2012 and attracts nearly 500 people, including children of all ages.



PHOTO BY JON KLAS

Perpetuity Is a Long Time – Land Acquisition and Stewardship

Desert Foothills Land Trust is committed to identifying and conserving the most sensitive and important lands in our service area. We have used sophisticated mapping technology and data to aid in conservation planning efforts, focusing on priorities such as riparian habitats, cultural resources, wildlife movement corridors, and scenic views.

Just as importantly, we are responsive to local community needs and interests in defining conservation activities. Our emphasis on both science-based data and local community needs allows the Land Trust to focus limited resources on the most important conservation lands.

Our commitment to protecting these special places is perpetual, and our land stewardship activities reflect this commitment. We maintain trails and trailheads on properties that are open to the public, and work to monitor and control invasive species throughout our preserves. We also monitor and defend our protected lands from hazards and threats of all kinds.

We accomplish this work due entirely to the generosity of landowners, community leaders, volunteers and donors like you!

“In the scheme of the Arizona landscape and viewscape, DFLT matters. The Sonoran Desert is the most lush desert in the world and that is why, as a former manager of a Fortune 100 company, we became involved financially, with volunteers and brand support. While DFLT is one of the best kept secrets in the North Valley, it is worthy of every citizen to take a close look and consider financial support.”

George Seitts, *former oil company manager and former federal and state government official*

Connecting People to Nature

As the Land Trust has matured, we have increasingly come to see our work to connect people to land as a critical part of our long-term conservation mission.

Our preserves support wildlife habitat and sensitive resources, but they also support the people who live and work here. Our community members must treasure these lands if they are to be valued and protected by future generations. Thus, our work to connect people to nature is not merely community engagement – it is also long-term stewardship.

Throughout the year, Desert Foothills Land Trust offers a number of opportunities for citizens to experience our desert home, including many preserves that are open to the public for exploration and recreation. Hikers, birders, photographers, mountain bikers and equestrians all benefit from our system of trails and preserves.

We also offer guided hikes, a photo contest, information booths, Desert Discovery Day and other activities throughout the year. In addition to raising awareness and support for our organization, these events are educational and fun, and enrich the relationship we have with the land and one another.

JEWEL OF THE CREEK PRESERVE

This magnificent 26-acre riparian parcel is our most popular preserve. Bordering the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, it boasts one of the last perennial streams in Maricopa County. Towering cottonwood and willow trees thrive along the banks of Cave Creek and support a myriad of plant and animal species. The land was purchased from the Arizona State Land Department in 2001 with funding from the community and a state grant. In late 2014, trail grading and modifications allowed accessibility for those in wheelchairs or with limited mobility. It is a magnificent example of a Sonoran Desert oasis.





"It is man's nature to protect what he loves. We live in an area that is under massive development pressures. In a few short generations, the opportunity to conserve nature's special places in the foothills where we live will no longer be an option. Now is the moment to get involved to protect what you love."

Fred Rosenbaum, *conservation easement donor, former DFLT board president and current DFLT board member*

Looking to the Future — Preserving What Matters

To live in the uplands of the Sonoran Desert is to become intimate with its rhythms, its shadows, its seasons and its creatures. It's the opportunity to fall in love with it again and again, with every mile you hike or ride. It's the possibility to discover yourself in a refuge quieted from everyday noise, to slow to the pace of wild things while connecting to something larger. It is a high privilege few will ever know.

We are, all of us, caretakers of the things we love. As Americans, we share a long-held instinct to leave the land we love as we found it, not only for future generations, but for the shared community of plants and animals, rocks and sky and earth.

The residents of the desert — the mammals, the reptiles, the birds, the plants, the trees — have all devised ingenious adaptations to the challenging conditions of the terrain. But make no mistake: there is no evolutionary tactic that can reverse the devastating loss of land and habitat that characterizes far too much of the Sonoran Desert during our lifetime.

*What will our desert look like in 20, 50, 100 years?
That largely depends on the decisions we make now.*

CAREFREE HERITAGE PRESERVE

Using a model of public-private partnership, we partnered with the Town of Carefree and a local landowner to obtain 40 acres of pristine Sonoran Desert, which includes a rocky wash, fragile cultural resources and significant wildlife habitat. This property had been a priority for conservation since the Land Trust's earliest days, and was finally protected in 2013. Public access is not currently feasible, but we hope that additional conservation efforts in the area will permit such access in the future.





"Everyone knows that it's important to preserve the Sonoran Desert. But not everyone knows that each of us can play a part. Whether it's guided hikes or open-air painting classes, we are getting people involved in this extraordinary landscape. Clearly, the mission of a land trust is conservation, and a large part includes educating and engaging the community."

Ronnie Wainwright, *volunteer preserve steward*

The Challenges for Conservation

Many of us remember when our desertscape was a rural one. Over the decades, development has quickened as more and more people seek the lifestyle of our North Valley communities. As a result, land costs are rising — for all of us. While we welcome these new neighbors, we are mindful that it is more important now than ever to protect the land we love.

To keep pace with shifting realities, we are quickening our conservation efforts and acting on multiple fronts:

- Expanding our outreach to private landowners
- Partnering with like-minded nonprofits and local governments to increase incentives for land acquisition
- Building consensus among key stakeholders
- Increasing educational and stewardship opportunities
- Targeting our fundraising efforts
- Seeking out grant sources and other revenue streams
- Refining our conservation priorities
- Reaching new audiences, including next-generation donors

PRESERVE AT THE CAVE

The cave for which Cave Creek is named has been used by humans for more than 10,000 years. However, the property itself was privately owned and unprotected. When the property was listed for sale and at risk of development, a “conservation buyer” purchased the land. The new owner protected the sensitive lands along the creek, including the cave, with a conservation easement donated to the Land Trust, and resold the land with restrictions in place.

The Land Trust is responsible for permanently monitoring and defending the easement, and is permitted to share the cave with visitors through a series of guided hikes. The property remains in private ownership and is not open to the public.



PHOTO BY MARIANNE S. JENSEN

"Stewardship of private and public lands is very important for the future. That's why I've been involved since the very beginning. I also get the personal satisfaction of being able to use my botanical background by teaching out in the field. It's been rewarding to watch the organization maturing and turning into something so solid."

Steve Jones, *botanist and former DFLT board member*





PHOTO BY JON KLAS

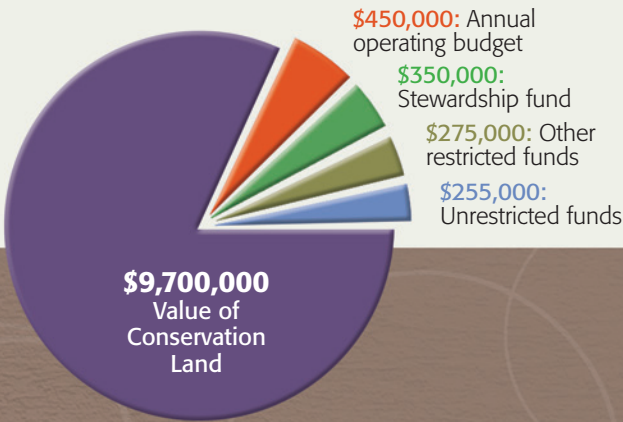
Our Funding Is Private, Not Public

Desert Foothills Land Trust receives no dedicated source of funding at the state, county or local level. That's why we rely on the generous support of our private and corporate donors. The largest percentage of our operating funds comes directly from private donations. Additionally, there is little public funding available for land acquisition in our area, unlike many other parts of the country. We rely on generous landowners, partners and donors to accomplish our land acquisition goals.

Only the Plains States have fewer land trusts than the Southwest, so the work of local land conservation groups like the Desert Foothills Land Trust is vital to ensuring our extraordinary landscape endures.

Voluntary conservation is a powerful vehicle. But it calls for participation at a sustained level. Yes, we are a small organization with a huge mission, but it's a mission made possible by the ongoing support of people like you.

Assets and Fund Allocation (FY 2014)



Annual Revenue and Support (FY 2014)

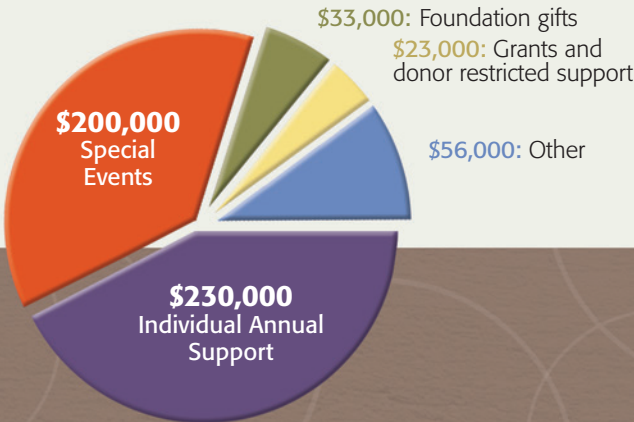


PHOTO BY MARK CARROLL

We need you

If you've ever loved a wild place, you know that grieving its loss is not so different from grieving the loss of a beloved person. You understand that what is lost cannot be regained.

Conservation was born in the second half of the 19th century in response to the destruction of American land. The impetus was the recognition that the land is the ultimate source of wealth, both material and spiritual. That's why for many, conservation is a moral action that demonstrates our values.

Nature holds the power to improve our physical and mental well-being, providing a tonic to the fast-paced lives we lead. We know this intuitively, which is why we seek it out for ourselves and share it with our children.

No matter what may come, a relationship with nature serves you for the rest of your life.

That's why, regardless of our differences, we can rally around a common purpose: *saving the land we treasure not only for our present enjoyment, but for future enjoyment.* This requires foresight and fortitude.

Simply put, the scale of the challenge requires a response of like scale. The views we cherish are not assured; we must be proactive and act now for their long-term protection.

Please join us as we invest in the land we love — and in ourselves and those who will follow. With your generous support, we will continue to make huge strides for Sonoran Desert conservation.

With your support, we will:

- Identify and protect our community's most important and treasured lands.
- Steward, monitor and defend protected lands in perpetuity.
- Connect people to nature through events, activities and access to protected lands.
- Expand our public access opportunities on protected lands, including new trailheads and interpretive signs.
- Collaborate with local and regional partners to connect open spaces, expand trail access and ensure a network of conservation lands across the region.

"We need to strike a balance between conservation and development to ensure the future of the Sonoran Desert landscape we love."

W. Jeffrey Marshall, *DFLT board member and volunteer preserve steward*



Donor Opportunities

Sonoran Guardians: Donors who contribute \$1,000 or more annually to underwrite our priority land protection projects, long-term stewardship of protected lands and programs to connect people to nature. Donors receive an invitation to our Sonoran Guardians Tour of a Preserve, acknowledgement in our annual report and exclusive updates and invitations to members-only events.

Virtuous Legacy Circle: This planned giving circle is for visionaries who have included Desert Foothills Land Trust in their estate plans. These generous patrons are committed to sustained, permanent land conservation. As a special thank you to this group, we host special events and activities for members, including a Circle Dinner.

Corporate Gifts: Desert Foothills Land Trust offers a variety of opportunities for business and corporate sponsors to support our events and activities. Recognition and branding can be customized for the sponsor and event. Please contact us to discuss these opportunities!

There are many ways to get involved!

Financial Support:

- Annual gifts
- Bequests and other planned gifts
- Gifts of stock
- Corporate gifts
- Workplace gifts
- Employer matching gifts
- Gift memberships
- Real estate gifts for non-conservation purposes ("trade lands")

Land Conservation Support:

- Donations of land or conservation easements
- Bargain sale of land

Other ways to get involved:

- In-kind donations
- Volunteering
- Advocacy

To learn more about how you can contribute, please contact the Desert Foothills Land Trust office at 480-488-6131. **We'd love to talk to you.**