

Granite Creek: The start of something good

Not far from downtown **Prescott** lies a little forest of cottonwood trees and willows, a green canopy hanging on to life along **Granite Creek**. A pond feeds riparian habitat, sheltering a lively mix of birds, fish and other aquatic wildlife.

The little oasis nearly vanished amid the spread of gravel mining, livestock grazing and firewood cutting. Once an imposing 1,000 acres, the **Watson Woods** now cover just 126 acres. Granite Creek is listed by the state environmental agency as an impaired waterway.

But this isn't an obituary for another of Arizona's dying creeks and rivers. This is the start of a success story, one written by hard-working volunteers and the city of Prescott, which has helped secure enough money to restore and protect the habitat.

[Prescott Creeks](#), the nonprofit group leading preservation efforts, says it now has about **\$1.4 million** to fund the work, most of it from two grants. The [Arizona Department of Environmental Quality](#) wrote a check for **\$582,253** and the [Arizona Water Protection Fund](#) commission recently voted to contribute **\$798,988**.

The city of [Prescott](#) has committed another **\$80,000**. Volunteers and city officials toured the preserve Thursday with **Steve Owens**, director of the state DEQ.

Plans call for restoration of the natural Granite Creek stream channel and its riparian habitat, along with education and monitoring programs.

Although damaged by years of destructive activities, the remaining forest has repaired itself in some areas, testifying to the resilience of desert waterways. Ecologists have found that riparian life can lie dormant under poor conditions and re-emerge with just a little water and some patience.

Prescott Creeks says the Woods preserve has become a top bird-watching spot, which isn't surprising for a cottonwood forest.

You can read more about the preserve and the efforts to restore it [here](#). Learn about the state water protection fund [here](#).

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