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Prescott Creeks and Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe Partner to Improve Water Quality

Slaughterhouse Gulch Project to Restore Local Stream and Wetland

Prescott Creeks and the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe (YPIT) have announced plans to protect, restore, and improve surface water quality through a joint project in Slaughterhouse Gulch on the Tribal Reservation. Slaughterhouse Gulch drains to Granite Creek and the Watson Lake Reservoir – both designated as impaired waterbodies by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The project seeks to reduce sediment, *E. coli* bacteria, and nutrients traveling downstream.

Prescott Creeks and YPIT will design and implement best management practices such as stream channel restoration, wetland protection, and planting native riparian vegetation. “These measures will manage, slow, and naturally treat runoff containing non-point source pollutants before it reaches downstream waterbodies,” said Michael Byrd, Executive Director at Prescott Creeks. The resulting riparian greenways along the restored waterways will add to wildlife and aesthetic values in the local landscape.

Many of the Upper Granite Creek Watershed’s fifteen waterbodies have shown water quality declines for over a decade. Watson Lake Reservoir was originally designated as impaired by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the EPA in 2004. Subsequent monitoring results have led to most other local streams being added to the impaired waters list. High *E. coli* bacteria levels, excess nutrients, and sediment are among the main causes behind the poor condition. Contaminant sources include urbanization and roads which increase runoff. Historical degradation from other land uses both within Slaughterhouse Gulch and the Granite Creek Watershed also contribute to current conditions.

Sixty percent of the project expense (\$374,394) is funded through an ADEQ Water Quality Improvement Grant. “ADEQ’s Water Quality Improvement Grant Program arms qualifying parties with funds to support important projects to prevent and address pollution from non-regulated sources,” said ADEQ Water Quality Division Director, Trevor Baggio. Prescott Creeks, YPIT and the collaborating Upper Verde River Watershed Protection

Coalition will collectively contribute the remaining 40% of the project expense (\$250,937) through in-kind services such as volunteer labor, donated time and materials, and cash contributions.

The project will make improvements in a water protection plan area as recommended in the *Upper Granite Creek Watershed Improvement Plan*. With major support from ADEQ, Prescott Creeks initiated and led the Upper Granite Creek Watershed Improvement Council with representatives from the City of Prescott, Yavapai County, the Arizona Department of Transportation, National Forest, ADEQ, University of Arizona, the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, along with small business owners, landowners, and other interested parties. The group worked collaboratively to develop the improvement plan which has guided multiple improvement efforts over the past four years.

“The Slaughterhouse Gulch project not only presents a great opportunity for the Tribe and Prescott Creeks to work together, it highlights the Tribe’s ongoing commitment to addressing critical water issues of both Tribal and regional significance,” said Peter Bourgois, Tribal Planner. “This is one of multiple projects under development throughout the multi-jurisdictional subwatershed.”

Prescott Creeks is a nonprofit organization with the mission to achieve healthy watersheds and clean waters in central Arizona for the benefit of people and wildlife through protection, restoration, education, and advocacy. For over 25-years, the group has coordinated projects based on the concept that ***Creeks Connect Community***. For additional information about Prescott Creeks and their Slaughterhouse Gulch project partnership with the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe visit: www.PrescottCreeks.org. Prescott Creeks can also be contacted by telephone at (928) 445-5669.

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