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New Miller Creek-area restroom aims to improve creek, community health



Not only will a new public bathroom along Miller Creek offer a convenient rest stop for users of Prescott's popular Greenways Trails, it is also expected to improve water quality in the polluted creek. (Cindy Barks/Courier)



By Cindy Barks | [Cindy_Barks](#)

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Not only will a new public bathroom along Miller Creek offer a convenient rest stop for users of Prescott's popular Greenways Trails, it is also expected to improve water quality in the polluted creek.

Earlier this month, a new precast concrete bathroom building was delivered to a site next to the Coalition for Compassion and Justice's (CCJ) emergency homeless shelter along Miller Valley Road.

The creekside restroom, which is a project of the Prescott Creeks organization, will be open for use to the public, including the residents of the shelter.

Michael Byrd, executive director of Prescott Creeks, said the restroom advances the organization's goal of a clean watershed.

"The water quality in Miller Creek is not good," Byrd said.

For years, Miller Creek has been among the area waterways listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Arizona Department of Water Quality (ADEQ) as "impaired" or polluted.

The main identified pollutant: E.coli, a fecal coliform bacteria that indicates the presence of sewage or human/animal waste contamination.

Throughout Prescott Creek's longtime efforts toward improving the local watershed's water quality, Byrd said the organization has discussed practical ways of reaching its goal.

Offering a safe and clean way for people to use the bathroom was among the ideas.

"We tinkered with this idea that we could use more bathrooms (along the creeks)," Byrd said of the early

discussions.

Nicholas Balik, the president of the Butte Creek Restoration Council, agreed. “There aren’t a whole lot of options for bathroom use,” he said, calling the location of the new restroom along Miller Creek “the ideal situation because it will benefit everyone.”

The Butte Creek Restoration has had a decade-or-so-long partnership with Prescott Creeks, Balik said, noting that it was one of the clubs that worked in conjunction with Prescott College for the closure of Garden Street.

The City of Prescott has also been a partner on the new restroom project.

Oren Thomas, city stormwater specialist, and Matt Killeen, environmental specialist, were on hand during the installation of the restroom on Feb. 11.

Killeen pointed out that projects such as the new Miller Creek-area restroom help to address the big picture of pollution reduction in the creeks and the nearby lakes.

Granite Creek and Watson Lake have also been listed as impaired by pollution over the years.

“We try to take a multi-faceted approach,” Killeen said of addressing the pollution. “Water quality improvements come in all shapes and sizes.”

For instance, he mentioned the city’s 2015 addition of a bio basin to help clean polluted runoff water near the Prescott Rodeo Grounds.

Also partnering on the new restroom project is CCJ, which provided the land.

Jessi Hans, executive director, for CCJ, stressed the broad-based benefits of the restroom, which will serve

the public and the people who use the homeless shelter.

“We’re happy to host it,” Hans said. During the daytime hours that the shelter is closed, the public restroom would offer a safe place for its residents to use the bathroom, she said.

“Hopefully, it will also serve the broader community,” Hans said. “And it will make the creek a little healthier.”

Byrd noted that his first contact with CCJ was with its former executive director Paul Mitchell, who said at the time, “Our reasons for partnering with Prescott Creeks starts with creek health and extends to community health.”

Byrd said water quality samples were taken before the installation of the bathroom, and would be taken again afterward. The intent, according to a Prescott Creeks news release is to document “a measurable decrease in pollutants, specifically E.coli bacteria, in the creek.”

The bulk of the cost of the restroom is being covered by an \$111,000 ADEQ grant, along with a local match, and a \$10,000 contribution from the City of Prescott. The news release states that the city covered the permitting and impact fees for the project and is providing staff support for educational and outreach elements of the project.

The restroom is expected to be open later this winter.

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