



PRESCOTT CREEKS

PO Box 3004 • Prescott, AZ 86302
Info@PrescottCreeks.org • www.PrescottCreeks.org
Phone (928) 445-5669

Updated Conservation Easement Benefits

for Watson Woods Riparian Preserve

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Watson Woods Riparian Preserve (Preserve) is a 126-acre riparian corridor along Granite Creek. Prescott Creeks manages the City-owned Preserve through a long-term lease agreement established in 1995. Ecological restoration efforts have successfully restored much of the stream, riparian, and wetland functions of the Preserve. There remain areas that require enhancement of vegetation, channel stability, and other key functions. The Preserve is part of an In-Lieu Fee project that provides mitigation credits to permittees that cause unavoidable impacts to jurisdictional waters under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. As a part of the In-Lieu Fee project, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has directed Prescott Creeks to develop plans for the Preserve. Establishment of a site protection instrument, in the form of a conservation easement is a required element of the plans. Benefits of placing a conservation easement on the Watson Woods Riparian Preserve are as follow:

Economic Benefits

- As one of the only three (3) In-Lieu Fee programs in AZ, it fulfills a regulatory requirement and allows for local and state-wide infrastructure and development projects to proceed
- Directs dollars to Prescott – Allows for the direction of compensatory mitigation fees from development projects throughout the state toward ecological improvement and management of the Preserve (*Directs dollars to Prescott*)
- Keeps dollars in Prescott – Potential future City of Prescott compensatory mitigation fees (required from development projects) will be retained within the Prescott community rather than being directed to other parts of the state
- Allows for expenditure of dollars – Releases In-Lieu Fee funding for procurement of locally sourced (when available) supplies, labor, and contract services
- Extends City Budgets - Keeps the In-Lieu Fee Program funds working through Prescott Creeks, in perpetuity to manage projects, improve City assets, and educate the public
- Leverages existing funds and in perpetuity protection to secure additional funding for site improvements

Recreation Benefits

- Ensures nature-based outdoor opportunities for local citizens and visitors providing for passive recreation and experiencing the unique, natural environment of Watson Woods Riparian Preserve
- Provides a point of interest attracting visitors and encouraging overnight stays that increase local spending opportunities
- Provides enhanced grant eligibility for recreational amenities when conservation easements are required or preferred

Conservation/Environmental/Biological Benefits

- Protects and improves surface water quality through absorption and filtration prior to reaching Watson Lake
- Allows Prescott Creeks to conduct additional ecological restoration, perform performance monitoring, and to adaptively manage the Preserve in perpetuity with the release of collected funds
- Protects rare cottonwood/willow riparian forest in perpetuity (~90% of these rare habitats have been lost. In Arizona, they occupy less than ~ 0.5% of the total land cover*)
- Protects diversity of riparian wildlife including mammals, birds, reptiles & amphibians, fish, and insects in perpetuity (~75% of AZ resident wildlife are dependent on riparian habitats to sustain their populations*)
- Protects unique wetland habitats within the Granite Creek floodplain in perpetuity

Other Benefits

- Demonstrates City of Prescott commitment to environmental issues
- Shows cooperation between non-profits, local government, and the federal government to protect surface water resources through implementation of the Clean Water Act
- Provides opportunity for green marketing and positive local and statewide media attention

* Arizona Riparian Council, 2004

The mission of Prescott Creeks is to achieve healthy watersheds and clean waters in central Arizona for the benefit of people and wildlife through protection, restoration, education and advocacy.

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