



ARIZONA FOUNDATION FOR
RESOURCE EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

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West Valley Residents Help Design Agua Fria River Corridor *Workshop Seeks Public Input on Land Designs for Park, Reclaimed Gravel Pit, Trails*

AVONDALE/PHOENIX, Ariz. (April 28, 2005) – Some 200 Valley residents, teachers and business leaders will join forces on April 30 to help determine the environmental and architectural design, as well as recreational uses for a 33-mile corridor of the Agua Fria River. The land starts as far north as Lake Pleasant and continues south to the Salt River in Avondale.

The Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor (Friends) and Arizona Foundation for Resource Education (AFRE) are partnering in this unique community workshop to be held at Estrella Mountain Community College, 3000 N. Dysart Rd. in Avondale. The workshop will involve individual planning groups that include: environmental experts, such as mining, gravel and water representatives; landscape architects; community leaders; engineers; architects; user groups; as well as teachers and students. El Mirage Mayor Fred Waterman, Representative John Nelson and Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox are also expected to attend the program.

Each group will be given background information, photos and other materials depicting one of three sites along the Agua Fria River under consideration for development. The sites include a wetland area adjacent to Avondale's Friendship Park (which could be enhanced as an interpretive park), a reclaimed sand and gravel pit in the Southwest Valley, and the McMicken Dam Outfall area just north of Bell Road (which is now an informal ATV area, but could be redeveloped into a system of trails and parks winding through the Sun Cities area).

"With approval of the Agua Fria Watercourse Master Plan forthcoming, this project is at a critical juncture, where actual development can and will occur," said Roger Baele, Friends board president. "The workshop will bring the creative talents of the community together to prepare designs in specific sites along the corridor that could be implemented. This is an exciting time in the life of this grand dream."

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Add 1/Design Workshop

Participants in each group will work together to conceptualize and outline their ideas as to what could be done with the particular site in terms of reclamation and community use. Landscape architects will be on hand to illustrate the groups' ideas. The various groups will then gather together to discuss and share their individual concepts.

One of the group designs developed during this process may be chosen by public officials for the final development of the Agua Fria River corridor. Final redevelopment at all three sites will ultimately benefit residents who live in the communities along that corridor, including Avondale, El Mirage, Glendale, Peoria, Phoenix, Tolleson, Surprise and Youngtown, as well as large unincorporated areas of Maricopa County.

"The Friends are extremely excited about this project, as it will help shape a vision for the West Valley Recreation Corridor," Baele said. "In the process, participants will learn about our state's natural resources and related industries and how they play a vital role in contributing to and improving our quality of life."

"For Arizona's teachers to participate in an event like this, where they actually have a voice and a hand in physically redesigning a community environment, is such a relevant, powerful learning experience," added AFRE Executive Director Larry McBiles, Ph.D.

Once the morning workshop is over, teachers will stay for an afternoon program from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. facilitated by AFRE. During this session, participants will debrief on what they've learned in the Agua Fria design project, then conceptualize ways to adapt that same type of critical thinking and problem-based learning to their classroom instruction in all subjects and grade levels.

The Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor (WVRC) is a non-profit organization comprised of nearly 1,000 stakeholders, including volunteers, public and private sector representatives and community leaders, who are dedicated to creating an enhanced corridor along the Agua Fria and New Rivers within Maricopa County. The group was initiated in 2001 through a partnership of Westmarc and Valley Forward Association.

AFRE is a non-profit foundation that promotes understanding about the state's natural resources and related industries while providing teachers hands-on, educational and professional development experiences to enhance their instructional skills in the classroom.

For more information about the design workshop, contact the Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor at (623) 695-4602, or visit www.friendsofwvrc.org.