



ANNUAL REPORT

**July 2012-
June 2013**

With trails that access the Flagstaff Urban Trail System and a nearby riparian area, Willow Bend is a popular field trip destination for regional K-12 schools. All of our field trip slots were full this year; with your help we can reach more school children.

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Director's Update

The following pages include highlights from our most recently completed fiscal year. As I come upon the anniversary of my first year at Willow Bend, I feel deeply grateful to so many of you that have reached out to me to keep our partnerships and collaborations strong and thriving. One of our greatest assets is the community that supports us and works together with us on environmental education and conservation. Through your continued commitment and faith in Willow Bend, and through your support, we are ready to grow even more.

Financially, it was a challenging year as nearly every source of revenue that had been budgeted was in jeopardy. For example, a challenging 55% reduction in funding for our environmental education in K-12 classrooms threatened our most fundamental work. Your generosity has helped us through the challenge. As a result, we have expanded into new directions, while successful grant awards for K-12 education strengthened our key programs. We continue to look for new ways to

"We believe in the power of individuals and small organizations in making change and having an impact."
-Brad Ball, The Wildland Trekking Company



Birds soaring through the sky shown in student artwork created as part of the 5-Points project (see page 4.)

support our classroom programs and we welcome your continued input and help.

We remain committed to K-12 education as one of our core values. The most accessible scientific laboratory for children is outdoors. Science is all around us; we believe that helping children develop a greater appreciation for the natural world leads to greater stewardship of natural resources as adults.

-Russell Tweed, Director

Conservation and Education

A BALANCED APPROACH

Did you know that Willow Bend Environmental Education Center has over 50 education programs for children and adults? Our audience is primarily those living in the southern half of Coconino County, though we have classes that visit for field trips from as far away as Tuba City and Kykotsmovi. This 5.3 million-acre area comprises the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District (CNRCD) which includes most of the life zones found in the United States. In the relatively short distance from the Mogollon Rim, to the top of the San Francisco Peaks, to the bottom of the Grand Canyon you can find the alpine tundra zone, Canadian fir zone, ponderosa pine zone, pinyon-juniper zone, chaparral zone, and the grasslands and deserts of the Sonoran zone.

Willow Bend was founded by the CNRCD in 1978 as a resource for environmental education about this wonderfully diverse place in which we live, and to build an ethic of responsible stewardship of the many natural resources found here. Willow Bend's most popular programs for children and families have focused on water, plants and animals. This past year I had the pleasure of attending programming which has included more adult-oriented education.

For example, last fall NAU Forestry professor Tom Kolb led a discussion in which we reviewed pressing forest health issues and also toured his research area in the ponderosa forest. Willow Bend has also teamed with Coconino County's Sustainable Building Program for monthly presentations on building

practices which conserve resources. I participated in three well-attended programs focused on passive solar building, home solar voltaic systems, and rainwater harvesting.

As an organization, Willow Bend is relatively small, but its impact is big. With your help we can do even more. I encourage you to attend our programs, and support Willow Bend by becoming a member. You can help us expand our community by spreading conservation education; because, as the conservationist Baba Dioum once said "In the end, we will

conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."

- Norm Lowe, Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District Board of Supervisors and Member of the Willow Bend Advisory Board



CNRCD Supervisor Norm Lowe installs freeze protection valve boxes for our large rainwater tanks. The rainwater catchment system is used to irrigate our crop garden (see page 7).

Building Trails

OUR ROOTS ARE IN K-12 EDUCATION

One of our founders was Jim David – a high-school biology teacher in Flagstaff. From the beginning, classroom programs about environmental education have been our focus. With many different programs to choose from and dozens of kits, we complement teachers' lessons with specific areas of expertise as requested.

THE 5-POINTS PROJECT

The 5-Points Project incorporated 5 major components of environmental education: standards-aligned classroom programs, outdoor field experiences, training for teachers, service learning projects, and family science events. The underlying theme of the project was wildlife habitat



Students at Knoles Elementary School take a break from trail building activities. As part of the 5-Points project, Willow Bend worked with volunteers from the American Conservation Experience (ACE) to build a nature trail and outdoor classroom on the school grounds.

restoration and resource conservation.

First, we visited the classrooms to provide lessons on habitats and biodiversity, forest ecology, animal and plant structure and human interactions with the environment. Using the school grounds as an outdoor classroom, we created micro-habitats, hunted for animal scat and sign, and discussed how we could improve the school yard habitat.

At one school we started by working in the school garden developing micro-habitats for a variety of animals and plants. This linked in with a much larger project through Terra BIRDS – an organization specializing in school gardens. In another school the students researched local birds, made bird feeders from recycled materials, and hung bird feeders in the school grounds. At a third school, students constructed a new trail, built “insect hotels” to welcome small wildlife, and created animal books with poetry and artwork on local animals that may be seen close to the school.

The children had incredible fun building trails, starting a garden, exploring their school yards, writing field guides for wildlife found near the school yard, and creating beautiful art work and poetry.

And, they learned valuable lessons:
“You made us all realize we can help.”

The project was funded through a grant from the Arizona Game and Fish Department Heritage Fund.

- Cassandra Roberts, Program Manager

“Our education system, and the classroom itself, will look incredibly different in the next decade. Increased standards and greater access to information creates new challenges, but also new opportunities. For this reason, Willow Bend’s approach to education has never been more important. Using our local ecological systems as a STEM-based laboratory is key to a relevant, real, applied, and magical place for learning.” – Robert Kelty, Coconino County Superintendent of Schools



The project included a lesson where the children made art work re-using materials, and then wrote poems about their animal.

Local Experts Lead Sustainability Series

FROM JUNK YARD TO NATIVE GARDENS

As you walk down the trail that leads from Willow Bend Environmental Education Center to the Flagstaff Urban Trail System you will notice large chunks of metal and concrete sticking out of the ground. These are remnants of the Stone Forest Sawmill that operated at the 40 acre site on the corner of Lone Tree and Butler; the southern part of this site is where debris and other junk were piled. You know the rest of the story – the land has been repurposed for many uses, one of which is Willow Bend Environmental Education Center.

This story is consistent with the theme behind our sustainability series. Partnering with the Coconino County Sustainable Building Program were workshops presented by six experts on their respective specialties: sustainable home improvements and design, passive solar heating, rainwater harvesting, renewable energy, native gardens and composting.

Our goal is to help you see the features in use at Willow Bend and learn how these features could be implemented elsewhere.



The fourth presentation in Willow Bend's Sustainability Series featured Jim Corning of Plug and Play Solar Kits. In the photo, Jim discusses the company's newest product - a portable solar panel which supplies its electricity to your home simply by plugging into any standard wall socket. Plug and Play Solar Kits was the main sponsor for the Sustainability Series.



In the presentation on rainwater harvesting, participants received a 'pickle barrel' and fixtures, courtesy of David McKee from the City of Flagstaff. David brought all the tools needed to take the barrels home ready to use immediately.

Arugula!

GARDENING IS POSSIBLE IN FLAGSTAFF

This year our vegetable garden expanded with the help of our AmeriCorps Educator Lisa Eldredge, and youth from the Juvenile Court school. Lisa has many years of farming and gardening knowledge from Flagstaff and beyond, and is dedicated to empowering youth through hands-on experiences in food systems, gardening, community, and sustainability.

"I spent several months doing garden planning and staring outside wishing for spring. To prepare, I worked with the kids and added a hefty layer of aged manure to the beds, turned the soil, weeded, and then spread a final layer of mulch. The garden is located on the east side of Willow Bend where the beds are very warm and sunny, but the soil quality is quite sandy and nutrient poor. My goal was to give the youth I was working with an experience of

harvesting by May, which is a push in Flagstaff's climate. In order to reach that goal we did everything we could to set the plants up for successful growing.

The biggest obstacle was grasshoppers. They ate a lot of the seedlings before I learned to cover them with a barrier. Once covered, the salad garden grew fast and southwest staples like corn, beans, squash, and tomatoes greeted many garden visitors. Drop in anytime to check on the garden."

- Lisa Eldredge, AmeriCorps Educator



Trays of seed starts were placed in the sunny south-facing windows at Willow Bend and outside on the south side of the building.

Supporter Spotlight: **The Wildland Trekking Company**

“TOUCHING PEOPLE’S LIVES IN A POSITIVE WAY”

“We believe that philanthropy brings good karma” Brad Ball explained after his company made the largest unrestricted gift ever received by Willow Bend. Brad and his partners, brothers Steve and Scott Cundy, started The Wildland Trekking Company in 2005. This summer they hired 13 new people expanding their business to 65 employees. The business specializes in guided backcountry hiking tours, as well as lodge-based and camp-based hiking tours. They offer trips in national parks such as Sequoia and Kings Canyon, Yosemite, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, and throughout the Colorado Plateau including Zion, Bryce, Glen Canyon, and the Grand Canyon, which is their most popular destination.

The business was originally based out of Brad’s garage; expanding to the “shed-stage” as Brad described it, “was a major milestone.” After 5 years of over 100% growth, in 2010 they moved into their current location, a warehouse on Huntington Drive.

“One of the keys to our success is the lateral communication we encourage from the staff. We surround ourselves with the very best people we can find.” The three partners also have different perspectives on the business and “that helps us make successful decisions.” Brad and Steve met while working for the New Mexico State Forestry Department. Previously, Brad had 10 years of mountaineering experience as an

instructor at NOLS. Scott was an English major and was working as a motivational speaker for Klemmer and Associates before the partnership. All three are true outdoorsmen and share a love and passion for the mountains. Flagstaff and Willow Bend are fortunate to benefit from their success and commitment to our community.



Brad Ball stands in front of one his company’s fleet vehicles. The Wildland Trekking Company supports Willow Bend because of our focus on children and environmental education. Brad said that he and his partners “believe in the power of individuals and small organizations in making change and having an impact.”

Thank-You!

ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE ENABLED OUR SUCCESS

Sustaining (\$1000 and above):



Steward (\$500-\$999): APS

Collaborator (\$250-\$499): Cottage Place Restaurant, Arizona Lottery

We would also like to thank: Wilson's Auto Repair, Center for Spiritual Living-Flagstaff, Flagstaff Native Plant and Seed, Foliage Unlimited.

Grant and Contract Support

- City of Flagstaff Art and Science Fund/BBB Revenues, and the Flagstaff Cultural Partners
- Intergovernmental Agreement with Coconino County Superintendent of Schools, Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District, Flagstaff Unified School District, Maine Consolidated School District, Williams Unified School District
- National Park Foundation - America's Best Ideas, in partnership with Flagstaff Area National Monuments
- Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program administered in cooperation with the Arizona State Forestry Division - Urban and Community Forestry and the USDA Forest Service
- Arizona Game and Fish Department Heritage Fund
- Flagstaff Community Foundation/Elliott Family Fund, in partnership with Friends of Camp Colton and Grand Canyon Youth
- The Arizona State Land Department through the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District
- The City of Flagstaff Sustainability Program
- Coconino County Juvenile Court



As part of the Forests for the Future Program, participants enjoyed a field trip to Hart Prairie to learn about sudden aspen decline that has impacted local aspen forests.

Program Summary

Total number of people reached for all programs offered by Willow Bend: **18,759**

(This is an actual count, rather than estimated as in previous years.)

K-12 programs

Number of School Programs presented: **392**

Number of Students reached through those programs: **9,278**

Top Ten programs for 2012-2013

- Erupting Earth
- Starry Skies
- Fire Ecology
- Groundwater
- Living within Your Climate
- Rock Talk
- Plant Power
- Trash and the Three Rs
- Worms
- Grand Canyon Geology, Images on Stone and Seeds on the Move



Dr. Richard Hofstetter of Northern Arizona University shows children how to find bark beetles during a Family Science event at Willow Bend.

Adult Education Programs

Our 14 adult education programs reached 361 people. Experts from a variety of fields such as forestry, botany and sustainability offered presentations and workshops to adult audiences.

Family Science

Family learning activities are an essential component of a successful education system. Parents enjoy seeing their children find something that excites them, and kids learn what is important by seeing what their parents find interesting. This past year, we offered 10 Family Science programs and reached 465 people. We presented programs about Owls, Bark Beetles, Bats, Bald Eagles, Reptiles, and Family Gift-making.

About Us

Willow Bend Environmental Education Center was founded by the Board of Supervisors of the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District in 1978. The CNRCD filed Articles of Association and received 501(c)(3) IRS tax-exempt status to

establish the new organization. Willow Bend also has an Advisory Board for guidance in day-to-day operations. Board members that served during Fiscal Year 2013 are listed below.

Nigel Sparks of Flagstaff Native Plant and Seed spoke to a group about incorporating sustainable practices into gardening strategies. For example, he questioned the use of imported gravel from distant quarries when there are plenty of local materials available for ground cover, such as wood chips and pine needles for paths.



CNRCD Board of Supervisors

- Mike Macauley
- Vic Howell
- Kit Metzger
- Norm Lowe
- Paul Babbitt
- Steve Gatewood

Willow Bend Advisory Board

- Veronica Hipolito
- Tim Clark
- Bret Carpenter
- Andy Gould
- Rollie Kohl
- Norm Lowe
- Matt Roberts
- Holly Taylor

Staff

Russell Tweed, Director

Rusty has a background in natural science and over 15 years of experience in development, educational programming, and non-profit management. He has a Master's degree in Geology from NAU and a BA from Earlham College.

Cassandra Roberts, Program Manager

Cassandra has been teaching for Willow Bend since 2009 and joined the full-time staff in 2011. Cassandra has taught elementary school in New Zealand and Japan and holds a B.Bus (Management) and M.A. (Experiential Education).

Lauren Ritchey, AmeriCorps Outreach and Development Assistant

Lauren has a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State University. She will soon be completing her second and final year of service with Willow Bend and beginning a new position with the Student Conservation Association at Valley Forge National Historical Park.

Lisa Eldredge, AmeriCorps Educator

Lisa holds a B.S. in Natural Resources from Humboldt State University, and an MA in Sustainable Communities from Northern Arizona University. She will soon finish her term at Willow Bend and will be starting a new position for FoodCorps at Rogue Valley Farm to School in Oregon.



AmeriCorps volunteer Lauren Ritchey (right) demonstrates groundwater flow with a three-dimensional model at the Sinagua Middle School STEM night.

Key Volunteers

We'd like to thank the following key volunteers not mentioned elsewhere in this report, for their substantial donation of time and skills:

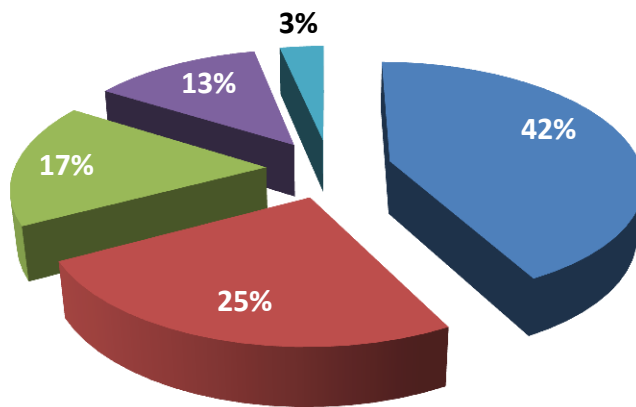
- Kathy Hayes
- Jasmine Terrazas
- Janelle Roza
- Tiffany Hardman
- Becky Fitzpatrick
- Bridget Hoffman
- Molly Huffman

Financial Position

Our financial information is entered and tracked in Quickbooks with advice from a professional CPA. The information presented below is on a cash basis and is unaudited.

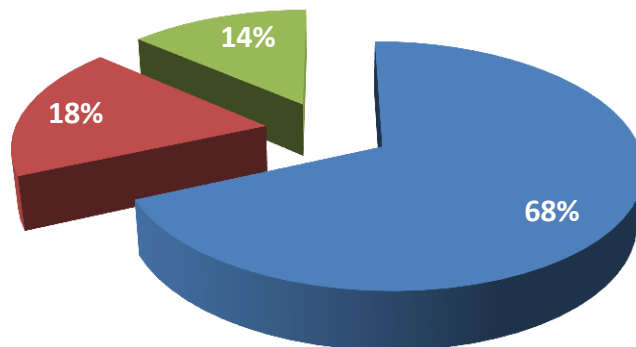
July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Income



Grant	\$	61,020
Contributions	\$	35,960
Program	\$	24,113
Contract	\$	18,402
Misc.	\$	4,804
Total		\$ 144,301

Expense



Program	\$	103,065
Administrative	\$	27,330
Fundraising	\$	20,479
Total		\$ 150,875

Balance Sheet

June 30, 2013

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings \$ 102,639

Other Current Assets \$ 350

Total Current Assets \$ 102,989

Fixed Assets \$ 3,129

TOTAL ASSETS \$ 106,117

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Other Current Liabilities \$ 217

Total Current Liabilities \$ 217

Total Liabilities \$ 217

Equity \$ 105,900

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY \$ 106,117



Willow Bend Environmental Education Center

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(928) 779-1745

www.willowbendcenter.org

Willow Bend is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.