



*Established in 1978  
By the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District*



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## A Change of Hands

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The past year brought lots of exciting changes and additions to Willow Bend Environmental Education Center's legacy in Coconino County. Our Adult Adventures educational programs were a great success and included journeys to Grand Falls, a starlight dinner at Wupatki National Monument, and a guided hike into the Picture Canyon preserve. We continued our outreach and education with children through field trips, classroom lessons, and family science events. We also provided our community educators with Environmental Education training, with hands on learning in our own scenic county and a field trip to Yellowstone National Park.

We saw a change in leadership at Willow Bend this year. Sapna Sopori, former Executive Director, took on a new role with Islandwood, an outdoor learning center on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Sapna made significant contributions to Willow Bend and the advisory board is grateful for her leadership and legacy. The board conducted a national search and hired new Executive Director, Russell Tweed. Rusty has extensive experience with non-profit management and development including his recent experience as the Development Manager at Lowell Observatory. As always, the Willow Bend staff and volunteers do a wonderful job serving our community and we're excited to have Rusty join this team.



The next year promises to be an exciting one for Willow Bend. We are exploring new strategies and opportunities to spread place-based environmental awareness and encourage responsible stewardship of our county's natural resources. On behalf of the Willow Bend Advisory Board, thank you for your support of Willow Bend; we look forward to your continued partnership.

Sincerely,

Veronica Hipolito  
Chair, Willow Bend Advisory Board

## Our Roots Are Deep

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### WHAT DO SEEDS, IDEAS, ANCHOR CHAINS, TWO JIMS AND COWBOYS HAVE IN COMMON?

*Michael P. Macauley*  
*Chair, Coconino Natural Resource*  
*Conservation District*

Thirty-eight years ago a High School Biology teacher (first Jim) looked out his classroom window and thought, “a pond there would make a great outdoor classroom” (the idea). He contacted the District Conservationist (second Jim) for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and he contacted the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District (CNRC D.) Thus, the Pond project was born and the beginning of an environmental education center started to form.

The Board Members of the Conservation District (a bunch of cowboys) put their heads together with the two Jims and came up with the idea of the District funding the start of the Education Center. The initial funding came from the District’s conservation equipment program.

The District rented out anchor chains and other equipment obtained from the military surplus program to the area ranchers to address the encroaching Pinion-Juniper woodlands on the grasslands (the seed). With the money received from the rentals and additional donations the District created the first Environmental Education Resource Center in the state in 1978. Through this center they had every student and parent in Flagstaff digging, shoveling



and designing what is now known as the Frances Short Pond in Thorpe Park. They all wore pins with the words “I Care!” printed on them.

The following years the Environmental Education Resource Center developed educational programs to be utilized in the schools and in presentations to help teachers, students, adults and, yes, cooperators (ranchers) with the

Conservation District learn about environmental issues and concerns and how to address them at the local level. The Education Center has become an award winning, nationally recognized environmental education center.

The two Jims are now retired. Jim David was the Biology teacher at Flagstaff Junior High; Jim Alam was the SCS District Conservationist. The SCS is now the Natural Resource Conservation Services; The Environmental Education Resource Center is now called Willow Bend and the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District is still the CNRC D.

It is amazing what people from different backgrounds, can do when they come together. Just look what seeds, ideas, anchor chains, two Jims and cowboys accomplished.

*They all wore pins  
with the words  
“I Care!”  
printed on them.*

## K-12 School Program Partners

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Willow Bend is pleased to be *the* resource for environmental curricula in our schools. Our award winning programs continuously meet the changing needs of K-12 education and the academic standards that teachers strive to achieve. Our goal is to serve as an indispensable resource for teachers by providing hands-on programs in specific areas of expertise that address specific standards.

This year our school programs were supported by funding from the Coconino County Superintendent of Schools, Flagstaff Unified School District, Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District, National Park Service - Flagstaff Area Monuments, Williams Unified School District, Maine Consolidated School District, the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Program and the NAU Water Research and Education Program.



Young participants have a close look at a tarantula during a Family Science event at Willow Bend.



## Program Summary

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Total number of people reached for **all** programs offered by Willow Bend: **18,846**

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

### K-12 programs

Number of School Programs presented: **463**

Number of Students reached through those programs: **8,750**

Top Ten programs for 2011-2012

- Plant Power
- Worms
- Starry Skies
- Bats
- Erupting Earth
- Rock Talk
- Recycling Rules
- Adapt to Survive
- Seeds on the Move
- Water Quality



Jacob Higgins of the Colorado Plateau Museum of Arthropod Biodiversity shows children some of the bugs in his collection during the Amazing Arthropods Family Science event at Willow Bend.

### Adult Education Programs

Our 17 adult education programs reached 378 people. Experts from a variety of fields such as forestry, botany and native/habitat gardening 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 6 Family Science programs and reached 216 people. We presented programs about Owls, Bald Eagles, Reptiles, Arthropods, Corvids, and Family Gift-making.

## Grant-Supported Projects

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We were very successful securing support for both new and ongoing projects through grant revenue. Descriptions of these grant-funded projects, funding agencies and collaborators are provided below.

### Flagstaff in the Woods

Our partnership with the **Rocky Mountain Research Station Flagstaff Lab** resulted in successful proposals to the **US Forest Service More Kids in the Woods** grant program, as well as the **Community Initiative Grant Program** administered through the **Coconino County Supervisors**. Our project, Flagstaff in the Woods, had four main components: Students in the Woods, Families in the Woods, Teachers in the Woods, and Community in the Woods. The funding supported 135 elementary, middle, and high school classroom programs; the development of a Climate Change classroom program; a family-science day focused on “citizen-science” where groups helped with observation and data collection; an environmental education certification program; and interpretive nature walks for the community.

### Forests for the Future

Funding by the **Arizona State Forestry Division’s Community Challenge Grant**, enabled us to offer a series of six adult education programs themed around trees and local ecosystems. Forestry experts presented talks and participated in field components, giving community members engaging educational experiences. We also

developed a new, interactive display on forest health and ecology and presented it at six community events. A component of this grant, Family Science, offered fun, educational and free activities for families.

### Flagstaff Experiential Education Project

Willow Bend was pleased to partner with **Friends of Camp Colton** and **Grand Canyon Youth** on a proposal supported by the **Flagstaff Community Foundation**. This new partnership between our organizations focused on experiential and environmental education for students at Flagstaff Unified



As part of the Forests for the Future project, Jonah Hill, a local ethnobotanist, led 22 participants on this workshop through the Willow Bend gardens.

## Grant Project Summary - continued

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School District and the Alpine Leadership Academy. Willow Bend provided pre- and post-Camp Colton programs for all sixth graders in FUSD, reinforcing their Camp Colton experience with classroom exercises.

### **Program Support**

A grant award from the **City of Flagstaff Art and Science Fund** administered through the **Flagstaff Cultural Partners** provided general

program support helping us to reach 18,846 people during the funding period, exceeding our goal of 17,000. Furthermore, 98 educators participated in our professional development series. Our programs were a great success: we reached more students, teachers and community members over the previous year, and the grant expanded our capacity to grow and deliver educational programs about our natural environment.



A participant looks through a telescope during Willow Bend's Ancient Southwest Astronomy program at Wupatki National Monument, led by Bryan Bates from the Science Faculty of Coconino Community College.





A group from Willow Bend toured the area devastated by the Shultz Fire.

## Governance

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Willow Bend Environmental Education Center was formed 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 form the new organization. The CNRCD board of supervisors continues to serve as the board for Willow Bend, and Willow Bend also formed an Advisory Board for guidance in specific areas of expertise valuable to a small non-profit organization. Board members that served during the 2011-2012 Fiscal Year are listed on the following page.



## 2011-2012 CNRCD Board

- Duane Coleman
- Mike Macauley
- Vic Howell
- Kit Metzger
- Norm Lowe
- John Davison
- Paul Babbitt

## 2011-2012 Willow Bend Advisory Board

- Veronica Hipolito
- Tim Clark
- Bret Carpenter
- Andy Gould
- Rollie Kohl
- Norm Lowe
- Matt Roberts
- Jim Sell
- John Davison

### **New Board Members**

Shortly after Fiscal year 2011/2012 ended Steve Gatewood joined the CNRCD Board of Supervisors and Holly Taylor joined the Willow Bend Advisory Board.

## **2011-2012 Staff**

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### **Sapna Sopori, Director**

After working at Willow Bend for 7 years (first as Program Manager and as Director from 2009), Sapna accepted a position as Head of Residential School Programs with “Islandwood” on Bainbridge Island, Washington State. Sapna left Willow Bend in July, 2012, and will be greatly missed by staff and many members of the Flagstaff community.

### **Bret Carpenter, Interim Director**

Bret serves on the Willow Bend Advisory Board and generously stepped into the role of Interim Director while a search for a successor to Sapna was conducted. We owe Bret a debt of gratitude for the many technology improvements he made to Willow Bend during his brief term, as well

as ensuring a smooth transition to new leadership.



Americorps volunteers Lauren Ritchey (center) and Abby Davidson (right) work with volunteer Bridget Hoffman (left) during the environmental certification workshop.

**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). Cassandra loves living in Flagstaff because the prevalent sunshine is so different from the typical weather in her native New Zealand.

**Lauren Ritchey, AmeriCorps Outreach and Development Assistant**  
Lauren received a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State University. She is excited to be living in Flagstaff and enjoys promoting Willow Bend and its message of environmental awareness throughout the community.

**AmeriCorps Volunteers:** For many years, AmeriCorps volunteers have been an important part of the Willow Bend staff. As usual, this past year saw some volunteers finish their term and leave as others began. We thank **Elsbeth Inglett, Andy Ives, and Abby Davidson** for their service with Willow Bend for the greater Flagstaff community. We wish them continued success in their chosen careers.

#### **New Staff**

Shortly after Fiscal year 2011/2012 ended Lisa Eldredge joined Willow Bend as

AmeriCorps Educator and Russell Tweed was hired as Executive Director.

#### **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. Her diverse background includes experiential education on sailing ships, biological surveys with the US Forest Service, farming, bicycle mechanics, and facilitating engaged pedagogy programs at NAU.

#### **Russell Tweed, Executive Director**

Rusty has a long background in natural resources 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.

*“Thank you for continuing to work with FUSD to integrate what we do in the classroom both inside and out.”  
~Sixth-grade teacher*

#### **Key Volunteers**

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

- Kathy Hayes
- Bridget Hoffman
- Richard Sidy
- Janelle Roza

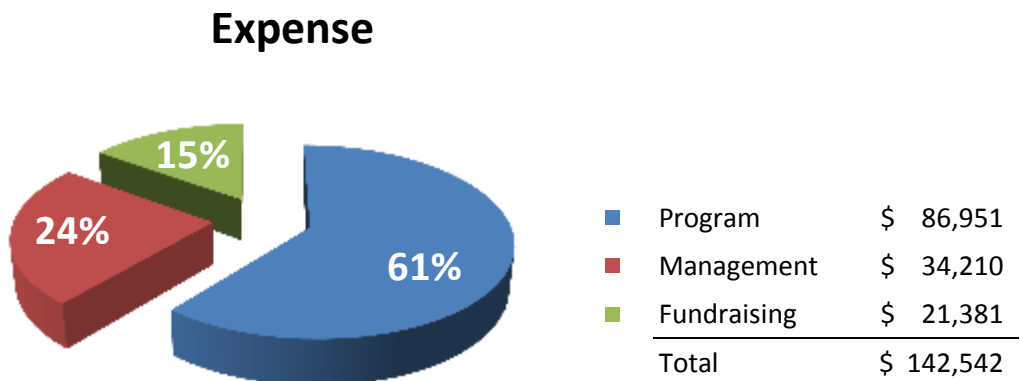
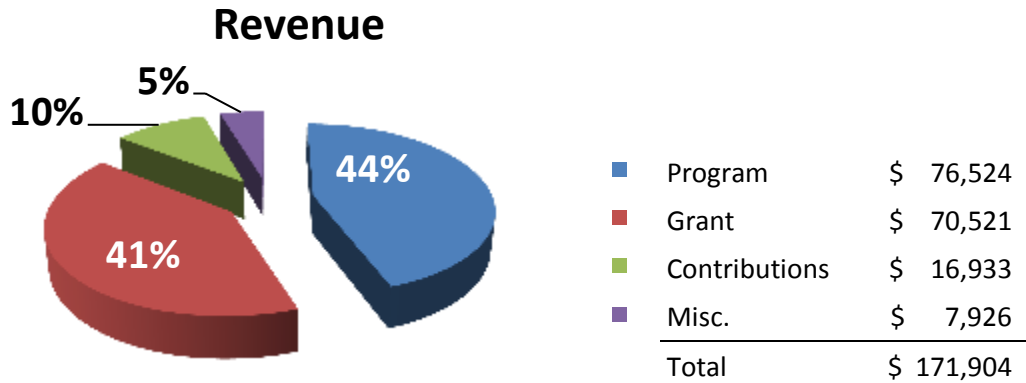
Combined with the many hours our advisory board contributed, total volunteer hours donated was 411.

## Financial Position

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Our financial information is entered and tracked in Quickbooks by a professional CPA. The information presented below is on an accrual basis and is unaudited.

July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012





## Balance Sheet

June 30, 2012

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Checking/Savings	\$ 109,468
Accounts Receivable	24,990
Other Current Assets	<u>1,534</u>

Total Current Assets 135,992

Fixed Assets 5,046

TOTAL ASSETS 141,038

### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

#### Liabilities

##### Current Liabilities

Credit Cards	3,358
Other Current Liabilities	<u>217</u>

Total Current Liabilities 3,575

Total Liabilities 3,575

Equity 137,463

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY 141,038

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## Willow Bend Environmental Education Center

*703 East Sawmill Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86001.*

*(928) 779-1745*

*[www.willowbendcenter.org](http://www.willowbendcenter.org)*

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