

Fall 2022

The Oak Creek Chronicles

News & Updates from Oak Creek Watershed Council

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@oakcreekwatershed.org



@theoakcreekwatershedcouncil



Hello Oak Creek Watershed Friends!

Summer is in full swing in northern Arizona, as seen from the bustling campgrounds in Oak Creek Canyon to the refreshing monsoon rains sweeping across the red rock. We have new faces on the team at Oak Creek Watershed Council, but still, we are hard at work monitoring water quality, educating visitors, and cleaning up highly impacted creekside areas.

It's with bittersweet emotion that we say farewell to Kalai Kollus, our executive director and ambassador of the Oak Creek watershed for the last seven years. Kalai's passion and dedication to the health of Oak Creek is evident in all that she has accomplished. In her four years as executive director, we've (with your help) removed over 16,000 pounds of trash, collected over 20,000 pounds of pet waste, held 35 cleanup events with over 560 volunteers, hosted 15 public meetings, and held many educational events -- all to protect the creek. These accomplishments would not have been possible without Kalai's leadership, and we are profoundly grateful. Incredible places need incredible people to lead their protection, and Oak Creek has been fortunate to have had Kalai as a steward.

This newsletter describes our continued journey. We are excited to introduce our new executive director, Jonathan Lutz, as well as watershed technicians, Cassidy Mott and Nate Doseck. We share an exciting new shuttle in Sedona for navigating trailhead parking and new materials for educating creek users on how to "leave no trace." Finally, we have upcoming events around the watershed that need your help and we take a moment to brag about our outstanding volunteers.

We have an incredible, passionate group of members and supporters, and together, we are protecting one of Arizona's greatest treasures.

With gratitude,

Lisa Winters
Board Chair

Meet Our Team



From our new Executive Director:

For the past 15 years, I've led Audubon organizations in Michigan, Montana, and southeast Arizona. I'm a water-lover—and devout fly fisherman—at heart, so I couldn't be more thrilled to be an ambassador and advocate for preserving the integrity of Oak Creek.

As Executive Director, I'm eager to immerse myself in the organization's suite of projects and strategic priorities. With the support of our dedicated board leaders and volunteers, I intend to cultivate a base of support that will be necessary to sustain and grow initiatives like water quality testing, waste removal, and community engagement.

I'm excited to connect with the visitors, property owners, and businesses who share an interest in the health of Oak Creek. I want to hear your stories, field your concerns, and work together to continue protecting one of Arizona's most beloved waterways.

Farewell & Best Wishes to our ED of 4 years, Kalai Kollus!

As I reflect on the last four years, I am blown away at how far our organization has come. I stepped up at a difficult time in leadership, as our organization was going through a major transitional phase. It has been such a journey, which I am so grateful to have experienced.



We could not have accomplished all we have as an organization without each one of you, past volunteers, and board members. I am so genuinely moved by your support and will truly miss working with you.

You are all such kind, caring, and passionate individuals with so many strengths that I know Oak Creek, this organization, and our future ED will continue to benefit from your efforts!

Meet Our New Watershed Technicians



Cassidy Mott

I recently graduated from Northern Arizona University with a Bachelor's of Arts in Environmental and Sustainability Studies with a minor in Spanish. I am interested in how people relate to and interact with the environment, which is why Oak Creek Watershed Council is a perfect place to work! I have not recreated much in Sedona or Oak Creek, but I am no stranger to the ecology of the southwest and its water. I love being outside in any way, especially with my dog, whether we are hiking, biking, rock climbing, or swimming in the creek! I am excited to interact with visitors to share the wonders of Oak Creek with them and the importance of keeping it healthy and clean so that everyone can use it, including wildlife and plants.



Nate Doseck

I've recreated in Oak Creek for as long as I can remember and through that time I have fostered both a connection and understanding of Oak Creek. As an avid fisherman, I've wandered for hours on end in search of the next bite. While furthering my education at the School of Forestry at Northern Arizona University, I have only grown in appreciation for such a wonderful place. I am incredibly grateful for this amazing opportunity to work with such a tremendous organization and group of volunteers. I hope to foster a deeper sense of community with visitors of Oak Creek, especially those who are experiencing Oak Creek for the first time! I look forward to working together to preserve the integrity and health of Oak Creek as we continue to expand our stewardship.



Jonathan Lutz
Executive Director



OCWC is dedicated to maintaining a standard of excellence for watershed stewardship, and preserving the health and integrity of Oak Creek and its tributaries.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

- *Fall & winter Sedona Farmer's Market
- *Virtual engagement

SOCIAL TRAIL MONITORING

13 trails monitored & REHABILITATED with 6 treatment types

VISITOR USE MONITORING

- *West Fork Trail and high use areas, including roadside pullouts
- *Ambassador Program



Did you know: just one gram of dog waste can contain 23 million E.coli bacteria!

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Shared common messaging

MS4 SEDONA
STORMWATER OUTREACH

2021 Accomplishments

WATER QUALITY MONITORING

- *144 samples collected
- *7 locations monitored during high-use times and 4 additional locations in Upper Oak Creek
- *7 samples had E.coli exceedances

Special thanks to ADEQ, Sedona Chamber of Commerce, and Slide Rock State Park for the support



TRASH PICK-UP

130 volunteers collected a total of 4,100 pounds of trash during 9 cleanup events!



PET WASTE STATIONS



*37 pet waste stations now installed at busy trailheads throughout Oak Creek watershed

*2,020 pounds of pet waste were collected by OCWC

*Over 5,000 pounds of pet waste were collected by partners!

Special thanks to:

Friends of the Forest
City of Sedona
ADEQ
Vista Recreation



Updates from the Creek

Pedestrian Safety a Priority



In partnership with
Arizona State Parks & Trails
& Arizona Department of
Transportation . . .

* 26 of 60 unauthorized
roadside parking spots closed
and social trails rehabilitated

* Barrier fence constructed at
Slide Rock State Park.
Entrance by vehicle only, no
walk-in's



Volunteer Initiative

Become an Oak Creek Steward!

We believe that creek visitors will
leave sites clean if they find it that
way, which is why our small team
works tirelessly to pick up litter at
high-use sites along the creek.

We need your help!
Ready to get involved? Email:
info@oakcreekwatershed.org



Arizona Forward Award of Distinction



Ron Tiller and Natalie Muilenberg, ADEQ, pose with the award for "The Path to Protection in Oak Creek."

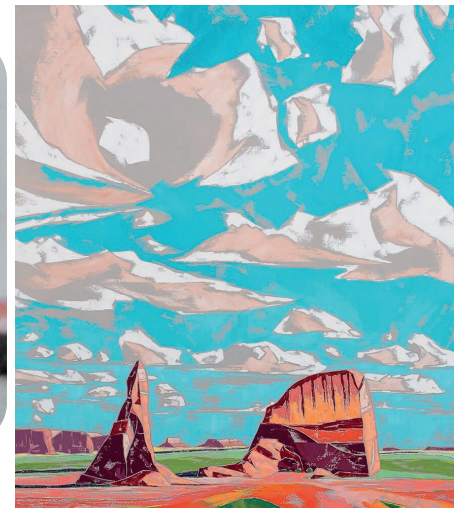
Ronald Tiller, Senior Environmental Scientist, & Natalie Muilenberg, Watershed Improvement Unit Supervisor, at Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) accept the Environmental Excellence Award for the project, "The Path to Protection in Oak Creek," in partnership with the Arizona Dept. of Transportation, Arizona State Parks & Trails, U.S. Forest Service, National Forest Foundation, OCWC, and Natural Channel Design. The March 2022 event acknowledged 3+ years of work toward measurable improvements in water quality, riparian habitat, creek access, and public safety in Oak Creek Canyon. Learn more: arizonaforward.org

OUT IN THE WORLD



Tamara Hastie

"Painting the beauty of the southwest
with the heart of an explorer. . ."



"Stand Tall"

The Arizona Highways Magazine Dec 2021 issue teamed up with a group of artists to participate in "The December Project." Gist of it? Select an iconic Arizona Highways photo, set up an easel & paint away. Each artist agreed to donate at least half of the sale price of their paintings to a charity of their choice. We're thrilled that Tamara chose to support the Oak Creek Watershed Council! Tamara said, "It's one of the most spectacular scenic byways in the country & it needs protecting." Learn more about her work:

tamarahastie.com

SPOTLIGHTS on Businesses, Partners & Volunteers



Indian Gardens Cafe & Market supports OCWC by ordering trout stickers from River Collective Co. & displaying them for sale at the cafe/market. River Collective Co. donates a portion of the proceeds to OCWC!



Our fantastic volunteers!



Judy Lewis - Board Treasurer, Supporter, Friend of Oak Creek, and Volunteer Educator. Thank you, Judy!



Past Ambassadors, Emma Harries and Elise Guzman, join friends and supporters to celebrate Kalai last month. Thank you for your hard work and dedication, Emma and Elise!



Oak Creek Watershed Council is partnering with ADEQ, Arizona State Parks & Trails, City of Sedona, Sedona Chamber of Commerce, and the U.S. Forest Service to share common messaging related to "Leave No Trace."





Ways to Give

Get Involved! Why?

- You become happier the more you volunteer.
- Volunteering contributes to a longer lifespan.
- Create new connections & friendships!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
Giving Tuesday is November 29!

Your unrestricted support allows our organization to reach new horizons, ensuring the waters of Oak Creek continue to flow clean and cold for everyone to enjoy.

oakcreekwatershed.org/donate

Help keep Oak Creek clean while collecting significant visitor use data! Join our Oak Creek Steward community today. Stewards receive their own clean-up kit, PPE & training to safely restore littered areas. Volunteer when the time is right for you.



amazonsmile

You shop. Amazon gives.

Support Oak Creek Watershed Council when you shop on Amazon Smile!

EVENTS CALENDAR

Saturday, September 17, 9am
Pickin' Up in the Pines
Clean-up
Meet at FR237
above the switchbacks

For more info:
tinyurl.com/pickinupfall22



Friday, October 14, 2-4pm
Oak Creek Watershed Fall Forum
All are welcome!
Sedona Public Library

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT! Joanie Neri



My husband and I moved to Sedona about 4 years ago. I searched for something to do that would help out the community and also make friends along the way. I went to an event held by the Oak Creek Watershed Council at Sunset Park a few years back. I was impressed with the friendliness of the organizers and other people involved. I also help out with the Stewards of Sedona that do clean-ups in Oak Creek Canyon on Tuesdays and join the OCWC folks when they have events. I call this kind of activity, as going hiking with a purpose...trying to make things better than you find them.

BE AN OAK CREEK Caretaker

1 Protect WATERSHEDS

Oak Creek is part of a *watershed*. That means anything we do in this area, on the creek or not, can end up in the water. Things like human waste cause *E. coli* contamination. Trash can leave plastic pollution. All of these things harm the plants and animals that live here. Use restrooms and pack out all trash, including dog poop and diapers, to a trash can.

Watershed - an area of land that catches rain and drains into a creek.

E. coli - A bacterium that lives in human and animal intestines that can cause severe infection and sickness in others. It spreads through human and dog poop.



2 HAVE A Poop plan

Poop in the form of human waste, dog waste, or diapers can pollute water and gross out other visitors. Have a plan for what to do with poop. Use the restrooms provided. Remain patient with land managers making improvements to restrooms to meet the needs of visitors. Have a plan for packing out diapers and dog poop all the way to a trash can.

TIP: Wrap a large resealable bag in duct tape to have a discrete, durable, and sealable way to pack out diapers.



3 Trash YOUR TRASH

Everything we bring with us, we should bring back out. This includes trash, even fruit peels, nut shells, and other food waste. Orange peels can last 2 years, while aluminum cans can last 400, and plastic never completely goes away. Trash can make wildlife sick and change their habits. Leave No Trace and pack everything out to a trash can.

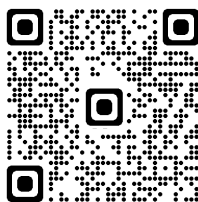
Leave No Trace - A national movement and organization working to minimize impacts to the outdoors.



4 STICK TO Trails

Marked trails are built for us to use. They give us a place to explore while leaving the rest of the landscape intact for wildlife and plants to flourish. Leaving the trail can damage plants, stress out wildlife, and put us in a dangerous position. Stick to the trail to stay safe and Leave No Trace.

Many paths look like the right trail to use, but many of them have been created on accident by uninformed visitors. Please use only marked trails and be aware of restoration signs noting fragile areas.



**Learn
more**
ABOUT WAYS
TO PRACTICE
LEAVE NO TRACE

PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



APPRECIATEAZ

Together we ARE making a difference

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lisa Winters, Chair
Nick Kowall, Secretary
Judy Lewis, Treasurer
Bryce Beck
Megan Colvin
Sally Gebler
Ashley Hardy
McKenzie Jones
Chantal Mosman

Help ensure that the health and
integrity of Oak Creek are
preserved for future generations

oakcreekwatershed.org/donate

We hope you have enjoyed
learning a little more about
Oak Creek Watershed
Council and news around
the creek. If you know of
anyone that might be
interested in our collective
efforts, please share this
newsletter and encourage
them to join OCWC.



Check out
"Loved To Death"
The Story of Oak
Creek
<https://vimeo.com/118766246>



New Shuttle Bus System in Sedona!
The free, easy and eco-friendly way to explore some of
Sedona's favorite trails!

Launched in late March.
Reached 100,000 passenger boarding by July 9th.
Trailhead shuttles avoided approx. 38 metric tons of CO₂e.
Improved recreational user experience.

sedonashuttle.com

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OCWC is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization



OAK CREEK
WATERSHED COUNCIL

