2019

SUPPORT THE NATIONAL HERITAGE ACT OF 2019

By Lowell Perry Jr.

The National Heritage Area (NHA) program is one of the Department of the Interior's most cost-effective initiatives, relying on a public-private partnership in which every federal dollar is matched with an average of $5.50 in other public and private funding. Often the match to the federal investment comes from the contributions of volunteers, who commit their time and expertise within individual National Heritage Areas to support programs, maintain trails, and assist with community conservation projects. In 2017 alone, National Heritage Areas benefited from 38,061 volunteers contributing over 823,902 hours for heritage area projects- a $19.6 million- dollar value.

In Yuma, Arizona, 812 volunteers contributed over 3,125 hours valued at $70,747 for local Heritage Area projects. One recent project of note involved international agricultural firm, the Gowan Company. In addition to funding the project, over 500 Gowan employees from around the world volunteered to plant over 700 trees and shrubs in a 7-acre section of the West Wetlands Park along the Lower Colorado River. This effort further cements the West Wetlands as Yuma's favorite park where children, families, hikers, bikers and anglers gather regularly.

National Heritage Areas are currently funded through the National Recreation and Preservation Account and represent considerably less than 1% of the total National Park Service budget. The National Heritage Act of 2019 (Act), also known as HR 1049, will bring appropriations into greater alignment with the number of Congressionally-authorized National Heritage Areas. The Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (YCNHA) has joined with other Heritage Areas nationwide to request that federal funding be increased to $32 million, as outlined in the Act.

While the Heritage Area program currently models the type of efficiency we need to see in more federal programs, we believe it can be modernized to better ensure long-term sustainability and savings. As the chart below demonstrates, funding levels have not kept pace with the growth and popularity of the program. In the past 15 years, the number of National Heritage Areas has more than doubled, while federal funding has increased by less than 50%. This has resulted in significant underfunding of the program to individual National Heritage Areas, including the YCNHA. ***It should be noted that this past month Congress passed S.47, which adds six new National Heritage Areas—further exacerbating an already underfunded program.***

Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area

Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area partnered with Arizona Humanities to bring Sarah Porter from the Kyl Center for Water Policy. Sarah shared the Water Haves and Have-nots with the public. Yuma is a water have unlike some other areas in the state.

Colorado River State Historic Park (CRSHP)

The Colorado River State Historic Park had a very busy winter season. We hosted the 1st Annual Christmas on the Colorado Event for young families. We partnered with several businesses throughout the community to make Christmas come to life. In January, we hosted Civil War Days where several reenactors from all over the Desert Southwest traveled to Yuma to bring history back to life. These events brought in over 1,500 people to the park.

Yuma Territorial Prison

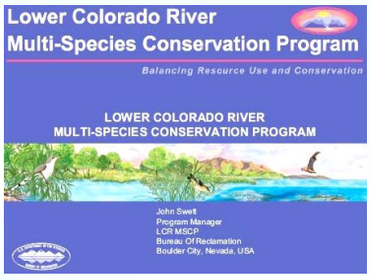
The Yuma Territorial Prison had a very busy January with the Gathering of the Gunfighters in town. The Prison hosted 10 teams from the Southwest as they reenacted the Wild Wild West days. The weather didn't stop the event from being successful. Many people came out and watched the event and purchased items from the museums gift shop.

On March 17th the Prison is hosting the first "To Catch a Leprechaun" event. Riddles and goodies will be given to children who visit the park between 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm. We are really looking forward to seeing our local families enjoy Yuma's history.

Yuma Wetlands

The YCNHA was awarded grant funding through the BOR to re-establish the vegetation that burned in last May's East Wetlands fire. This project will be completed this Spring.

Irrigation activities will start up again this Spring in the Yuma East Wetlands and the YCNHA will be replacing an irrigation pump in the North Channel thanks to Multi-Species Conservation Program Funding.



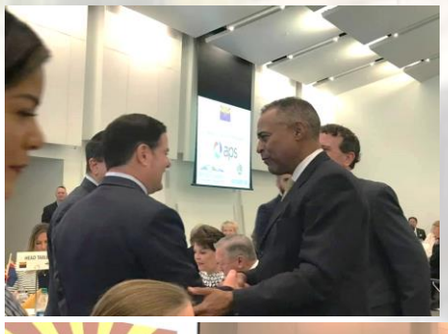
The Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management Grant Funded Project in the lower bench of the Yuma West is progressing. Over 2,000 trees will be planted between the boat ramp in the West Wetlands and the 4th Avenue bridge this spring.

STEDY- Yuma Student Engagement

The YCNHA Team ventured over to STEDY to check in on the Self-Guided Tour App for the CRSHP that the students have been working on. The App is nearing the finish line and just in need of dialogue. We are very happy with the hard work these students have put into this project.

Governor Ducey's State of the State

Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area team attended Gov. Ducey's State of the State breakfast. Director Lowell Perry had the opportunity to introduce himself personally to Gov. Ducey and several other community members. Gov. Ducey then signed the Drought Contingency Plan, which will protect the River's supply. It was wonderful to see the bill be signed.



Important Dates

3/7 – YCNHA Full Board Meeting
3/15 - Hispanic Advisory Committee Meeting
4/19 – YCNHA Full Board Meeting
3/17 – Catch a Leprechaun at the Yuma Territorial Prison
4/11 – YCNHA Full Board Meeting
4/19 – Hispanic Advisory Committee Meeting
5/10 – YCNHA Full Board Meeting

Community Outreach and Events

Lowell attended the National Heritage Area Conference in Washington D.C. where there was a jammed packed schedule every day. The first day he was able to meet with Senator McSally and share our Master Plan which states our goals for our local State Parks. The following day he presented to the Majority Staff Director of the House, Natural Resources Committee-Sub-Committee on National Park's, Forests and Public Lands.

We were proud to be sponsors of the Harvest Dinner in February. Lowell was invited to sit at APS's table which allowed all of the YCNHA staff to attend. It was a great time supporting our local ag industry and its future.

The Colorado River State Historic Park had the privilege of touring Yuma's UofA Ag students. Out of the 27 students, only three had visited the park prior to the tour. Park Manager, Tammy Snook, shared the history and importance of the Colorado River and how it is a major factor in the Ag industry.W e really enjoyed them and admire how dedicated they are to school and their future