

WETLAND PROGRAM PLAN
FOR THE
YAVAPAI-APACHE NATION
RESERVATION

Yavapai-Apache Nation
2400 West Datsi Street
Camp Verde, Arizona 86322

January 2013

YAVAPAI-APACHE NATION APPROVAL

David Kwait 
Chairman, Yavapai-Apache Nation

Date 3/20/2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1.0 Purpose.....	1
2.0 Background Information	2
2.1 Cultural Significance	2
2.2 Wildlife and Recreational Significance	5
2.3 Related Tribal Projects.....	6
3.0 Overall Goal and Timeframe for the WPP	8
4.0 Actions and Activities for the Wetland Program Plan	9
4.1 Year 1 - 2013	9
4.2 Year 2 - 2014	10
4.3 Year 3 - 2015	11
4.4 Year 4 - 2016	12

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Location Map.....	3
------------------------------------	----------

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Wetland Program Plan is to develop strategies and mechanisms that can be utilized to identify and assess wetland resources on the Yavapai-Apache Nation Reservation. This information can then be used to develop plans to protect, restore and enhance Tribal wetland resources.

2.0 Background Information

The Yavapai-Apache Nation (“YAN” or “the Nation”) is a federally recognized Indian Tribe pursuant to the Apache Treaty of July 1, 1852, 10 Stat. 979, and Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, 48 Stat. 984. The Yavapai-Apache Reservation (“Reservation”) is located within the Verde River Watershed in north-central Arizona, near the towns of Camp Verde and Clarkdale, Arizona (**Figure 1**). The Verde River flows through the heart of the Reservation. The Reservation is entirely within the U.S. Geological Survey's Cataloging Unit Number H150602 called *Verde Watershed* (see attachments). The primary surface water on the Reservation is the Verde River which contains abundant areas of wetland and riparian habitat. The health and vitality of the Verde River and its riparian habitat plays a vital role in the preservation of the YAN's traditional, cultural and religious values.

2.1 Cultural Significance:

To the People of the Yavapai-Apache Nation the Verde River (Tu cho n'Lii) and its associated wetland/riparian zone is an important physical and spiritual anchor to their place in this world. When many of the Yavapai and Dilzhe'e Apache People of the Verde Valley and surrounding mountains were force marched to the concentration camp at San Carlos east of Phoenix in the brutal February weather of 1875 they knew that some day they would return to the Verde Valley and the River that carved it. For centuries prior to the involuntary exile the Yuman speaking Yavapai lived west and south of the Verde River, while the Athapaskan speaking Apache lived mostly north and east of it. Before the federal conquest of the western United States, the Yavapai and the Apache historically overlapped along the length of the Verde River corridor sharing its resources and occasionally supporting each other against common enemies to the south. The Verde River and its riparian habitat has always been and remains today the focal point of the Yavapai and Apache peoples' existence.

During the 1930's Yavapai tribal elder, Mary Sine, imparted this wisdom to her grandson David, saying, “...as long as the River flows, life will be good”. Those words are no less true today than they were 80 some years ago. More recently in a public presentation in 2005, tribal elder and Apache historian Vincent Randall, a lifelong resident of the Verde Valley explained in discussing the religious and cultural importance of the Desert Nesting Eagle that, “to our People the desert nesting Bald Eagle is the barometer of the desert and



Figure 1

- Indian Districts
- Indian Districts Private



Water Quality Technology, Inc.
Wherever there's water

**Yavapai-Apache
 Reservation
 Location Map**

Printing Date: February 23, 2010
 File: P:\A355-Yavapai-WQT\mxd\Yavapai Location Map.mxd

the health of the Verde River is the barometer of the Eagle". Mr. Randall went on to say that the River is not just for the People, but it is for the benefit of all the animals and plants that rely on it for life as well.

The Verde River and its riparian habitat have been dramatically altered over the years by (among other things) upstream water diversions and pumping, cattle grazing, forest management practices and development. Recollections of Elders during their lifetimes and information passed on from their parents and grandparents provide documentation that the ecology of the Verde River and riparian area and uses by the Yavapai and Apache People have markedly changed over the last century, especially in the last fifty years.

The Elders reported that flows in the Verde River have substantially declined, channel morphology has changed, and riparian vegetation has become less diverse in structure and species composition. Interviews with Yavapai and Apache Elders also indicate that many riparian species of plants once found within the riparian corridor of the Verde River that are of traditional and cultural value are rarely encountered today. Common riparian species that were once present, but have been locally extirpated or substantially reduced in abundance include, the Arizona walnut, mulberry, hackberry, Arizona grape, devil's claw, wild "Apache" spinach (several species of herbs harvested for food and other purposes). Cottonwood and willow communities have also become reduced in spatial extent and in age class diversity. The Elders reported that young willow shoots, essential in basketry, are much less plentiful than in the past because the extent of willow communities has become reduced. As a consequence, many of the places where the People traditionally gathered cottonwood and willow for baskets or wild spinach for food are no longer present. Today there are few places where People can gather these resources.

Tribal ceremonies must also be conducted at specific locations along the Verde River, just as they have been traditionally conducted for centuries. The Verde river and the plants and animals it supports continues to play a key role in these ceremonies, as well as in simple social gatherings and retreats – all of which remain fundamental to the well

being and continuity of the YAN community. This is why the development of Wetlands Program Plan offers a critical opportunity to the Nation to help in its effort to keep the River flowing and to preserve and enhance its natural riparian habitat so that, “...*life will be good*”!

2.2 Wildlife and Recreational Significance:

Portions of the Verde River (upstream of the YAN Reservation) represents one of only two “Wild and Scenic Rivers” designations in Arizona. The Verde River is 140 river miles long and is primarily perennial – a very unique occurrence in Arizona today. The Verde River provides habitat for a diversity of aquatic and riparian-dependent species. At least 13 native fish species historically occurred in the Verde River watershed and 12 species persist today, including the federally listed spikedace and loach minnow fish, each of which has critical habitat designated under the Endangered Species Act along certain segments of the Verde River. The Verde River and its tributaries also support a diversity of wildlife species, with a high density of breeding birds per acre and records of over 200 resident and neo-tropical migratory bird species. In addition, federally-listed and candidate species such as the southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed cuckoo depend on its woody riparian forests, while the Verde River also supports large numbers of Bald Eagle*, river otters, and beavers.

Given the importance of the Verde River and its riparian habitat, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has made the Verde a primary focus of its conservation efforts in Arizona. In September 2009, the Service issued the Verde River Watershed Focus Area Strategic Plan (“Action Plan”), in an effort to coordinate and cooperate with other agencies, organizations, tribes and stakeholders to identify, implement and facilitate programs and management practices on the Verde River to improve the diversity, status and trends “of native aquatic and terrestrial species and the habitats that they depend upon in the Verde River watershed.”

*The Bald Eagle plays a pivotal role in the religion, traditions and culture of the Yavapai and Apache People. Its continued existence is directly tied to their health and wellbeing. The Verde River is one of the last remaining locations in Arizona where Bald eagles are known to nest and fledge their young.

Because of YAN's longstanding and committed efforts to protect the Verde River and its habitat, including for benefit of federally listed species like the southwestern willow flycatcher and the spikedace and loach minnow, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has repeatedly excluded the YAN Reservation from final critical habitat designations under Sec. 4(b)(2) of the Endangered Species Act, noting that the benefits of excluding the Reservation outweigh the benefits of designation on YAN lands. The Service has also acknowledged that designations of critical habitat on the Reservation would only confuse (and potentially jeopardize) YAN's own conservation efforts on behalf of these federally listed species and their habitat and that such designation would undermine current and future partnerships between the Nation and the Service.

2.3 Related Tribal Projects

The YAN has implemented the following projects/tasks pertaining to wetland resources on the reservation.

- In an effort to provide protections for the Verde River and its habitat, in 2006, the Tribal Council for the YAN enacted formal legislation by means of a Tribal Resolution (No. 46-2006) wherein the Council confirmed and declared a Riparian Conservation Corridor and Management Plan for the Verde River on the Reservation extending outward for three-hundred (300) lateral feet on either side of the bankfull stage of the River. Within the corridor a wide variety of activities that could adversely impact the riparian habitat of the Verde River are prohibited, including grazing, road building and construction.
- The YAN has developed, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Management Plan (May 25, 2005) for the Verde River corridor on the Reservation in order to provide enhanced protection (greater than a critical habitat designation under the Endangered Species Act) for the federally listed, southwestern willow flycatcher, a species that often breeds in patchy and dense riparian habitats **along streams** or other wetlands, including along various segments of the Verde River. The flycatcher typically nests in native vegetation such as willow and cottonwood.

- YAN was awarded CWA Section 319 Base funding in 2011 and is currently implementing a habitat enhancement Tamarisk removal project along the Verde River.

3.0 Overall Goal and Timeframe for the WPP

The overall goal of the Wetland Program Plan is to develop a comprehensive program that will assess wetland and riparian resource conditions on the YAN Reservation and develop mechanisms to sustain, protect and enhance unimpaired wetlands and restore impaired wetland areas utilizing effective restoration techniques.

The YAN will implement the Wetland Program Plan described below over the next four years (2013 -2016). Upon EPA approval of the WPP, the YAN will complete year one tasks utilizing Tribal resources. Implementation of future year tasks will be dependent on funding from Wetland Program Development Grants or other funding sources.

4.0 Actions and Activities for the Wetland Program Plan

4.1 Year 1 – 2013

Objective: Monitoring Strategy and Design

Core Element: Monitoring and Assessment

Action: Identify Program Decisions and Long-term Environmental Outcomes

(Core Element: Monitoring and Assessment Objective 1.a.)

- a. Develop and document the long-term environmental goals of the WPP
- b. Define Tribal entities and outside partners who will participate in the WPP development process

Action: Define Wetlands Monitoring Objectives and Strategies

(CE: M&A Obj. 1.b.)

Activities:

- a. YAN personnel associated with the WPP will meet with cooperating agencies in the process of developing monitoring objectives and strategies
- b. Data needs and uses will be defined and documented
- c. Wetlands monitoring objectives and strategies will be defined and documented

Action: Develop Monitoring Design

(CE: M&A Obj. 1.c.)

Activities:

- a. Determine appropriate wetland classification scheme
- b. Develop monitoring site selection process and monitoring frequency
- c. Develop a process to incorporate the WPP monitoring plan into YAN's Water Pollution Control Program (WPCP) Monitoring Strategy and the EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan utilizing WPCP funds

4.2 Year 2 – 2014

Objective, Monitoring Strategy and Design

Core Element: Monitoring and Assessment

Action: Select a Core Set of Monitoring Indicators

(CE: M&A Obj. 1.d.)

Activities

- a. Identify scientifically defensible monitoring indicators that are relevant for the monitoring objectives
- b. Develop/refine field methods to be used in the monitoring plan

Action: Monitor Wetland Resources

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.b.)

Activity

- a. Train YAN staff in wetlands identification, delineation and selected indicator monitoring

Action: Establish Reference Condition

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.c.)

Activity

- a. Conduct base line monitoring to define reference conditions and establish reference sites (unimpaired to impaired)

Action: Reporting

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.e.)

Activity:

- a. Prepare annual summary report for submittal to EPA and Tribal decision makers

4.3 Year 3 – 2015

Objective, Monitoring Strategy and Design

Core Element: Monitoring and Assessment

Action: Monitor Wetland Resources

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.b.)

Activities:

- a. Revise/modify the Wetlands Monitoring Plan based on baseline studies and reference sites
- a. Implement the Wetlands Monitoring Plan
- b. Track site monitoring information utilizing described field methods and selected reference sites

Action: Track Monitoring Data

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.d.)

Activities:

- a. Geo-reference monitoring data utilizing GPS and GIS tools
- b. Incorporate geo-reference data on to a monitoring site location map
- b. Incorporate monitoring data into an electronic data base that is compatible with the WPCP WQX data base
- c. Identify monitoring sites that can be used to develop trend analysis

Action: Evaluate Monitoring Program

(CE: M&A Obj. 3.a.)

Activity:

- a. Conduct a review of the monitoring program and make changes or modify if needed.

Action: Analyze Monitoring Data

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.e.)

Activities:

- a. Determine baseline wetland conditions (functions and values)
- b. Prepare and Annual Wetlands Assessment Report for submittal to EPA and Tribal decision makers

4.4 Year 4 – 2015

Objective, Monitoring Strategy and Design, Management and Protection

Core Element: Monitoring and Assessment

Action: Monitor Wetland Resources (continued)

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.b.)

Activities:

- a. Revise/modify the Wetlands Monitoring Plan based on previous monitoring and observations and continue to implement monitoring
- b. Track site monitoring information utilizing described field methods, data system and selected reference sites

Core Elements: Monitoring and Assessment, and Restoration and Protection

Action: Develop Wetland Management, Protection and Restoration Plans

(CE: M&A Obj. 2.e., 3.d. and CE Restoration and Protection Obj. 1.b.)

Activities:

- a. Identify impaired wetland resources and document causes of impairment
- b. Develop restoration activities for impaired wetlands based on documented causes of impairment
- c. Prioritize restoration projects base on functions and values associated with each impaired wetland resource
- d. Prepare and Annual Wetlands Assessment Report for submittal to EPA and Tribal decision makers