

# Eleven Reasons to Protect the Verde

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The Verde River is a green artery pulsing through the heart of Arizona, a jewel of the Southwest, continuously flowing over 190 miles from Paulden to the Salt River near Scottsdale.

The upper Verde, tucked away deep within the Prescott National Forest between Paulden and Clarkdale, is remote, unknown, under-appreciated, and threatened. The upper Verde's future is clouded by unmitigated groundwater pumping in the Big Chino Valley, which will eventually convert 25 miles of a living river into a dead, dry wash.

The Citizens Water Advocacy Group believes that we are smart enough to live here responsibly, enjoying a comfortable lifestyle while protecting our natural areas and our wildlife. The question is: Do we have the political will?

Here are eleven reasons we should protect the Verde:

**Economy:** The Verde sustains over 700 jobs and over \$100 million in economic value in the Verde Valley, plus 40% of the Phoenix area's surface water supply. Plus, natural areas are proven to benefit local economies.

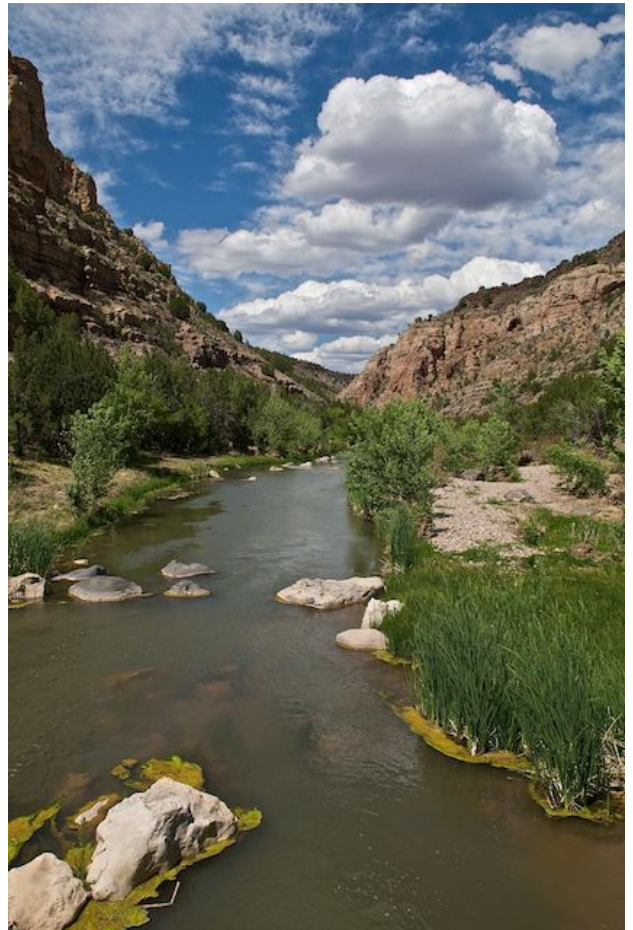
**Recreation:** As our population grows, we require more recreational area. The upper Verde is a wonderful place for people to hike, hunt, fish, camp, backpack, kayak, canoe, view wildlife, photograph, ride horses, climb rocks, and observe birds.

**Quality of Life:** Clean air, unfettered open spaces and bodies of water, and opportunities to view wildlife enhance our daily living.

**Scenery:** Primal colors and spectacular rock formations create scenery second to none in the state — red rocks, green plants, blue sky, and white clouds. The Verde displays tremendous natural beauty.

**Cultural & Historic Values:** The entire river corridor is laced with ancient rock art, campsites, structures, and artifacts revealing the historical lifestyle of Native Americans. The river and its springs are an essential spiritual and cultural foundation for the Yavapai-Apache Nation. Also, remnants of early Arizona ranching history dot the canyon.

**Wildlife:** Although the Verde River watershed comprises only 5.8 percent of the land area in Arizona, it contains the best remaining riparian areas — lush, green ribbons full of life. The Verde supports a surprisingly large fraction of Arizona's vertebrate species: 78 percent of breeding bird species, 89 percent of bat and carnivore species, 83 percent of native ungulate species, and 76 percent of reptiles and amphibian genera — an impressive concentration of wildlife. Many bald eagles overwinter on the Verde. Seven eagle chicks have fledged at Del Rio Springs in the last five years.



The Verde River, the lifeblood of the watershed, supports most of Arizona's wildlife species, a heritage we all share.

**Endangered Species:** The Verde River supports a rich and diverse variety of plants, animals, and fish. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) lists 21 species in the Verde watershed, including the yellow-billed cuckoo, the southwestern willow flycatcher, native fish and snakes, and more. Wildlife managers monitor an additional 16 sensitive species of concern.

**Native Fish:** Of Arizona's original 33 native fish, three are extinct, 19 are protected by the ESA, and the Verde supports ten. The upper Verde River sustains four ESA-listed native fish.

**Uniqueness:** Of Arizona's six major perennial rivers, the Gila, Salt, and Santa Cruz Rivers have been consumed by dams and groundwater pumping, the Colorado is fully diverted and no longer flows to the Gulf of California, and the San Pedro is struggling for life. The Verde River is the longest surviving living river in Arizona.



**Stewardship:** Because we exploit our forests, rivers, and land for the resources that support our society, some environmental degradation is inevitable. Our challenge is to manage this rich and amazing world sustainably so our kids, and their children, can also live comfortably and enjoy nature and wildlife. We can learn from our local Native Americans, the Yavapai-Apache Nation in Camp Verde. Monica Marquez, a Yavapai, told me: "Water is Life. You never take it all." Vince Randall, past YAN Tribal Chairman and Apache Cultural Chair, asks: "When are you going to learn to share with all living things? When will you learn the true meaning of stewardship? Will it be when there is only one of you left?"

**Water is Life:** To indigenous people, the land, plants, and animals are alive; they are identified as beings to be respected, not as nouns representing objects to be owned and exploited. When asked "Where is the river?" they reply "The river lives over there."

## What You Can Do:

**Join** the Citizens Water Advocacy Group ([cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org)), a local group working to protect the Verde.

**Learn** about the Verde River! Read about water on [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org). Sign up for a Sierra Club hike on the river or volunteer to help us monitor the river flow.

**Share** your knowledge with your friends and neighbors. Schedule a showing of *Viva La Verde* or a speaker for your group ([cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org)).

**Vote** for candidates that care and have a clue; make water and rivers an election issue. We must modernize Arizona water law.

**Conserve Water:** To protect the Verde, we need to use less water and reduce groundwater pumping: minimize your water use, use drought-tolerant landscaping, and use rainwater harvesting to irrigate landscapes and gardens. When your hand is on the faucet, your choices affect this river, our wildlife, and our children's future quality of life.

**Support** Congressional designation of the *Upper Verde Wild and Scenic River*.