

FROM THE PRESIDENTS'S DESK

Greetings Friends! I hope this edition of the Canyon Chatter finds you in good health. I'd sure like to take a mulligan on 2020 so far. What a year it has been! Where does one start? Well, OK, the elephant in the room, Covid-19. It has had a profound influence on virtually everything normal. We were fortunate to have the annual meeting, but were hit shortly thereafter and had to cancel the Volunteer Appreciation Brunch. We had hoped to be able to re-schedule this Fall, but I recently received word from our liaison, Joe Macisaac, that La Posada will not be taking bookings at least through January. About the same time we received a request from the USFS to cease VIS and Monday Clean Up operations. Friends in Deed, where we hold our Board meetings closed. If that weren't enough, how about the Bighorn fire, unrelenting heat and "Nonsoon"? The closure of the Mt. Lemmon section of the Coronado National Forest put enormous pressure on Madera Canyon. Joe and Cheryl Wolowsky, our car counters have reported record numbers of visitors. Want more? How about having to cancel the popular Music in the Canyon series? Not done yet. Grantors advised us that most funds would be funneled to essential services and awards, if any, would be scaled down.

I think that sort of does it for the bad news. So let me address some silver linings emerging behind those black clouds:

Volunteers: Thank you. You haven't gone away and we are so appreciative. While I cannot promise when we will be able to celebrate and honor you, we won't forget.

Annual Meeting: GVR is re-opening in phases and expects to be fully “Covid world” operational by the end of the year. We may have to book a larger venue like the West Center to accommodate an appropriately socially distanced gathering. We’re going to work on it.

VIS and Monday Clean Up: I approached the USFS last month and they requested we table until late September. I will be meeting with Nogales District Ranger Jim Copeland soon to discuss getting started again and being able to operate safely.

Board Meetings: We have been having SD Board meetings at the Ramada Proctor. It’s been really nice to gather in the Canyon and enjoy the sights and sounds that are so dear to us all.

Grants: Christine Olsenius has been busy working with the White Elephant and Freeport-MacMoRan on our next joint venture with the USFS, the Super Trail/Baldy entry restoration, scheduled to start later this year.

Music in the Canyon: We measured and explored and there is really no place in Madera Canyon to accommodate a socially distanced audience. However, those of you with Covid fatigue, starved for entertainment, don’t despair. **How about Music “near” the Canyon?**

While we have not been able to be directly active in the Canyon does not mean we have sat idly by. The Amphitheater bench replacement, a joint venture project involving the Friends, GVR Hiking Club and USFS will be completed this Fall. David Linn our VP and President of the GVR Hiking Club will be telling you more about our partnership later in this issue.

Doug Moore, Education Director and Jim Burkstrand a true Friend and amateur videographer have been working on a project they called the Virtual Learning Project (VLP). With the help of webmaster Teri Matelson, they are placing lessons for what was the 4th Grade docent led Canyon visits on our website. I'll let Doug tell the story, but if you have not visited the FoMC website lately, especially the Education section, you are in for a treat.

Doug, Friend Laurens Halsley and Board member Bob Pitcher have updated the Bird Checklist adding several new species. The new list is available on line. The print edition will be updated soon.

With a lot help from Anita Woodward and edit coaching from Bill White, the Welcome brochure has been completely redesigned. Joe and Cheryl Wolowsky and their crew will be filling the mailboxes in the Canyon with a fresh supply.

Some years ago, the Friends tried to get some protection for flora and fauna. With the documented decline especially insects, we are going to try again. Doug and Bob Pitcher have been spearheading this effort. Bob has written an article in this edition of the Chatter that you will want to read.

In early July, David Linn and I met with representatives from the Coronado National Forest (John Titre, Recreation Officer; Jim Copeland, Nogales District Ranger; Kerwin Dewberry, Supervisor CNF and Dana Backer, Partnership and Volunteer Coordinator. The purpose was how to improve our relationship and communication. Some important take aways were: simple documents for property title transfer, an updated Volunteer Service Agreement with an addendum titled Shared Expectations between FoMC, the Nogales Ranger District and CNF. A

Joint Hazards Analysis protocol was established for future projects. We were also able to secure a VSA agreement for our partners at the Green Valley Hiking Club. Jim Copeland has expressed an interest in attending our Board meetings. We welcome him along with John Titre, a regular attendee.

Finally, to our grantors: we understand the critical importance of essential services, especially when it comes to a safe roof over our heads and food to sustain us. But don't forget about our mental health. As was evidenced by the increased visitations to Madera Canyon, mental health is important too. Studies have found that connecting with nature makes adults and children happier and increased their sustainability behaviors. We the Friends of Madera take great pride in doing our part to provide respite from the challenges of this modern world and are grateful for your support.

I've been rambling on here Friends, but I wanted to let you know what's going on. Enjoy the Chatter, get out and have some fun in Madera Canyon and stay healthy.

Rusty Lombardo, President

Recognizing the Special Relationship between Friends of Madera Canyon and the GVR Green Valley Hiking Club

David Linn

As president of the Hiking Club and vice-president of Friends of Madera Canyon, I am in a unique position to acknowledge and value the enduring relationship these two organizations hold. We are linked by our abiding love for the Canyon. We have shared history and values in that we have both been around for a while, with the hiking club established in 1981 and, of course, FoMC was founded in 1987. In fact, the first club hike conducted was up the Madera Canyon Nature Trail.

Our interests have been united in the conservation and maintenance of the Canyon for public recreational opportunities. In mutual pursuit of these goals we have each repeatedly signed volunteer services agreements with the Forest Service of Coronado National Forest.

The hiking club is probably the biggest consumer of the Madera Canyon bounty with our hikers climbing into the Canyon on a daily basis. And on the Thursday group club hikes Madera's trails are filled with happy hikers enjoying the views, the wildflowers, the birds, and occasional bear sightings. Southeastern Arizona is rich in nearby mountain ranges that are frequently hiked by the club. But what with the pandemic and the Bighorn fire in the Santa Catalina's, the Santa Rita mountains have clearly become home.

The hiking club gives back to the Canyon in coordination with FoMC by organizing frequent trail maintenance activities: including brush trimming, removing downed trees, and reconstruction of eroded trails.

We also form joint work groups with a recent example of bringing volunteers from our organizations in planning of the replacement the seating at the amphitheater.

FoMC relies on hiking club expertise to keep an eye on Madera's wellbeing status as we hike the many trails in the lower and upper canyon. We are mutually involved in maintaining accurate maps for safe and enjoyable recreation.

The advocacy efforts for a thriving Madera Canyon are and should be a concern for all who participate in enjoying her gifts. The Green Valley Hiking Club and Friends of Madera Canyon will remain linked in that common purpose.

Virtual Learning Project (VLP)

Doug Moore, Education Director

The Covid-19 epidemic certainly has turned almost everyone's life upside-down in some way. The FoMC Education Program and 4th Grade Nature Walks are not an exception- all scheduled walks and activities were cancelled for Spring 2020 and our in-person programs and activities are on hiatus for the near future. The Ed Program follows the science recommendations and USFS rules for safety; we'll restart when it is deemed safe for students and docent volunteers to do so.

Despite the disappointment of not walking in Madera Canyon with our students, teachers and parents this year, pandemic restrictions did generate a spark of ingenuity that is allowing the FoMC to still reach and connect- not only with our 4th graders, but potentially to students everywhere! With many school districts moving to on-line distance learning formats, new Board member Christine Olsenius and Pres. Rusty Lombardo suggested that FoMC Education look into posting website-accessible nature education content. After many questions and much research, I can announce the FoMC **Virtual Learning Project**. There is now a "Virtual Learning Project" page under the "Education" button on the website and we are generating and posting original 4th grade and multi-level teacher's resource content!

So far, the project is taking a two-prong approach to learning content. First, Ed. Director Doug Moore is writing "e-books"- PowerPoint-style 4th grade reading and photo nature stories. He is also editing and updating the "Species Spotlight" articles and appropriate nature materials from the FoMC Docent Manual for the page. The second prong is "in-house" production of short-subject multi-media

educational videos. Instead of hiring a production company, Doug and Docent (and I.T. wiz) Jim Burkstrand are writing scripts and designing/photographing/shooting footage, with Jim then producing and editing the final videos with still photos, video clips, text, graphics, narration and music on his home computers. The finished videos are uploaded to YouTube for viewing and a link is posted on the “Virtual Learning Page”. We are promoting the content to our participating teachers and students, but anyone visiting the website is able to “click” and view our Madera Canyon educational content! “The White House of Madera Canyon” is our first posted FoMC video production. A “Proctor Trail” video series is now in the works- a multi-chapter virtual field trip around the Proctor Nature Loop Trail with lots of plants, animals and fun facts. There will even be some drone footage, providing a bird’s eye view from above the canyon!

If you have a minute, please visit the “Virtual Learning Page” and click on the content links to see what we’ve been doing during the pandemic. You may also notice that much of the website has been reorganized and updated too! Though many things may have shut down completely this summer, the situation has not stopped the Friends of Madera Canyon from creatively working on projects and issues important to the canyon.

Protection in the Canyon

Bob Pitcher, FOMC Board

At the first Friends Board meeting I attended, last November, Doug Moore, FOMC Education Director, mentioned that he was in conversation with the Forest Service about a potential ban on the collecting of wildlife in Madera Canyon. I was startled to hear that collecting in the Canyon was allowed at all. It seems so inappropriate for a location whose enormous appeal depends in such large measure on its wildlife. I spoke to Doug after the meeting and said that I'd be happy to help in any effort toward obtaining such a prohibition.

Doug continued his talks with the Service for some months, until it became plain that the agency would not be taking action on its own, at least not very soon. At that point, Rusty, Doug, and I conferred, and agreed that a formal request from the Friends to the Forest Service asking for a ban on collecting might serve to jar things loose. Doug volunteered to put together the scientific case against collecting, and I agreed to write the legal and administrative case for the Service to act. We'd put the two parts together when we finished, and have a solid basis for approaching the Service with our arguments.

The project has taken a good deal of research. Doug has reviewed the scientific literature documenting the worldwide decline of many species, the fragile condition of the Canyon's ecosystems, the lack of any population baselines for most wildlife and plants in the Canyon, and the depredations of collectors, both commercial and private, on elements of that wildlife. I've looked at the federal laws and regulations under which the Forest Service does its work, the Service's

own rules, and the recently revised Land Management Plan for the Coronado National Forest, of which Madera Canyon is a part.

Our draft request is now very near completion. It asks for a complete ban on collecting of wildlife and plants in those parts of the Canyon that are not already included in the Mt. Wrightson Wilderness, where all species are protected. In fact, of course, many form of wildlife are already protected in the Madera Canyon Recreation Area, the lower Canyon, as well. No hunting is permitted in the Canyon, so game animals are protected; birds are protected under federal law; and all endangered and threatened species, and many rare plants – of which there are an abundance in Madera Canyon -- are also protected (although one wonders how thoroughly these protections are enforced). But the collection of reptiles and amphibians generally requires only a state hunting license, and the collection of insects and other invertebrates doesn't require even that. Evidently, Madera Canyon is the foremost bug-collecting destination in the country. And insects in particular, as we know, form the bottom of the food chain for most higher species, When the bugs go, they go.

When the Friends request is ready, we'll be deciding how best to present it to the Service, and whether it will be more effective if other groups join in with the FOMC. As far as we can tell, this would be the first time the Forest Service has considered a full prohibition on collecting in a recreation area like Madera Canyon. This story's far from over – we'll keep you posted.

Great American Outdoors Act

John Titre, Recreation Staff Officer, Nogales District

On August 5, 2020, the President signed the Great American Outdoors Act permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and providing dollars for National Parks, Forests, and other federal agencies to address overdue repairs and maintenance. It is considered the biggest land conservation legislation in a generation. LWCF helps fund the four main federal land grant programs: National Parks, National Forests, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management) It establishes the National Park and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund that will provide \$9 billion for the next 5 years. The National Parks Conservation Association is hailing this it as “a conservationist’s dream.”

The Nogales District was successful in obtaining funding for trails and restoration in Madera Canyon. The Friends are financially contributing to this effort and that is greatly appreciated! The match from the Friends was critical in obtaining the grant. Since the program is planned for the next 5 five years, other opportunities will be forthcoming. Exciting times to address trail maintenance, interpretive signs, and erosion in the Canyon!

Music “near” the Canyon

Rusty Lombardo, President

With the support of your Board and MITC Committee we brainstormed sites where could provide a safe environment for a Fall concert series. Anita Woodward, Chair and I met with Matt Smogor of Pima County Parks and surveyed some private sites at the new Historic Canoa Ranch Park. We were offered a lovely, intimate section of the Ranch that would not be accessible to the general public. The restroom is just outside the concert area as is ample nearby parking including and ADA area. It has ample room to socially distance an audience of about 45 with consideration to pair spouses and partners. The first performance is scheduled for Sunday, October 18th then October 25th, followed by November 1st and November 8th. Look for an upcoming special E-blast regarding entertainers and ticket sales. As members of the Friends, you will receive notice and an opportunity to purchase tickets before an announcement to the general public.

Board of Directors vacancies and elections

The By Laws require that the composition of the Board of Directors be a minimum of 9 voting members with a maximum of 13. The Directors terms are staggered so that there is not an inordinate vacancy at any one time. For 2021 we will have openings for 4 new members. If you or anyone you know are interested in joining a dynamic group of volunteers dedicated to continuing our work in Madera Canyon, please contact info@friendsofmaderacanyon.com . Elections are held in December and new members installed in January.

An appeal to past and present Vulcan Materials Company Employees

Christine Olsenius, FoMC Board Fundraising Chair

The Friends of Madera Canyon (FoMC) are working on a funding proposal to Vulcan Materials Company, the largest producer of construction aggregate (sand, gravel, etc.) in the country, Vulcan operates several facilities in the Tucson area. And we are wondering if there are any past or present Vulcan employees receiving Canyon Chatter who would be willing to put in a good word for FoMC. Vulcan likes to see involvement by their employees in projects that they fund. So if you are a fan of Madera Canyon and want to help it thrive, while supporting the Friend's education programs and trail restoration work, please contact Board Member Christine Olsenius (olsenius.christine@gmail.com) who will be working on the proposal. Thanks to all who continue to support our work.