



# *Friends of Saguaro National Park*

*Providing financial and volunteer support for Saguaro National Park*

May 27, 2016

Lisa Ronald  
Board Chair  
Wilderness Forever

RE: Progress Report from Friends of Saguaro National Park

Dear Lisa:

Your October 1, 2015 Wilderness Forever education grant to Friends of Saguaro National Park is being utilized to support our "Park Stewards" program – engaging young people in hands-on service learning activities within the Saguaro Wilderness, an area comprising approximately 87% of Saguaro National Park. The project – in partnership with the Arizona College Prep Academy (ACPA) – is focused on wilderness character monitoring, with an emphasis on examining the importance of the Saguaro Wilderness to water quality in this eco-region.

The project is proceeding very well, with no complications, and we are on track to achieve all our goals. This grant is enabling us to expand our relationship with the Arizona College Prep Academy and provide hands-on service learning opportunities to currently-underserved Tucson youth. Our goals for this program are to expose these urban students to a greater understanding of wilderness values; provide them opportunities to spend time in the park's Wilderness areas; and conduct a variety of service learning activities, including science, outreach, and education projects. Project achievements to date:

1. Presentation at the school (October 2016) by park biologist Don Swann: Wilderness history, values and character, and an introduction to the Saguaro Wilderness.
2. Four visits by ACPA elective class to the park, including:
  - a. November-December 2015: 3 hikes to set wildlife cameras and natural sounds monitoring equipment (15 youth, 1.5 hrs, total 67.5 hours)
  - b. Wilderness hike in park (13 youth, 2 hrs, total 26 hours)
3. Five service-learning trips by ACPA students to park, including:
  - a. December 2015: NPS Centennial Saguaro Survey (20 youth, 6 hrs, total 120 hours)
  - b. April 2016, Restoration activity (13 youth, 2 hrs, total 26 hours)
  - c. April 2016, Saguaro survey (17 youth, 3 hrs, total 52 hours)
  - d. April 2016, Invasive plant activity (17 youth, 3 hrs, total 52 hours)
  - e. May 25, 2016, Saguaro "I Stand with Saguaros" education activity (expect 20 youth, 3 hrs, total 60 hrs)

The **elective class in the fall semester** (teacher Dan Bell) focused on wilderness issues and Saguaro National Park. Students learned about the park, hiked in Wilderness on several field trips (see above), developed science activities related to wildlife and other wilderness topics, and presented project ideas in class. Students set up natural sounds monitoring equipment and wildlife cameras.

Four students conducted **wilderness wildlife monitoring projects** (assisted by Dr. Bell) in the spring of 2016, collecting wildlife data in one of the park's most remote wilderness areas on the north side of the Rincon Mountains. They provided the park with many photos of wildlife, including rare species, in an area where we have little knowledge of wildlife. A fifth student organized several students to do an extra saguaro survey and an outreach project. These projects were presented at an end-of-year school event in May 2016 attended by park staff.

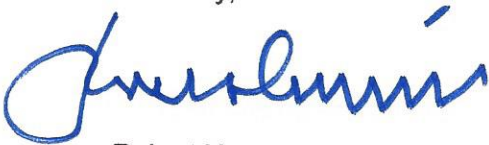
Finally, we **have interviewed and hired 3 student interns** from ACPA to work at the park this summer on wilderness issues and outreach. These internships will include field work in wilderness, and assistance with education and outreach, including helping at the park's Junior Ranger camp in June. They will work with Dr. Bell to make short and longer videos about park and wilderness resources that will be presented in social media forums and added to the Science Corner in the Visitor Center.

Wilderness Forever funding to date has been utilized for a 6-week Teacher/Ranger stipend (\$3,000) and a 24-week College Field Intern (\$3,000). Friends of Saguaro and NPS matching funds have supported staff and volunteer support, as well as field supplies.

We have enjoyed strong support from our partners, which include Saguaro National Park and ACPA. Don Swann, biologist at Saguaro, has managed the program for NPS, with Next Gen intern Lauren Nichols assisting on field trips. Park staff have worked closely with Charlene Mendoza, ACPA Principal, teacher Dan Bell, and other teachers at the school.

Thank you, once again, for providing us this Wilderness Forever grant to support this important work at Saguaro National Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Newton".

Robert Newton  
Executive Director