



Upper Verde River Outstanding Arizona Water Community Meeting

November 19, 2025

MEETING PURPOSE AND AGENDA

Meeting Purpose:

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) invites you to attend a community meeting to learn more about the nomination of the Upper Verde River as an Outstanding Arizona Water (OAW). This meeting is an opportunity to hear directly from ADEQ and ask questions.

AGENDA

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Welcome and Housekeeping | Daren Sweet , <i>ADEQ Community Engagement Facilitator</i> |
| 2. Upper Verde River Outstanding Arizona Water Nomination Overview | Katie Anderson , <i>ADEQ Project Manager</i> |
| 3. Arizona Community Science Alliance | Meghan Smart , <i>ADEQ Principal Scientist</i>
Audrey Ridge , <i>ADEQ Associate Hydrogeologist</i> |
| 4. Open House | Agency representatives |

Tips for a good meeting

- Share from your experience and perspective
- Please listen when others are speaking
- Allow space for all to participate
- Be generous
- We ask that all present be respectful and kind and we believe that this will lead to good outcomes



Upper Verde River Outstanding Arizona Water Nomination

Katie Anderson
ADEQ Project Manager



Background

What is an Outstanding Arizona Water (OAW)?



- Special designation given to high-quality waters that have one of the following:
 - ◆ Exceptional recreational significance
 - ◆ Exceptional ecological significance
 - ◆ Support threatened or endangered species
- Designated through state rulemaking
- Existing water quality must be maintained with the exception of temporary impacts.



How Does a Water Become an OAW?

Data Collection

What:

- Water Quality Data
- Protected Species Data
- Flow Data

Who:

Community Science groups
State & federal agencies

Nomination

What:

- Nomination & data submitted to ADEQ

Who:

Anyone can nominate a water

Nomination Review

What:

- Review nomination documents & data to determine if the nomination meets OAW requirements
- Direct stakeholder outreach

Who:

ADEQ

ADEQ Proposes via Rulemaking

What:

- Request to open the rule for changes
- Local community outreach

Who:

ADEQ director & staff

Rulemaking

What:

- Formal rule change
- Broader stakeholder engagement
- Public comment period

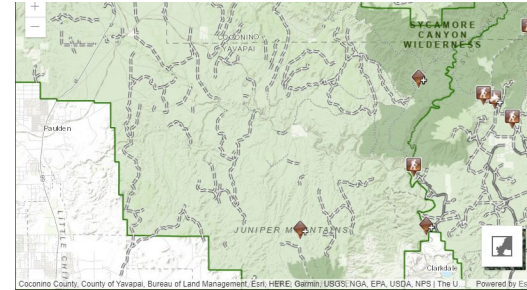
Who:

ADEQ legal staff



OAW Nomination Review Process

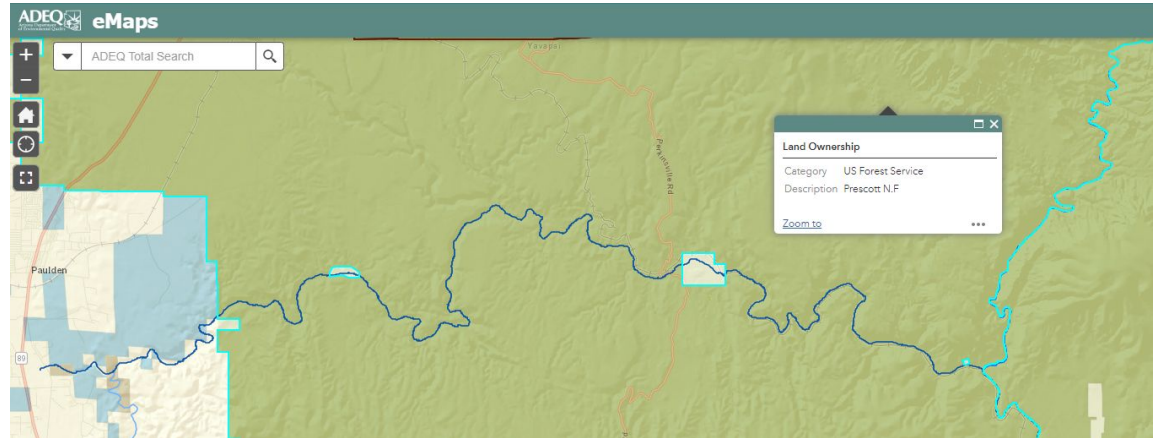
- Flow Regime at least intermittent
 - ◆ Verde River and Sycamore creek are at least intermittent
- Good Water Quality
 - ◆ “Attaining” for all parameters on current assessment
- Currently in Free Flowing Condition
- Recreational or Ecological Significance
 - ◆ Hiking, Verde Canyon Railroad, Forest Road access
- Critical Habitat for 5 Threatened or Endangered Species
 - ◆ Loach Minnow, Spinedace, Narrow headed gartersnake, Yellow Billed Cuckoo, Razorback sucker



OAW Nomination Review Process

Additional Factors Considered

- Ability to manage
 - ◆ Majority public land- Prescott National Forest
 - ◆ Alignment with existing land management
- Economic impact
 - ◆ Currently no direct cost impact on point source permits
- Public support or opposition



OUTSTANDING ARIZONA WATERS (OAWs)

A.A.C.R18-11-112(G)

1. West Fork of the Little Colorado River, Headwaters to Government Springs at 33°59'35.1"/109°27'54.6"
2. Oak Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Verde River
3. West Fork of Oak Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Oak Creek
4. Peoples Canyon Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Santa Maria River
5. Burro Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Boulder Creek
6. Francis Creek, Headwater to confluence with Burro Creek
7. Bonita Creek, San Carlos Reservation Boundary at 33°03'07.6"/109°33'38.8" to confluence with Gila River
8. Cienega Creek, Confluence with Gardner Canyon to USGS gaging station (#09484600) at 32°02'07.6"/110°40'44.3"
9. Aravaipa Creek, Confluence with Stowe Gulch to the downstream boundary of the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness Area at 32°54'23"/110°33'42"
10. Cave Creek, Headwaters to the Coronado National Forest boundary at 31°54'38"/109°08'40"
11. South Fork of Cave Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Cave Creek
12. Buehman Canyon Creek, Headwaters to confluence with unnamed tributary at 32°24'31"/110°32'08"
13. Lee Valley Creek, Headwaters to Lee Valley Reservoir
14. Bear Wallow Creek, Headwaters to the boundary of the San Carlos Indian Reservation at 33°37'45.3"/109°29'44.1"
15. North Fork of Bear Wallow Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Bear Wallow Creek
16. South Fork of Bear Wallow Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Bear Wallow Creek
17. Snake Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Black River
18. Hay Creek, Headwaters to confluence with the West Fork of Black River
19. Stinky Creek, White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation boundary at 33°52'29"/109°29'43.3" to confluence with the West Fork of Black River
20. KP Creek, Headwaters to confluence with Blue River
21. Davidson Creek, Unnamed Spring at 31°59'00"/110°38'48.6" to confluence with Cienega Creek
22. Fossil Creek, Headwaters at the confluence of Sandrock and Calf Pen Canyons above Fossil Springs to confluence with Verde River

Change in Rule

- Propose to add Sycamore Creek and Verde River to the list of 22 existing OAWs in Arizona Administrative Code Title 18, Chapter 11, Article 1
- Section R18-11-112 Outstanding Arizona Waters

Impact of the OAW Designation



Highest Level of Water Quality Protection

Must maintain water quality it had at the time of designation



Prohibits New or Increased Discharges

New or increased discharges are prohibited unless they meet regulatory exemptions as outlined in A.A.C R18-11-107.01(C)(2).



Nonpoint Source Reduction

ADEQ works collaboratively with landowners, land managers, and other stakeholders to protect from the effects of nonpoint sources.



Prioritization for Impaired Sites

ADEQ considered OAW status when prioritizing impaired sites for source identification

Rulemaking Schedule

Oct. 2025

- Exemption Memo
- File Notice of Docket Opening

Fall 2025

- Community Meeting
- Tribal Consultation
- Draft rule language



Winter 2025

- Virtual Information meeting
- Tribal Consultation
- File Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

Spring 2026

- 60-Day public comment period for NPRM
- Public Hearing

Summer 2026

- Submit Notice of Final Rulemaking to GRRC
- GRRC Study Session and Meeting
- File NFRM

Fall 2026

- Rules become effective

Next Steps

- Ask questions during the open house after this presentation
- Provide comments during the public comment period for the rulemaking
 - ◆ Expected Spring 2026
- Sign up for ADEQ emailing lists or check rulemaking website for updates
<https://azdeq.gov/rulemaking/upper-verde-oaw>



Contact Information

Katie Anderson, Project Manager
Surface Water Quality Standards
waterqualitystandards@azdeq.gov





ARIZONA COMMUNITY SCIENCE ALLIANCE



Arizona Community Science Alliance



Meghan Smart

Principal Scientist
Agency Community Science & Education Coordinator
Nov. 19, 2025

Audrey Ridge

Hydrogeologist
Surface Water Community Science Coordinator
Nov. 19, 2025

Arizona

114,000 Square Miles



Air, Water, and Land

Data?



Community Science to the Rescue

AZ COMMUNITY SCIENCE ALLIANCE



1

WATER QUALITY RECORDS:
180,170

2

POUNDS OF TRASH REMOVED:
75,000

3

AWW APP SUBMISSIONS:
2,600

4

WET DRY MAPPING EVENTS:
277

5

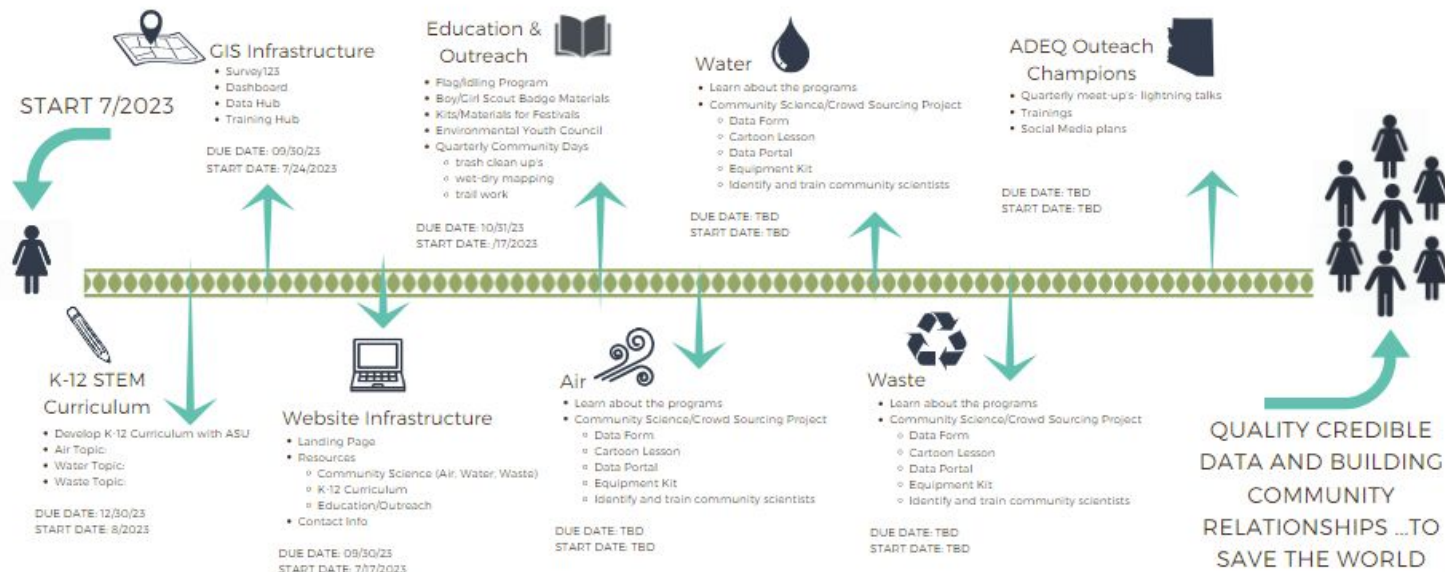
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS:
42,000

ADEQ COMMUNITY SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

PROVIDE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GUIDANCE TO COMMUNITIES IN ARIZONA. ALIGN ADEQ GOALS WITH COMMUNITY SCIENCE OPPORTUNITIES AND EDUCATION.

“ NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD. INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS. ”

-MARGARET MEAD



Sierra Club Collaboration



2017

- Formalized collaboration between Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter and AZ Community Science Alliance (known as AZ Water Watch at the time) begins!

Verde Sampling

- 7 sites
- May-October every year

*Upper Verde Sampling

- 6 sites, on 6 different reaches
- Verde River, Sycamore Creek, and Granite Creek
- 2019-2022, 3 quarters

2006

- Sierra Club Arizona Water Sentinels Program starts. Sierra Club hires Steve Pawlowski to lead the program. Started sampling on the Verde in 2006 and the San Pedro in 2011.



Sample for:

- Field Parameters
- E.coli
- Metals as needed



San Pedro Sampling

- 8 sites
- May-October every year



A wonderful collaboration to this day!

The Upper Verde



Co-Created SAP



Divided into
2 Teams



Collected
Quarterly Data



ADEQ reviewed
data, rolled up
to EPA

Credible Data

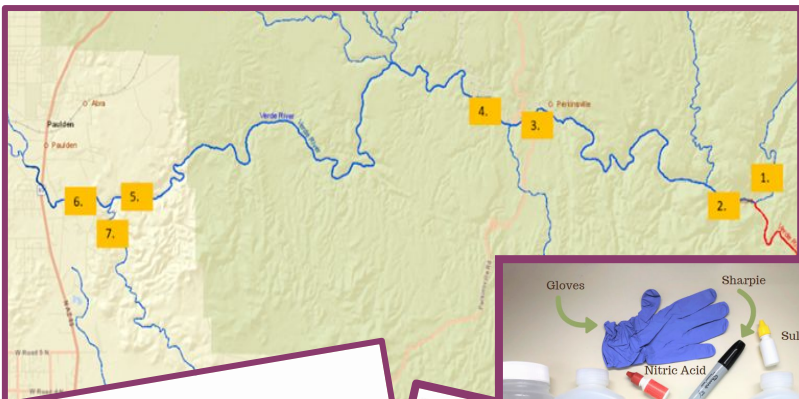


Table 2: Sample

ADEQ Site ID	System & Creek	Sierra Club ID	Field Conditions, Nutrients, Inorganics, Total Metals, Dissolved Metals	Frequency
112,072	Sierra Club ID = #1	VERDE RIVER - ABOVE PERKINSVILLE DIVERSION USGS- WOODB Name	Field Conditions, Nutrients, Inorganics, Total Metals, Dissolved Metals	Quarterly
112,213	Sierra Club ID = #4	VERDE RIVER - ABOVE PERKINSVILLE DIVERSION USGS- WOODB Name	Field Conditions, Nutrients, Inorganics, Total Metals, Dissolved Metals	Quarterly
112,205	Sierra Club ID = #3	VERDE RIVER - BELOW PERKINSVILLE BRIDGE- WOODB NAME	Field Conditions, Nutrients, Inorganics, Total Metals, Dissolved Metals	Quarterly
112,424	Sierra Club ID = #5	VERDE RIVER - BELOW PERKINSVILLE BRIDGE- WOODB NAME	Field Conditions, Nutrients, Inorganics, Total Metals, Dissolved Metals	Quarterly

Sierra Club - Verde Arizona Water Watch
Sampling and Analysis & Quality Assurance Plan for Verde River, Sycamore Creek, and Granite Creek
 Ambient Water Quality
 Fiscal Year 2020
 Sampling Season November - May

CREDIBLE DATA



SAP/QAPP



Annual Training



Audit

UPPER VERDE RIVER OAW



Thank You!

- Sandy Bahr
- Steve Pawlowski
- Jennifer Martin
- Gary Beverly
- Jenny Cobb
- Stephen Cook
- Tom Slaback
- Jessica Latzko (ADEQ)



Current Work in the Verde Watershed

17 Sample Events

Verde River
Tangle Creek
Roundtree Canyon
Red Creek

E. coli/Probe Data Gap

Arizona
Water Dogs

5 Sample Events

Miller Creek

E. coli/Probe

City of
Prescott

39 Sample Events

Verde River
Oak Creek

E. coli/Probe Data Gap

Friends of
the Verde

61 Sample Events

Oak Creek
Fossil Creek

E. coli/Probe Data Gap

Friends of the
Forest

VERDE RIVER WATERSHED SAMPLING FY25

28 Sample Events

Verde River

E. coli/Probe

Sierra Club

75 Sample Events

Oak Creek

E. coli/Probe

Slide Rock
State Park

4 Sample Events

East Verde River

E. coli/Probe Data Gap

Tonto NF

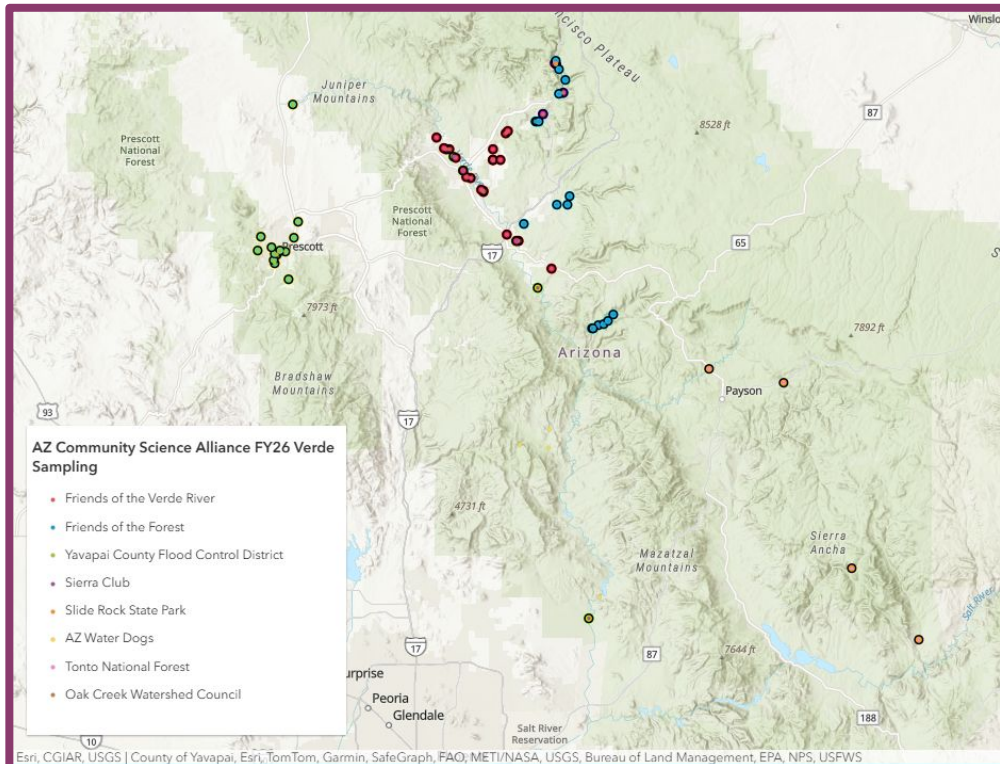
60 Sample Events

Willow Creek
North Granite Creek
Granite Creek
Miller Creek
Butte Creek
Aspen Creek
Government Canyon

E. coli/Probe

Yavapai
County

THANK YOU!



Join Us: Opportunities For All!



Stream Sampling

- Resource Dependent (Staff, QAQC, Equipment)
- Data used for regulatory decisions
- Stream Coordinator



AWW App

- Crowdsourcing
- Flow Regime Designations
- Maintenance Only



Trash Clean Up

- Crowdsourcing
- Pollution Removal
- Adding Trash Transect (standards)



Wet Dry Mapping

- Crowdsourcing
- Flow Regime Designation Trend Analysis
- Improving, Then Maintenance Only



Game Cameras

- Crowdsourcing/Resource Dependent
- Flow Regime Designation Trend Analysis
- Maintenance Only



Flag Program

- Crowdsourcing/Resource Dependent
- Education
- Flag Program Coordinator



Air Sampling

- Resource Dependent
- Data used for regulatory decisions
- MU team handles data



STEM Curriculum

- Resource Dependent (need help from a teacher, ex pocket lab)
- Education



Groundwater /Springs Sampling

- Resource Dependent (Staff, QAQC, Equipment)
- Data for ADEQ and ADWR
- Beta Testing



Composting

- Crowdsourcing
- Education



 **1,600**
air data records

 **20**
STEM Lessons

 **30**
volunteer groups

 **15**
new flag participants

AZCSA 2024

 **6,211**
water data records

 **170**
wet dry mapping app submissions

 **1,464**
pounds of trash cleaned up

 **254**
flow regime app submissions



Thank you!

Special thank you to the **AZCSA** community scientists!



Contact Us!

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Audrey Ridge

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AZ Community Science Alliance

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<https://www.azdeq.gov/ScienceAlliance>



Open House

