

Revitalizing the Gila River is critical to establishing a vibrant future for the West Valley. As with any major public/private undertaking, the interest and concerns of the community must be reflected. Your voice is needed and can make a difference with the El Rio project. To find out how you can become involved, call the Flood Control District of Maricopa County at 602-506-1501.



The vision of a restored Gila River serving as a catalyst for economic development in the Southwest Valley was born in 1999. Since then that vision has flourished through the cooperative efforts of Maricopa County and the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, and Goodyear. This partnership gave birth to the El Rio WCMP which serves as a blueprint for regional flood control, economic development, recreation and preservation along the Gila River.

Since the El Rio WCMP was adopted in 2006, several projects have been completed. Salt cedar has been replaced with native vegetation in areas of the river. A trailhead has been established near Vineyard and Bullard roads. An environmental education exhibit has been installed at Estrella Mountain Park. But these projects are just the beginning.

Project Partners:

- City of Avondale
- City of Buckeye
- City of Goodyear
- Flood Control District of Maricopa County
- Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
- Maricopa County Planning and Development
- Maricopa County Board of Supervisors:
Mary Rose Wilcox, Clint Hickman, Andy Kunasek,
Steve Chucri and Denny Barney

To learn more:

Flood Control District of Maricopa County
2801 West Durango Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85009
(602) 506-1501

Gracing the edges of Estrella Mountain Regional Park, periodically strengthened by the confluence of both the Salt and the Agua Fria rivers, the Gila River has helped define the agricultural basin of the West Valley and at times given life to an entire nation, the Pima Indians.

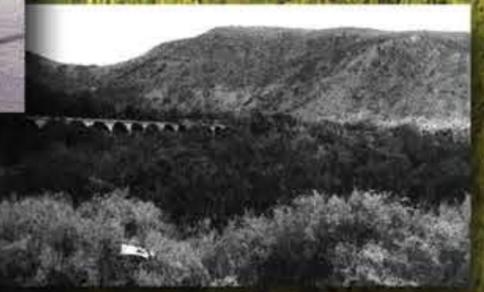
The Gila River is now a trickle of the mighty life-giving river it once was. During the cooler season, heavy rains and releases upstream allow it to regain a semblance of its past majestic flow. The formerly rich ribbons of cottonwood, willow and mesquite are now diminished to thin, isolated strips, and in many places, are dwarfed by invasive salt cedar. Native fish remain banished from the natural streambeds and dangerous, illegal activities flourish in bends and banks where a healthy river once flowed.

Today the Gila River rests as an irreplaceable natural resource in need of a voice. That voice is the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan (WCMP).

Flooded roads imperil community safety



Tamarisk and salt cedar choke former robust river flow



Pollutants and possible chemical waste threaten communities during times of flood



Unchecked debris poses health and safety issues



Photos courtesy of the West Valley View and Flood Control District

Focus on multi-use facilities and functions

Improve water quality
Coordinate plans with transportation corridors
Link up with Estrella Regional Park



Link functional compatibility outside the riparian habitat limits

Link canals and washes with developments
Link Estrella Parkway with Gila River corridor



Estrella Parkway

Maintain, enhance or mitigate flood control elements

Increase flow capacity
Enhance conveyance while also providing flood protection and riparian restoration



Restore and maintain the natural functions within the river corridors a riparian habitat

Provide open flow throughout the reach
Create diversity of habitat and wildlife



A robust river - Circa 1960

Proposed Buckeye Town Lake

Focus on public/private partnerships

Incorporate sand and gravel activities
Promote participation by development community



Estrella Mountain Regional Park



The Gila River

My people are the river people.
We have lived by this river for 8,000 years.
I have never seen it.
Nothing.
Just dirt and wind.
I think it is so strange that I have never seen a river or ducks or deer.
I am an Akimel O'odham, and I have never seen a river.

Maxina Lewis, 8, third grade, Gila Crossing Community School

EL RIO
A Plan to Heal the Gila