

DECEMBER 2004



TRUST

"In wildness lies the preservation of the world." Thoreau

The mission of *Trust* is to transmit the passion of the Desert Foothills Land Trust.

Stewardship is Forever *by Executive Director Mike Rigney*



For a land trust, receiving your first conservation easement or donation of land is a very exciting moment. For the proud board members it's a little like the birth of a child. But after the initial excitement wears off that emotion is replaced by the sobering realization of the responsibility you have just accepted. As a parent, that responsibility usually ends after the child reaches adulthood. For the land trust the responsibility lasts a lot longer, longer than the lives of the individual board members who secured the original acquisition, longer than the current generation. Our obligation is a perpetual one, and as I have said on a number of occasions when explaining our mission – "in perpetuity is a really long time."

As any parent will tell you, keeping children clothed and fed, nurtured and protected, is their primary duty. And of course, as the number of children increases, so does the cost of providing for the family's growing needs. Prudent parents provide a stable source of funding to make sure the family's needs are met. It's not as glamorous or as exciting as having the child in the first place, but it's the responsible thing to do.

As "parents" of the DFLT's family of 13 preserves, board members and staff are always mindful of the long-term

duty we have (borne out of a true love for these special places) to ensure that every one of our preserves flourishes. This duty we call stewardship.

As you can see from our Conservation Director's article, there are many components of stewardship – from maintaining good relationships with adjacent land owners to improving trail access and restoring habitat. And although we frequently augment our annual stewardship operating budget with funds from private foundations and government agencies, competition is fierce for a relatively small amount of money. That is why most of the other 1,200 land trusts throughout the country have established a stewardship fund to ensure that these crucial activities can be supported through good economic times and bad. With the assistance of George Seitts and his wife P.A., DFLT's beloved former Executive Director, Senator Barry Goldwater and his family supported the establishment of a permanent stewardship fund named after the late Senator. This spring we will launch an ambitious campaign to substantially increase the Barry Goldwater Stewardship Fund. Look forward to the details of this campaign in the next issue of the Trust.

Prudent stewardship, like good parenting, requires a focus on the future if our lands, like our children, are to be nurtured and protected.

How are DFLT Member Dollars Utilized? *by President Vivian Marr*

On behalf of DFLT's board of directors and staff, I extend our appreciation to each of you who have already sent in your membership dollars for the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

Membership dollars are the sustaining force in the ongoing operation of DFLT.

Membership allows us to carry out our responsibility for the stewardship of 500 acres of Sonoran Desert already preserved. Under the able guidance of Executive Director Mike Rigney and Conservation Director Thom Hulen, DFLT watches over these special areas in a variety of ways. We train preserve stewards for each site to be aware of any problems, such as illegal dumping, trespass or boundary issues, so that staff members can follow through appropriately. We maintain trails and provide fencing and signage

where needed. Precautions are taken to protect wildlife and to see that native plants are not destroyed.

Membership allows us to educate the public about land preservation and protection.

Membership allows us to pay for an experienced staff and to carry out our responsibilities in a professional and responsible manner.

If you have not had an opportunity to send in your membership dues, please take a moment to do so now. Your investment will not only benefit those of us who enjoy these beautiful places now but will assure future generations of the same opportunities to find pleasure and sustenance in the open spaces we set aside. Call 480-488-6131 if you need information on how to join. Thank you.

MESSAGE from the President

Dear Friends of the Desert Foothills Land Trust,

As the temperatures drop in the East and the Arizona temperatures moderate, it is time for us to welcome our winter residents home to our beautiful Sonoran Desert.

We are also pleased to welcome our new Office Manager, Kay Vargas. Please stop in the office to meet her.

The fall schedule is in full swing at DFLT with hikes, work on our preserves, updates to our computer and software capabilities, annual membership campaign, and a soon-to-be-announced special stewardship campaign.

We depend on our volunteers, who help with so many DFLT duties. I am taking this opportunity to thank the site stewards, docents, mail committee, Sonoran Symphony committee, general office support volunteers and DAC volunteers who are hike leaders and present programs in our local schools. Your help is vital and very much appreciated.

Mike Rigney, DFLT Executive Director, has prepared an interesting and informative Power Point presentation about the work of DFLT to protect and preserve the special 500 acres for which we are responsible. Please call Mike at the office if you would be interested in having this program presented to your group.

Our Annual meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2005, at the Tohono Room at El Pedregal at 7:00 P.M. Grady Gammage, Jr. will give us his forecast on the future of land preservation. Plans are moving forward for the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Sonoran Symphony to be held April 30, 2005. Linda Revane, Event Chairperson, and her committee are planning a special evening. If you would like to help with this event, please call the office and be sure to save the date.

The board of directors and staff of the Desert Foothills Land Trust look forward to seeing you at the various DFLT events, and we send our best wishes to each of you for a happy, healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,



Vivian C. Marr, President
Desert Foothills Land Trust

DFLT Hires New Office Manager

Kay Vargas began November 1 as DFLT office manager and already appears perfectly at home behind the front desk. Kay is an Arizona native and has lived and worked most of her life in this state, so she is familiar with local land preservation issues. In addition, Kay has worked many



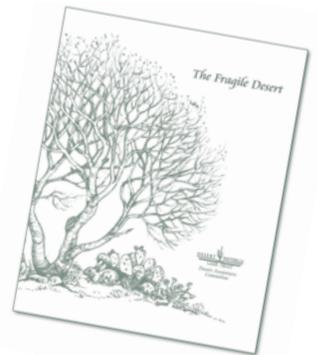
years for non-profit organizations and understands what it means to work for an organization with a cause. "My family always believed it was important to give something back to the community," she says. Here at DFLT she's in the right place to do that. Please stop in to say hello and help her get to know the members and

volunteers who make up the DFLT community. Learn more about Kay on our Web site: www.dflt.org.

Gifts for Lovers of the Land

DFLT has some Christmas gift ideas we want to share with you. Consider these:

- **A gift membership.** The benefits of land preservation for the person who doesn't need more clothes.
- **A DFLT shirt.** For someone who does. We have polo shirts (\$30), denim and twill long-sleeved shirts in two colors (\$40), and hats (\$15).
- **The *Fragile Desert*.** Updated edition published by the Desert Awareness Committee, available at the DFLT office. This immensely useful book contains indispensable information for anyone who wants to live lightly on the Sonoran Desert land. Contains descriptions of local flora and fauna and other valuable insights into our region. (\$10)
- **DFLT license plates.** (\$10)



We haven't yet set up the Website for making sales, so just call the office, 480-488-6131, to talk to your personal shopper, or stop in to carry your purchase home with you.

DFLT Board of Directors

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Acquiring land is only the first of many steps toward its perpetual preservation. Once the Desert Foothills Land Trust (DFLT) becomes responsible for a preserve, long-term management of that land becomes our focus. This is stewardship, and it takes many forms, many of which can be costly.

One common stewardship activity is maintaining property boundaries. No matter how watchful and helpful the neighbors are, encroachments and vandalism can occur. In some cases we may decide to fence to exclude livestock or direct hikers to designated trail-heads, though much of the time all we need to do is place signs identifying the preserve and listing permitted activities. Preserves that have public trails such as Go



Trail building at the Go John Preserve.

John Canyon, Galloway Wash, Jewel of the Creek and Saguaro Hill are visited by hundreds of people each year. We constantly monitor these trails to see that they remain safe and sustainable and to insure minimal disturbance to the natural values of the preserve. Even good-natured preserve visitors can love the habitat to death by inadvertently trampling plants and creating new trails that will erode and become unsightly. Fortunately DFLT has had the support of Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona and the local community to coordinate trail main-



Thank goodness for strong volunteers.

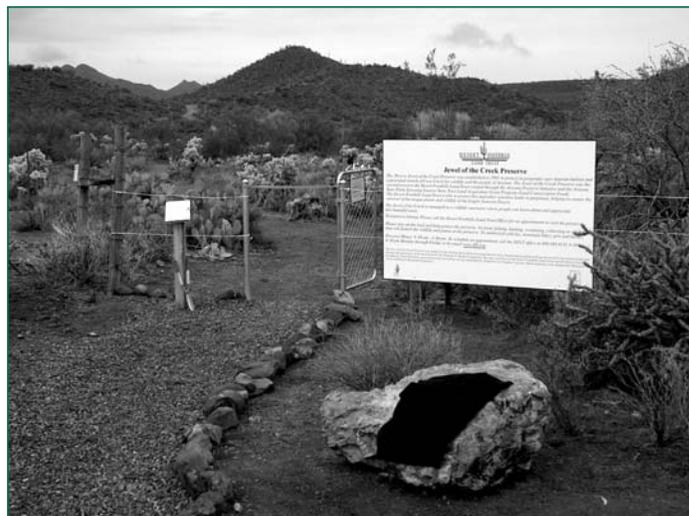
tenance, but, as trail use increases and demand for the volunteers' time becomes limited, we will have to pay for this service.

Ensuring that DFLT's conservation goals are being met is crucial. All of DFLT's preserves are currently in good to excellent ecological condition, considering the current drought, but to assure this we need to visit the preserves on a regular basis. Lists of all plant and animal species are compiled, because not only is the presence or absence of an organism important, but knowing the relative numbers of species at any given time is central to our ability to determine biologic and physical processes on-going in the region. For example monitoring the age distribution and condition of riparian trees can give us clues about the health of a riparian forest.

Restoring wildlife populations, such as the native fishery in Cave Creek, and possibly New River, is another ongoing stewardship activity. The Watt and Jewel of the Creek Preserves on Cave Creek and the New River Nature Reserve on New River contain outstanding riparian and aquatic attributes, and already a few native fish have been recovered from Cave Creek at the Watt Preserve. DFLT, by forming conservation partnerships with other organizations, will help lead the way to native fish recovery.

Invasive species management has been a concern to DFLT for some time. Salt cedar removal (tammy whacking) at the Watt Preserve will continue to be an important tool in DFLT's conservation tool box, but salt cedar is not the only invasive species we need to be concerned with in the desert foothills area. Yellow star thistle and buffle and fountain grasses are a few plant species we should address. And exotic wildlife is also a concern. Crayfish that stress native plants and animals inhabit stretches of Cave Creek, and parasitic cowbirds have been observed.

In 2005 DFLT stewardship activities will reach a new level. Several restoration and monitoring projects will be underway, and new signs, repaired fences and new and/or improved trails are planned. Of course it will take money to accomplish our stewardship goals, and plans are forming to establish a permanent fund for this purpose, but we are eager to get started. We feel fortunate to have the confidence of local residents, who see DFLT as responsible caretakers. They know the work we are doing is essential to protect the land and its natural value for future generations of plants and animals, including our own species.



The entrance to Jewel of the Creek on Spur Cross Road



IMPORTANT WINTER DATES TO REMEMBER

DAC Hikes

December 17, 2004. A special day hike to *Elephant Butte in the Spur Cross Preservation Area*. This hike is rated as very difficult, a spectacular 9-mile hike to a Hohokam fortress with wonderful views of the valley and a loop back through the Tonto National Forest. Bring lunch and lots of water. Remember a hat and sunscreen. Wear sturdy shoes/boots.

January 22, 2005. *Mexican Hat Loop*. This is a loop hike combining horse and foot trails in the pristine foothills of Continental Mountain. Some hiking challenges, changing terrain and beautiful vistas.

DFLT Hikes to the Cave

December 11, 2004; January 15, February 12, March 12, 2005. Call the office for more info and to make reservations for all hikes: 480-488-6131.

Docent Training

A new program for imparting to volunteers the knowledge and skills they need to interpret the preserves and share with the public information on how the DFLT is preserving land and other natural and cultural resources in the Desert Foothills area. Postponed from November, the four-session training will begin Tuesday, January 4, 2005, and run through January 25 from 9:00 to 12:00 a.m. Call the office for more information: 480-488-6131

Annual Meeting

January 13, 2005: Desert Foothills Land Trust Annual Meeting, Tohono Room in el Pedregal. Save the date. We'll send you a reminder/reservation card.

