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## Local extreme runner leads way to Verde headwaters

By JENNIFER SWACINA

Originally Published: March 28, 2008 9:20 p.m.

Post



PRESCOTT - As part of the Earth Day celebration April 19 at Granite Creek Park in Prescott, Thomas Arnold plans to run a total of 100 miles back and forth from the park to the Verde River headwaters near Paulden.

And he is looking for others to join him.

Arnold said he is running to "generate energy and awareness" about the [Verde River](#). The run also raises money for the Center for Biological Diversity's Save the Verde campaign.

Arnold figures he'll be running for 24 hours straight.

"You have to be extreme to make a statement," he said.

Runners, bikers and hikers will take off along with the Earth Day parade at Granite Creek Park at 10:30 a.m. on April 19.

The run also is a part of the Center for Biological Diversity's April River Week, which features a long list of events occurring April 11-20.

Arnold will be available to custom design routes and answer questions at a pre-run meeting in the Raven Café at the corner of Cortez and Willis in Prescott at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

"Choose any distance you want," he said. "You want 10 miles - I will hook you up with the most scenic 10 miles."

Arnold, 31, is a former Marine who now lives and works in an environmentally conscious Prescott community installing solar panels, raising chickens and planting fruit trees.

His physique is not typical of an ultra-marathon runner; at 5-foot 6-inches, he describes himself as "just a hairy white guy." The pig tattoo on one of his muscular arms represents humility, he said.

Becoming humble is one of Arnold's favorite things about running. During a previous 24-hour run he fell asleep and ran smack into a manzanita bush.

Arnold runs with a loosely organized group called The Sacred Earth Endurance Cooperative. The group's runs always are non-competitive, and people of all abilities are welcome to join.

"Not that many people will run for 24 hours ... yet," Arnold said. "We are getting there. We've got people that can do 50 miles."

The run is more about "mass energy" than mileage, Arnold added.

The Sacred Earth Endurance Cooperative has made it a tradition to name its events with a single, meaningful word. It has called past runs "union," "roots," "veda," "gratitude," and "freedom."

The upcoming run is called "Baseflow," a word that Joanne Oellers with the Center for Biological Diversity's Save the Verde campaign proposed. Baseflow refers to the natural, perennial flow of water that emanates from springs at the Verde River's headwaters.

Baseflow has become a well-known word in local political circles, because of fears that Prescott-area governments' plans to use Big Chino sub-basin ground-water could reduce the Verde's baseflow.

"You can read a nice article about the Verde River, or we can go out there," Arnold said. "See that Granite Creek does flow to the Verde."

After his military service, Arnold became an activist. He said he uses running as a positive way to release his anger about the loss of wild things.

"Running is a direct and simple way to connect with the earth," he said.

Proceeds from the run will go toward the center's "Vision for the Verde" project that focuses on regional water and growth planning.

For more information about the "Baseflow" run, April River Week, Verde River protection, or to make a donation, contact Oellers at 772-8204 or visit [www.savetheverde.org](http://www.savetheverde.org).

Jennifer Swacina is a Center for Biological Diversity volunteer.

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