

celebrating its first anniversary this week Pine Ridge Marketplace to Host Prescott Chamb

e-Edition



[View All 3 Credit Scores For Free](#)

[Get Pre-Approved. Apply Online.](#)

[0% Down VA Home Loans: Get Quote](#)

MONDAY, APRIL 01	WEATHER	SUBSCRIBER SERVICES	CONTACT US	NEWS TIPS	PUBLIC NOTICES	PUZZLES	COMICS
------------------	---------	---------------------	------------	-----------	----------------	---------	--------

## Verde River Headwaters State Park moves closer to reality; sale of Del Rio Springs land closes



Michael Patrick, project manager for the Trust for Public Land, reports that the Upper Verde River Headwaters State Park, north of Chino Valley, will be a draw for tourists, helping the local economy. (Stan Bindell/For the Review)

STAN BINDELL, For the Review

Originally Published: March 26, 2024 2:23 p.m.

Post



Michael Patrick, senior project manager for Trust for Public Land (TPL), has been working on establishing the Verde River Headwaters State Park for three years — so he was ecstatic when the sale closed for the land at Del Rio Springs Ranch.

The Verde River Headwaters State Park is a partnership of Arizona State Parks and Trails (ASPT), Yavapai County, Nature Conservancy, Town of Chino Valley and TPL.

Patrick told the Chino Valley Review that he is thrilled because the state park will bring outdoor recreation, protect historical buildings, as well as bringing economic and ecological benefits to the region.

The purchase of the 734 acres also adds another layer to protecting the Upper Verde River because if the land had not been purchased for the state park then it could be developed for more than 2,000 homes.

“Now, the planning process will begin. State parks will have a community based plan that will include outreach to tribes,” he said.

Patrick said the build out of the park will be in phases and he believes the first phase will mean extending the Peavine Trail from the park area to a section that’s already in Chino Valley.

Patrick said a second phase will include acquiring more land for the state park.

He said the area by Sullivan Lake will be improved with public access including ramadas, an area for rock climbing and viewing petroglyphs. “We want to make the most of our success,” he said. “By the end of the year, we want to have the additional properties so we can protect them.”

Patrick said state parks can now begin the planning and develop a timeline for construction for the facilities at the park, which could include a visitor center, bathrooms and showers.

The park is all within town limits and Patrick praised elected officials and town staff for playing a big role in obtaining funding from the state legislature for the park. He said the town has also offered to supply water for camping and other day uses.

“The town has also done a lot of little things that add up to playing a large role in establishing the park,” he said.

Patrick credited Town Manager Cindy Blackmore, Economic Development Director Maggie Tidaback, Community Services Director Cyndi Thomas and water consultant Mark Holmes with helping to push the Verde River Headwaters State Park forward.

### **Chino Valley officials excited**

Chino Valley issued a news release stating its support of the park.

Chino Valley Mayor Jack Miller said “having a state park is a great thing for our residents, not only for the recreational opportunities it will provide but also for the positive economic impact it will most certainly have.”

Town Manager Cindy Blackmore said, “Aside from the enormous benefits this park will bring to our residents and the region, this announcement represents an amazing collaboration between several public bodies and private organizations. It reminds us of what can be accomplished when we all work together for a common goal. I am proud of our role in this historic achievement.”

Blackmore said she is also excited that this park preserves important parts of Chino Valley’s history and gives the town an opportunity to share and celebrate it.

Economic Development Manager Maggie Tidaback echoed Miller’s sentiments: “The economic impact of a state park in our town borders will be significant. More importantly, it is positive economic growth that is in keeping with the rural character that is so important to our residents.”

### **Restoring Sullivan Lake**

“It’s the starting point of the river,” Patrick continued. “There’s a vision for restoring Sullivan Lake.”

Patrick said the roads in the park are good, but the planning will include thinking about the road going in and out of the park. He said the highway department, parks and town will work on this together.

“It could be the perfect place for a roundabout,” he said.

## **Peavine Trail**

The property contains the same abandoned rail bed that will enable the extension of the Peavine National Recreation Trail, one of the few “rail to trail projects” in the state, from its start at Watson Lake and Granite Dells in nearby Prescott to the start of the Verde River, a distance of 25 miles.

It will result in a trail available for a variety of non-motorized recreational uses including mountain biking, horse riding and hiking.

Patrick said having the opportunity to protect such an important outdoor space like Del Rio Springs doesn’t come around every day.

“TPL is proud to have worked to support the creation and enhancement of diverse outdoor recreation, while sustaining the integrity of natural aquifers, maintaining community heritage and rural character, and promoting compatible economic opportunities in the Greater Chino Valley area,” he said.

Through a community-based master planning process, coordinated by a landscape architect hired by TPL, over 30 organizations from public agencies to colleges to nonprofit organizations, and the public at large described the importance of conserving this special place.

## **Protecting Verde River**

Protection of this property will result in nearly all of the first 25 miles of the Verde River being in public ownership (from the property’s Sullivan Lake to Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Upper Verde Wildlife Management Area and land owned by Arizona State Land Department to the Prescott National Forest).

This upper stretch of the Verde River is actively being proposed for Wild and Scenic River status, a congressional designation that would maintain the river’s ecosystems and protect clean water supplies for future generations.

## **Del Rio Springs**

The land also includes a significant part of its namesake, Del Rio Springs. These springs were historically so prolific that they provided the only source of water for many northern Arizona communities including Ash Fork, Seligman, Williams, and the southern rim of the Grand Canyon.

In the early 1900s, the City of Prescott installed one of the first steam-powered water pumps in the Southwest to provide drinking water by a 20-mile wooden pipeline from these springs to Prescott. Del Rio Springs now lies on the new property owned by ASP in addition to several parcels owned by Town of Prescott Valley and City of Prescott, who are collaborating on the project.

## **State parks**

Bob Broscheid, executive director of Arizona State Parks and Trails, said in a news release that they are excited to bring a state park to Chino Valley.

“We will begin our long-term planning for this project with extensive public input and stakeholder collaboration, ensuring that this new park meets the needs of our residents, visitors, and partners.”

A substantial portion of the funds to acquire the land, \$6 million, was provided by the Arizona Legislature through a capital appropriation in the current year’s state budget to “create a new state park at the headwaters of the Verde River.” This funding initiative was led by State Sen. Sine Kerr and State Rep. Selina Bliss, and also supported by state legislators Sen. Ken Bennett and Rep. Quang Nguyen.

## **History**

The property offers opportunities to protect and interpret early history of statewide importance. Following the establishment of the Arizona Territory in 1863, the first capital of the territory was located on the property for a short while, as part of the original Fort Whipple, before being moved to Prescott.

Following purchase of the land by a subsidiary of the Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in 1913, the Fred Harvey Co. partnered with the railroad to establish a farm to raise poultry, produce ice, eggs and other foods here to supply their premier chain of hotels along the rail line connecting Chicago to Los Angeles.

## **Yavapai County**

Yavapai County contributed \$1.5 million toward the purchase of the land with funds available to it through the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Patrick said Yavapai County Supervisor Craig Brown has been a champion of this project for the economic benefits and jobs that a new state park can bring to the surrounding rural communities of Chino Valley and Paulden.

Brown said this seals the deal with the Town of Chino Valley and the State Park system to bring recreational opportunities and economic development to the area.

## **Nature Conservancy**

Given the importance of protecting the Verde River, The Nature Conservancy provided a major grant that was critical to the success of this project. Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, a substantial philanthropic funder for protection and restoration work on the Verde, also provided a grant to TPL that was instrumental in project costs.

Dan Stellar, Arizona state director for The Nature Conservancy, said this project is a win for conservation, recreation and historical preservation at one of our state's incomparable places near the Verde River's headwaters.

## **The sellers**

The sellers of the property, Bob O'Rear and Jim Brown of Del Rio Springs Loan Partners LLC, also made a major contribution to the project by selling the land at a significant discount from its appraised value.

---

[Sign up for our e-News Alerts](#)