

SONORAN INSIDERS 2023 REPORT



INTRODUCTION

Arizona has one of the fastest population growth rates in the country. The dramatic increase in population has led to more people, many of whom are new to outdoor recreation, learning about and enjoying Arizona landscapes. This has amplified the need for messaging and education focused on responsible outdoor recreation and conservation. With this need in mind, the Sonoran Insiders program began in 2019 as a collaborative effort to bridge the gap between the public and outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmental professionals.

The program is a collaborative effort that leverages the social media influence of passionate people in the outdoor community across the state. Sonoran Insiders program partners host Insider Experiences for ambassadors that are unique events not available to the general public. Insider Experiences include outdoor recreation activities, service opportunities, educational talks, and more focused on local environmental, conservation, and recreation topics. Program ambassadors then share what they learn during these experiences with their followers, amplifying conservation and responsible outdoor recreation messaging at a greater scale.

The program focuses on peer to peer communication rather than professional to public, and Instagram was selected as the ideal social media platform because of its historic and current impact on public lands and natural open spaces around the world. Instagram provides an impactful balance between visual and written storytelling in a way that facilitates strong messaging opportunities.

WHAT SONORAN INSIDERS STAND FOR

Sonoran Insiders embody a set of ethics, which we hope to inspire others to follow: recreate responsibly, be a good steward, build an inclusive outdoors, respect sovereign land, use technology responsibly, and be safe outdoors.

COLLABORATION

The collaborating program partners consistently acknowledge that this program would not be possible without one another. Together we pool capacity and networks to organize events that educate, inspire, and engage the ambassadors. We reach new audiences and create a greater sense of community by continuing to offer education and exposure to different aspects of conservation and responsible outdoor recreation.

In turn, program partners gain an enhanced reach to outdoor communities and new audiences, as well as an increased ability to share key messages for responsible behavior, conservation-focused events, volunteer opportunities, and projects with the public.

“Through the Sonoran Insiders, we’re connecting with and helping to nurture some of Arizona’s strongest natural resource advocates who possess not only passion, but new-found knowledge!”

- Arizona State Parks & Trails

PROGRAM PARTNERS



Salt River Pima-Maricopa
Indian Community
Environmental Protection and
Natural Resources Division

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2023 INSIDER EXPERIENCES

- 1 Professional photography and social media class at Desert Botanical Garden with Lisa Langell and Mason Mullally
- 2 Salt River kayaking and paddle boarding with the Tonto National Forest learning about restoration projects and removing invasive apple snails
- 3 Tour with San Carlos Apache Tribe learning about tourism and responsible outdoor recreation on their lands
- 4 New Roots Urban Farm tour in Phoenix to learn about urban green spaces, pollinator pathways, and community cohesion
- 5 Plant and wildlife walk at Boyce Thompson Arboretum with Wild Arizona
- 6 White Tank Mountains Conservancy talk at Wren House Brewing learning about wildlife corridors, responsible urban development, and sustainable outdoor recreation



FEATURED EXPERIENCE

The San Carlos Apache Tribe ([@sancarlosapache](https://www.instagram.com/sancarlosapache)) graciously spent their time with ambassadors talking about recreation, tourism, how we can treat the land with respect, and the importance of native plants, waterways, and preventing wildfire. Ambassadors were treated to a guided tour starting at Talkalai Lake, then stopping at Nosie's Native Gift Shop and lunch at Apache Burger, followed by visiting San Carlos Lake and Coolidge Dam. The Tribe welcomes outdoor recreation with a permit. When visiting, please respect the land, people, and animals that live there and keep Apache land beautiful! Thank you to our program partner Discover Gila County for connecting us with this experience.

PODCAST

A first for the program, we were on a podcast! Ambassador Isaiah Ortiz, Brooke Wheelock with the Forest Service, and Jeny Davis with the National Forest Foundation had a blast recording the podcast with Arizona State Parks & Trails. It was a great opportunity to raise awareness of the program and had 663 downloads. You can find the episode on [Arizona State Parks & Trails' website](https://www.arizona.gov/state-parks-trails) if you'd like to listen. Big thanks to Arizona State Parks & Trails ([@azstateparks](https://www.instagram.com/azstateparks)) for having us!



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2023 OUTCOMES

2 NEW
PARTNERS



7 NEW
AMBASSADORS



INSTAGRAM

17K

people reached through
the Sonoran Insiders
Instagram account

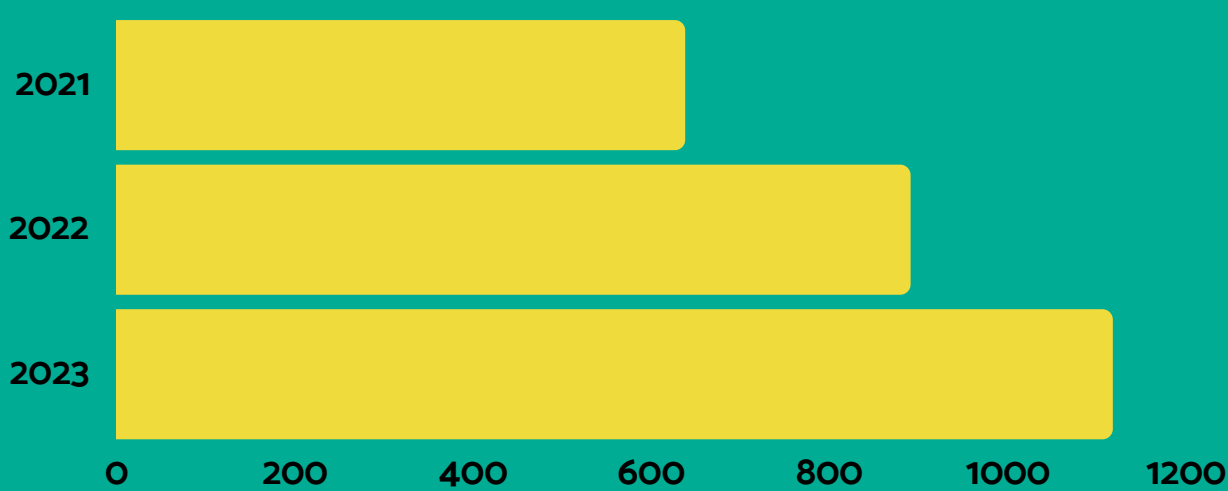
70K

followers that
ambassadors share
messaging with

48

average number of
people that saw our
posts every day

FOLLOWERS



POST OF THE YEAR



The Sonoran Desert is NOT adapted for fire. 🚫🔥🌵

Fire-adapted ecosystems (like some forests) are those that experience a regular occurrence of fire that benefits the ecosystem. To the best of knowledge, fires have not historically been a significant part of the Sonoran Desert. Unlike fire-adapted ecosystems, most of the plant and animal life in the desert is NOT adapted to co-exist with fire, and it has serious and lasting impacts.

Recovery for the Sonoran Desert is estimated at 65+ years after fire, and iconic species like the saguaro and other cacti may not return to burned areas. Desert areas that have been severely impacted by fire have the potential to shift to a very different landscape than we know and love, especially with repeated fires.

Do your part and make sure wildfires don't start.

LOOKING FORWARD

For 2024 we are creating a communications plan, better tracking analytics and metrics, and continuing to strategize and improve program structure. We are also focusing on continued engagement, working with the ambassadors to understand what they enjoy most and offering new incentives and opportunities for them. We also want to equip them with the knowledge and tools to go beyond the screen and talk about program messaging in the real world. In addition, we are shifting our outreach focus from application to invitation, reaching out to select influencers to invite them to become part of the program.

2024 GOALS



Grow to 20
ambassadors



Grow followers on Sonoran
Insiders account to
2000 followers



Fundraise \$5000 for
Sonoran Insiders

While we continue searching for options to increase our capacity, such as funding opportunities, additional partners, and/or volunteers, collaboration will continue to be key for the program. We welcome new partners who would like to join the program and encourage those interested in becoming an ambassador to apply!

DONATE



Help us grow and teach more people about responsible recreation and conservation in Arizona! Scan this code and type Sonoran Insiders in the text box to donate.

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