



January 10, 2023

John Kava, Acting Deputy District Ranger
Bradshaw and Chino Valley Ranger Districts
Prescott National Forest
344 S. Cortez Street
Prescott, AZ 86303

Subject: Upper Verde Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study DEA

Dear Mr. Kava:

As one of three parties to the February 11, 2010 Agreement in Principle ("AIP") with Salt River Project ("SRP") and the City of Prescott ("Prescott"), the Town of Prescott Valley ("Prescott Valley") appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the *Upper Verde River Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study, Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact* ("DEA"). Under the AIP, Prescott Valley, Prescott, and SRP agreed to work cooperatively and in good faith to resolve and reach agreement on "Wild and Scenic" designation for the headwaters of the Verde River. Prescott and SRP have recently each commented in favor of the DEA (though each has recommended one of the different Alternatives). Prescott Valley also supports designation of the Upper Verde River as a Wild and Scenic River (and will discuss further with its partners about the pros and cons of Alternatives 2-4).

As noted in the recent comment by Prescott, on page 22 the DEA indicates that –

Existing, valid water rights, including priority consumptive rights that predate instream rights held by the PNF, the CNF, the AZGFD, and the Nature Conservancy, would not be superseded by the determination.

In 1991, the Arizona Legislature adopted ARS 45-555 to establish a water supply for the Prescott AMA communities in the Big Chino Sub-basin aquifer upstream from the Upper Verde headwaters. Prescott Valley has an existing agreement with Prescott to develop those priority consumptive water rights (along with historically irrigated acreage) that would predate instream rights held by the Prescott National Forest, the Coconino National Forest, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Nature Conservancy. Prescott Valley also has significant municipal water rights in the Prescott Active Management Area ("PrAMA") to withdraw groundwater for use and delivery within its Service Area (including certain Type 2 Non-Irrigation Grandfathered Rights) that are potentially predating rights. Therefore, Prescott Valley's support for this designation is subject to preservation of these existing rights.

Prescott Valley appreciates the opportunity to comment on this DEA and share in these expressions of support for comprehensive management of the Verde River on National Forest lands to preserve and enhance the River's resiliency.

Sincerely,

Kell Palguta
Mayor

p.c.: • Prescott Valley Town Council Members
Prescott Valley Town Manager
Prescott Valley Town Attorney



December 11 2023

Gary Beverly, PhD
Chair, Sierra Club - Yavapai Group
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Chino Valley, AZ 86323
928-308-1003 (c)
gbverde99@gmail.com

Subject: Support for Designation of the Upper Verde Wild and Scenic River

To Whom It May Concern:

You have asked for a letter in support of local efforts to designate the Upper Verde River (River) as "Wild and Scenic" in addition to the January 10, 2023 letter from Mayor Palguta to John Kava (Acting Deputy District Ranger, Bradshaw and Chino Valley Ranger Districts, Prescott National Forest). I am happy to do so.

In addition to the points made by the Mayor, I can confirm as Town Manager that Prescott Valley is in full support of a Wild and Scenic designation that permanently protects the Upper Verde River for present and future generations.

The natural wild character of the River is especially important to citizens seeking recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, camping, birding, hiking and other recreational activities. It provides vital wildlife habitat, protects many species listed by the Endangered Species Act, and preserves indigenous cultural sites. The River enhances our local economy along with the economy of other County areas by bringing revenue from outside the state and encouraging local job formation.

There are many interests connected with a healthy Upper Verde River, and we are grateful that the Wild and Scenic designation does not affect existing water rights or private property rights.

Best wishes as your organization and others work together to reach this commendable goal!

Sincerely,

Gilbert Davidson
Town Manager