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Birth of a river



Editor:



For residents of the Verde Valley, the Verde River is a steady, year-long companion. We swim and boat in its waters. We walk under riverside summer-green to fall-golden tree canopies. We count on it to provide clean, reliable water for farms and ranches.



We may not think too much about where the river is born. But we should.



Beyond where the Verde meets Sycamore Creek is a gorgeous, rugged wilderness: the Upper Verde.



Roughly one-third of the Verde's water that we enjoy comes from the springs and flood flows of this upper section. But since 1940, the baseflow of the Upper Verde has declined by half. With this, the ecological, economic, cultural, and recreational future of the Upper Verde has grown increasingly uncertain.

Over 150 businesses and all of the surrounding towns/cities across Yavapai County are asking Congress to designate the Upper Verde as "wild and scenic." This designation would protect 76 miles of river (including Sycamore Creek and portions of Granite Creek) — helping to keep the river free-flowing, preserve water quality, and maintain the values that make the Verde so special. The designation is conservative. It doesn't touch existing grazing, property, or water rights. Current land uses stay as they are.

Designating the Upper Verde as wild and scenic won't guarantee that it won't run dry in my lifetime. We need bold thinking by communities about water use to ensure this. But the wild and scenic designation is a key part of the solution.

Learn more at WildVerdeRiver.org.

Thomas Catlaw

Clarkdale

