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'The Upper Verde River: A place with a story to tell' Sept. 12 at Sharlot Hall Museum.

By STAN BINDELL, Special to the Courier
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Railroad Trestle (Joe Trudeau/Courtesy)

















Joe Trudeau, a Prescott conservationist, will be giving a presentation about "The Upper Verde River: A Place with a story to tell" from 2 to 3 p.m. Sept. 12 at the Sharlot Hall Museum, 415 W. Gurley St., Prescott.

Trudeau's presentation will focus on the human history and geology of the Verde River.

"Most of the presentations about the Verde River are about the wildlife and ecology, so this is different," he said. "Sharlot Hall is all about history so this is a good fit. This is a story about place."

The Verde River is rich with Native American history as there are many cultural sites, including cliff dwellings, along the way.

"It is important to recognize those who came before us to pave the way for the present day. It is important to recognize the Native Americans but I also want to talk about the settlers," Trudeau said.

As an ecologist, Trudeau said he loves the Verde River because of its diversity and the importance of life and wild places.

"It's an incredible place with natural richness. The Verde River is the most ecologically diverse habitat in Arizona and there are an incredible amount of species there," he said.

One of Trudeau's points is that there has been a long history for the efforts to protect the Verde River, especially the Upper Verde River.

In 1979, Congress asked the US Forest Service to do a study to see if the Upper Verde River was worthy of National Wild and Scenic river designation. In 1981, they said it was yet it has not yet obtained that designation.

The proposal has wide spread support among towns and cities in Yavapai County, but US Rep. Eli Crane, the congressman for the district, has not submitted a bill for the Upper Verde to receive that designation.

"Good things take a while," Trudeau said.

In 1984, parts of the Lower Verde River received that designation. Trudeau hopes that those coming to the presentation will support the effort for the Upper Verde to obtain that destination for another level of protection for the river.

Trudeau has worked on the National Wild and Scenic effort for seven years and seen it gain traction during that time.

"We have a diverse coalition on the state and local level supporting it," he said.

Trudeau has a long running love affair with the Upper Verde as he has hiked and kayaked much of it.

"I love the Verde because of the water. Water is life," he said.

Trudeau said the most challenging part of the attempt to protect the river is working with representatives who would be willing to work in a bipartisan manner.

Trudeau is excited to give the presentation at Sharlot Hall because it is an important historical venue in Prescott.

This lecture will explore the rich biodiversity of the river, as well as some of the remnants of historic ranches, pre-historic indigenous occupancy and the deep geologic history of this stunning landscape.

He will describe the nearly half-century effort to protect the river as a National Wild and Scenic River, culminating in the current legislative campaign he is waging with his partners in the Wild Verde River Coalition – a critical step toward lasting stewardship of an irreplaceable resource that is imminently threatened by drought, development pressures and exotic invasive species.

Trudeau hopes that audience members will leave feeling a stronger connection to the landscape, a better understanding of why the Upper Verde River is so remarkable and with actionable steps they can take to contribute to efforts to protect and restore this amazing living landscape.

Trudeau is president at Wildwood Ecological and serves as a Conservation Policy Consultant to The Wilderness Society.

Trudeau is a geographer, forester and conservationist with a passion for protecting the places that define us –For more than 30 years he has been an educator, researcher, manager and advocate on some of the nation's most remarkable landscapes, including on 20 National Forests, numerous National Parks, Monuments, Conservation Areas, Wildlife Refuges and Military lands – as well as on state and local conservation lands, private forestlands and working ranches.



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