



Adopt-the-River Program

In 2007, the Sonoran Institute, the Ecological Association of Hardy and Colorado River Users (AEURHYC), Pronatura Noroeste, the Colorado River Delta Biosphere Reserve, and the Sonoran Ministry of the Environment developed the Adopt-the-River Program as the volunteer stewardship component of a larger, ongoing restoration initiative in the Colorado River Delta.

The Adopt-the-River program engages diverse groups in the Colorado River Delta Restoration Project in order to secure broad support and a lasting commitment to Delta restoration. Depending on the capacity and interest of the group, river adoption consists of repeated, on-the-ground volunteer work, financial donations to support a particular restoration project, or in-kind donations of needed restoration equipment and resources.

Through capacity-building and active community participation, the program promotes local understanding of restoration in the Delta—essential to building the broad constituency needed to advocate for policy reform in support of restoration and vital to ensuring a sustainable future for restoration efforts. Local groups targeted for the Adopt-the-River program include agricultural and fishing cooperatives, irrigation districts, government offices, businesses and schools. Regional and international organizations are also encouraged to participate. The restoration initiative directly relates to human health and well-being by improving water quality, recreation areas, environmental education opportunities, and natural resource-based economic opportunities like fishing, hunting, and small-scale tourism operations.



The Colorado River at an Adopt-the-River site in the Mexicali Valley

Colorado River Delta Outreach



Local students plant trees at their adopted restoration site

Successes Up-to-Date

- Fourteen groups have joined the Adopt-the-River Program, including governmental organizations, school and university groups, members of the Cucapah tribe, and various community groups.
- Local groups have improved recreational areas, developed exhibits and interpretive trails, and restored 30 acres of riparian habitat through river bank revegetation and clean-up.
- “Citizen scientists” have been trained in the monitoring of flora and fauna.
- Outreach to 5,330 people including local populations, students and international visitors.
- The first Adopt the-River celebration with the participation of over 80 people from state and federal government agencies, NGOs, fisherman, tourist operators, schools, and other community groups and local users.

2011 Objectives

- Continue increasing capacity of groups that have adopted restoration sites.
- Identify five new groups to adopt a restoration site or activity, encouraging participation of businesses, tourists, and universities.
- Provide ten professionally guided tours to the restoration sites.
- Conduct 25 environmental education workshops (600 people) on the Colorado River Delta.
- Host a second annual Adopt-the-River celebration/recognition event.

