

STATE ROUTE 89A  
SEDONA- OAK CREEK CANYON  
SCENIC ROAD



CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN



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The SR 89A Advisory Committee and Stakeholders



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## FOREWORD

This document is the result of many years of research and public comment. This Corridor Management Plan (CMP) evolved from field research, public opinion and concerns expressed during public and agency meetings.

The primary objective of this report is to document necessary planning efforts along State Route 89A in Oak Creek Canyon that will sustain the resources and route for generations to come. This document also will help foster the necessary relationships required to promote and protect the intrinsic qualities that define the corridor.

The SR 89A Sedona-Oak Creek Canyon CMP team would like to thank all participants who spent their time, resources and energy helping us research the “holes” in the document, reviewing the information and supporting us with their experiences and expertise. And for their vision for the future for this Scenic Road that can be implemented by all local stakeholders.



PHOTO BY BOB & SUZANNE CLEMENZ

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## **INTRODUCTION**

State Route 89A Sedona-Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Road is a winding, two-lane highway that runs through Oak Creek Canyon between Sedona and Flagstaff, Arizona. This route has changed little since it was built in the 1930s nor has the magnificent scenery. The lush landscape includes oaks, ponderosa pine, sycamores and other trees and shrubs complimented by towering red and white limestone cliffs. The corridor offers a peaceful respite to animals and their human counterparts.

### **A CMP is:**

- ✦ A vision for the Byway & the surrounding area
- ✦ An inventory of the characteristics, features & resources
- ✦ Documentation of the Byway's special qualities
- ✦ An interpretation of the Byway's special qualities
- ✦ A summation of the goals & strategies
  - A planning effort
  - A vision & blueprint for corridor improvements
  - Ideas for incentive-based participation
  - A plan that regulates land only within the ADOT right-of-way
  - A plan that opens up new possible funding sources
  - Suggestions to enhance the natural views & scenery

Oak Creek's cold, clear waters make possible a unique combination of geologic and ecological wonders. In a short span of 15 miles and approximately 2,000 feet elevation change, the route takes a traveler through hundreds of millions of years of geologic time and a series of distinct ecological niches.

### **A CMP is not:**

- ✦ A top-down land use regulation plan
- ✦ A mandated document that supersedes local authority
- ✦ A plan that restricts private property rights
- ✦ A plan that mandates regulations for viewsheds
- ✦ A plan that allows ADOT or the Federal Government to regulate land use outside of the DOT right-of-way
- ✦ A list of mandated new taxes



The Canyon inspires a sense of wonder that when combined with the ecological and geologic aspects, has come to be known as a unique “Oak Creek Canyon experience,” which attracts world-wide attention and millions of travelers each year.

#### **Potential benefits of a CMP**

- ✦ Economic Diversity
  - Facilitate movement of people & goods
  - More diverse business & commerce opportunities
  - Increased tourism
- ✦ Resource Stewardship
  - Identify valued public resources
  - Develop a community-based plan for conservation & interpretation
  - Preserve the defining features of the region
- ✦ Partnerships
  - Jurisdictions can work together & with ADOT to identify & prioritize improvements
  - Establish local goals & priorities for the highway right-of-way
  - Establish long-term investment strategies

#### **Byway Story**

The story of Oak Creek Canyon begins with its original caretakers – the Native Americans – who sought out this sacred place and lived in the Canyon for thousands of years. Artifacts, prehistoric dwellings, petroglyphs and other archaeological evidence confirm that various civilizations lived in the area beginning in about 8,000 B.C.

Historians and researchers somewhat disagree on timelines of when these original Native Americans came, why they left and what happened to them. However, it is known that the Canyon’s rich abundance of animal life, clean, cool waters and plant life (for seasonings, medicinal and ceremonial purposes) allowed tribes to thrive for centuries. For example, according to Navajo legend, the area of Slide Rock is known to the Navajo people as a location where the Western Water Clans stopped on their migration back from the Pacific Ocean to Navajo land to find their relatives. The Western Water Clans included the “Bitter Water” People, “Arms Folded” People, “Mud” People, “He Walks Around One” People and the “Big Water” People, who were created at the home of the White Shell Woman on a jeweled island in the Pacific Ocean. The five clans migrated east to find their relatives, and after years of wandering, joined the nuclear clans on the San Juan River, having passed through Oak Creek Canyon. Today, the Canyon remains a site for Native American herb and plant gathering and sacred ceremonies.

Zane Grey’s “Call of the Canyon”, published in 1924, and its main characters who lived under the looming stone walls also illustrate the area’s rich history. But long before Grey hunted, fished and wrote in the wild and lonely Canyon, the first settler to heed the call, J.J. Thompson,

claimed property under America's 1862 Homestead Act. In 1876, Thompson took squatters rights to a parcel of land across from today's Indian Gardens Store. Margaret Ann Jackson also made history that year when she became the first Caucasian woman to live on lower Oak Creek.

After Thompson homesteaded in the Canyon, more settlers heard the call, and they came to raise horses and cattle. They dug irrigation ditches so they could plant crops and establish orchards. During the ensuing decades, trails and cow paths in the Canyon became dirt roads, and this attracted more people. One of these early residents was Frank Pendley, who became the most notable farmer in the history of Oak Creek Canyon because his pioneer spirit and engineering skills enabled him to construct an innovative irrigation system. He succeeded where many others had failed to the extent that his apples and pears were sold at markets in Jerome, Cottonwood, Phoenix and Los Angeles.



CALL OF THE CANYON

As one of the few homesteads left intact in the Canyon today, Slide Rock State Park also was instrumental to the development of the tourism industry in Oak Creek Canyon. The completion of the Canyon road in 1914 and the paving of the roadway in 1938 were strong influences in encouraging recreational use of the Canyon. Ever since, desert dwellers, weary of the heat, have escaped north to the cool Canyon to visit fruit stands, to seek Native American arts and crafts and to enjoy the changing seasons. In addition, people from all over the state come to lounge and play by Oak Creek's crystal waters at Slide Rock or any of several unofficial popular hangouts.

These areas also caught the eye of Hollywood filmmakers who shot movies such as "Broken Arrow" (1950) with James Stewart, "Drum Beat" (1954) with Alan Ladd and Charles Bronson, "Gun Fury" (1953) with Rock Hudson and Donna Reed, and a scene from "Angel and the Badman" (1946) with John Wayne.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE

The State Route 89A Sedona-Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Road Corridor Management Plan is intended to assist the various agencies, private land owners and the public in managing, developing, conserving and interpreting the Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Corridor. The process used to develop this plan demands a coordinated effort that allows the communities to consider how to use and benefit from the road and its intrinsic qualities, while maintaining the integrity and value of those qualities.

SR 89A, from just north of Sedona to 15 miles south of Flagstaff, (Milepost 375.5 to 390) was the first state highway designated as a "scenic road" by the Arizona Department of Transportation on August 24, 1984. The mixed land use and high demand for recreation make this one of the most visited areas in the state. During the past 10 to 12 years, this unique route has seen a sharp increase in use. Daily vehicle traffic ranges between 5,000 and 12,000 vehicles, with the higher number

corresponding to holidays and weekends. With growth of tourism and development, concerns are raised about declining water quality, degraded wildlife habitat, and consequent reductions in the ecological diversity that attracts so many to the Canyon. With development in the Canyon, the hallmark scenic quality could be affected as views become hindered. These concerns have united those who care about Oak Creek Canyon. Because the concerns cross several jurisdictions and ownership patterns, a coordinated effort must form the basis of a solution. Part of this effort was the development of Coconino County's Oak Creek Canyon Area Plan, which was adopted in 1984 and amended in 1989. Because of this plan, there has in fact been limited development in the Canyon during the past 20 years.

### **CORRIDOR VISION STATEMENT**

The CMP intends to increase the efficiency of management along SR 89A by promoting programs that are complementary and by coordinating programs that are redundant. The CMP identifies activities that support the protection of important corridor qualities.

The Steering Committee collaborated with interested members of the public to create the following vision statement for the Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Corridor:

*Protect Oak Creek Canyon's rustic and natural character while providing a remarkable experience for residents and visitors.*

Goals and objectives listed later in this document describe how the vision may be implemented.

### **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

More than 75 people participated in two Oak Creek Canyon Visioning Sessions in June of 1997 in Sedona, Arizona. The meetings were sponsored by ADOT and the Red Rock Ranger District, Coconino National Forest. Participants included residents of Oak Creek Canyon and nearby communities, and representatives of public agencies and organizations with responsibility for land management in Oak Creek Canyon.

To assist with the preparation of this plan, a Steering Committee was established to represent key interests and views about management of this corridor (see page 38 for a list of original and current/potential committee members).



COMMUNITY INPUT MEETING

In November 1997, a public open house was held to present resource information and vision statements. In January 1998, additional public meetings were held to develop key recommendations for the plan.

In summary, between June 1997 and September 1998, the Forest Service formed a stakeholder Steering Committee and hosted five Steering Committee meetings and three public open houses. In April 1999, a draft CMP was prepared and sent to agencies and the Steering Committee



for review. Comments were received from ADOT, FHWA, Coconino County, Sedona Main Street Program, Pine Flat Homeowners Association, City of Sedona, the Navajo Nation and Arizona State Parks.

On August 10, 2001, a meeting was held between ADOT, USFS, and FHWA to discuss how to restart the planning process and complete the plan. In November 2004 when funding became available, work began to update the document for completion. In June 2005, a meeting was held with ADOT, USFS and interested stakeholders, past and present, to review and comment on the draft document. Input was received from a variety of agency, resident and business stakeholders along the route, and the document was completed and ready for implementation in November 2005.

### INTRINSIC QUALITIES

Intrinsic qualities are important aspects of the road and corridor that are the focus of protection and promotion. A key to successful corridor management requires that the intrinsic qualities of Oak Creek Canyon be identified and understood. Intrinsic qualities include the highway's right-of way, views from the roadway and the scenic, natural, historical, archeological, recreational and cultural context of the corridor.

#### SCENIC

- o Beauty, both natural or human-made.

#### NATURAL

- o Minimal human disturbance of the natural ecological features.

#### HISTORIC

- o Landscape, buildings, structures or other visual evidence of the past.

#### CULTURAL

- o Visual evidence of the unique customs, traditions, folklore, or rituals of a currently existing human group.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL

- o Visual evidence of the unique customs, traditions, folklore, or rituals of a no-longer existing human group.

#### RECREATIONAL

- o The road corridor is used for recreation.

### State Route 89A and its Right-of-Way

SR 89A runs the length of Oak Creek Canyon, approximately 15 road miles. With a 22-foot travel surface, the narrow highway provides two lanes with narrow 1-foot shoulders. Forested slopes and cliffs restrict road or shoulder widening. This enclosed, narrow,

meandering road character provides a sense of wonder that attracts many visitors each year. In 1984, this character was recognized by the State of Arizona when SR 89A through the Canyon became the first State Scenic Road established in Arizona.

The Oak Creek Canyon Scenic corridor begins at milepost 375.5 and continues 14.5 miles until milepost 390, at the Oak Creek Vista. The roadway pavement is in fair to moderate condition. The posted speed limit through the Canyon is 40 miles per hour with slower speeds posted at curves and in the switchbacks. The highway carries a mix of commercial, commuter and tourist traffic.

In 2004, average annual daily traffic through the Canyon was measured at approximately 6,000 vehicles. This volume can increase by 150 percent during peak periods. It is estimated that by 2007 average daily traffic will increase to 9,000 vehicles. The traffic demand in the Canyon is approaching capacity of a rural highway, especially during the summer and on holiday weekends when traffic counts approach 12,000 vehicles per day. Congestion and delay is expected to increase.

Approximately 600 designated parking spaces are available at developed recreation sites and commercial shopping areas in the corridor. During much of the year, parking at these developed sites fills quickly. Roadside parking is regulated, and yet overflow roadside parking occurs along



PHOTO BY TOM JOHNSON

the narrow road. Since narrow road shoulders are not designed to accommodate non-emergency parking, and there are no pedestrian sidewalks or pathways, parked cars often intrude on the travel way, and pedestrians often walk in the road. Estimates by the Forest Service indicate that approximately 1,000 vehicle parking spaces are used along the road.

Along SR 89A in the Canyon, many driveways belong to residences, lodges and camping/picnic sites. Vehicles entering the highway from driveways and other access points may experience long delays during peak traffic periods. The narrow roadway does not provide adequate space for bicycles and pedestrians in most areas.

Some improvements have been made including asphalt overlay of roadway from Sedona to Oak Creek Vista; construction of slow vehicle turnouts; asphalt overlay of roadway from Oak Creek Vista to the Flagstaff airport intersection; and rock fall containment in various areas, including a recent project at Banjo Bill. These improvements have minimal impact upon the resources and qualities of the Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Corridor. Additional future improvements include drainage, guardrail installations and replacement, additional pull-outs and turn lanes, and continuing rock fall containment.

## Views From the Road and Environmental Context

The drive on SR 89A from Sedona through Oak Creek Canyon takes a traveler up through 2,000 feet in elevation and millions of years of geological time. Starting with the distinctive red rocks near Sedona, the route takes visitors through the various colored sandstone and

limestone until finally reaching the cap of basalt on the Rim. During hot summer days, the traveler also will experience a change in temperature, from the scorching desert heat to the cooler air in the riparian creek bottom and the high plateau of the Mogollon Rim.

The Canyon exhibits sharp contrasts in vegetation. Dry-land grass and brush grows in close proximity to water-loving cottonwood, sycamore and alder. Nearly 600 separate species of plants fill the Canyon with color, shade and wildlife habitat. Similarly, a large variety of wildlife rewards the observant traveler, whether a stately browsing deer or the flicker of a song bird's wings.

Current popular uses include the well-known Slide Rock State Park, located in mid-Canyon. The West Fork of Oak Creek provides another popular stopping point, where a rich combination of scenic, ecological and historic treasures delights 100,000 visitors each year. Hiking is a huge draw, luring nearly 74,000 visitors in 2004 to its 16 trails throughout the Canyon. The most popular trail is West Fork, with approximately 70,000 visitors, as well as Sterling Pass and North Wilson Trails, which drew approximately 2,100 hiking enthusiasts in 2004. Wilson Mountain National Recreation Trail is another popular hike. The busiest month for hikers is May, followed closely by August.

Hiking, fishing, picnicking, swimming, photography and camping are very popular, as is shopping from Native American tribal members at the Oak Creek Vista and Dairy Queen parking lots. Using requests for reservations and recreation information as a gauge, the most popular Forest Service campground is Manzanita and the second is Cave Spring. Most campgrounds are often full on weekends. Peak season for visitors is March, April, May and October, in that order.

2004 DATA - FOREST SERVICE CAMPGROUNDS
Oak Creek campers – 83,493
Oak Creek day users – 106,890
Largest number of campground visitors – Manzanita – 42,382
Most visited day-use site – Call of the Canyon – 61,391

## Scenic Qualities

Oak Creek Canyon offers a rare scenic setting for most visitors. Lush flora grows alongside a clear, cold stream, enclosed by colorful and precipitous Canyon walls. The road running through the Canyon provides the only access to millions of visitors every year who would otherwise never see such scenery or experience the unique features of the Canyon.

Lush fruit orchards, started by early homesteaders, continue to grow wildly in parts of the Canyon. Many fruit trees grow on now-public lands in beautiful settings and still produce fruit.

The drive along this winding road offers motorists ever-changing views. In Spring, the forest is alive with wildflowers and animals. Although summer can be warm, the cool waters of Oak Creek offer relief. In autumn, red, orange and gold abound as the leaves turn, attracting visitors to



the National Forest during the fall color event. Winter can make the Canyon into a wonderland of snow.

In 1998, to further protect the scenic qualities of the area, the Forest Service, in cooperation with the community, created an amendment to the Coconino National Forest Plan (created in 1987) for the management of 160,000 acres of the most spectacular lands in the area. This plan, known as Amendment 12, delineates conservation and protection of these spectacularly scenic areas and further defines and strengthens the direction of the 1987 plan.

Amendment 12 established the following themes for the Oak Creek Canyon Management Area:

- Emphasize day-use activities that are pedestrian oriented with access to Oak Creek and scenery.
- Provide a range of high quality recreation benefits and interpretation.
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat, healthy stream conditions, clean air and water, and productive soils.

## Natural Qualities

### Water

Fed by springs, snow melt and rainfall, Oak Creek runs cold and clear year-round. The state of Arizona classifies Oak Creek as a “Unique Water” because it serves as an outstanding public resource and offers exceptional ecological values.

As a result of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality’s (ADEQ) triennial review, which is reported in the Arizona administrative register notice of final rule making, Oak Creek including West Fork have been classified as Unique Waters under Title 18, Environmental Quality, Chapter 11, ADEQ Water Quality Standards, Article 1 Water Quality Standards for Surface Waters, R18-11-112. These surface waters have been given Tier 3 anti-degradation status. Tier 3 states that no degradation is allowed in waters listed as Unique Waters, which is interpreted to mean “no new or expanded point source discharges” will be allowed in Unique Waters.

Any actions allowed on Forest lands cannot result in degradation to Oak Creek water quality. The water quality of Oak Creek in the Canyon is generally good; however, the stream through Slide Rock State Park is, on occasion, not appropriate for ‘Full Body Contact,’ one of the six designated uses for water quality. Water quality requirements for ‘Full Body Contact’ protect swimmers that might ingest water while swimming. It may not be appropriate as result of excessive levels of *Escherichia coli*. The primary source of *E-coli* is animal wastes that wash into the creek. The water is tested daily by Slide Rock staff at Slide Rock Swim area, weekly by volunteers at five Forest Service sites and occasionally by ADEQ and the Coconino County Health Department. Waters are tested at Slide Rock and other swimming areas, primarily through the summer. If levels of *E-coli* exceed safety, those areas are closed to swimming until levels drop.

Other potential safety issues are the potential for flooding along Oak Creek. A United States Geological Survey (USGS) real-time stream discharge gage exists at the bridge across Oak Creek in Sedona and at Pumphouse Wash.

## Wildlife and Fish

A total of 34 special status species are known to occur or have existing or potential habitat within the Oak Creek Canyon project area. Special status species include those species federally listed or proposed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), species listed as candidates for listing under the ESA, species designated as Forest Service sensitive by the Regional Forester, and species identified as management indicator species (MIS) for the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Three threatened or endangered species that are known to occur, or have existing or potential habitat within Oak Creek Canyon include bald eagle, Mexican spotted owl, and Gila trout. Other rare wildlife species that are known to occur, or have existing or potential habitat include 2 candidate species, 19 sensitive species, and 11 MIS, 1 of which is a listed (Table X).

**Table X: Special Status Species in Oak Creek Canyon**

<b>LEGEND</b>	
<b>SPECIES STATUS:</b>	
<b>E</b> = Federally listed as Endangered under Endangered Species Act (ESA)	<b>EXNE</b> = Federally Endangered, Experimental, Non-Essential
<b>T</b> = Federally listed as Threatened under ESA	<b>P</b> = Federally Proposed for ESA listing
<b>C</b> = Federal Candidate for ESA listing	<b>WC</b> = Wildlife of Special Concern in Arizona (AGFD draft 3/16/96)
<b>Sen</b> = Federal Species of Concern On Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List (7/21/99)	<b>MIS</b> = Coconino Management Indicator Species from the Forest Plan
<b>SC</b> = Federal Species of Concern (former C2 species).	

<b>COMMON NAME</b>	<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<b>FEDERALLY LISTED (END, THR, PROPOSED) (3)</b>		
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T, WC, Sen
Mexican Spotted Owl	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	T, WC, Sen, MIS
Gila Trout	<i>Onchorhynchus gilae gilae</i>	E, WC, Sen
<b>SENSITIVE MAMMALS (1)</b>		
Southwestern River Otter	<i>Lutra canadensis sonora</i>	SC, WC, Sen

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS
<b>SENSITIVE BIRDS (3)</b>		
American Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	WC, Sen
Common Black Hawk	<i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i>	WC, Sen, MIS
Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	C, WC, Sen
<b>SENSITIVE AMPHIBIANS (1)</b>		
Lowland Leopard Frog	<i>Rana yavapaiensis</i>	SC, WC, Sen
<b>SENSITIVE REPTILES (2)</b>		
Narrow-headed Garter Snake	<i>Thamnophis rufipunctatus</i>	SC, WC, Sen
Mexican Garter Snake	<i>Thamnophis eques megalops</i>	SC, WC, Sen
<b>SENSITIVE INVERTEBRATES (7)</b>		
Freeman's Agave Borer	<i>Agathymus baueri freemani</i>	Sen
Neumogen's Giant Skipper	<i>Agathymus neumogeni</i>	Sen
Aryxna Giant Skipper	<i>Agathymus aryxna</i>	Sen
Obsolete Viceroy Butterfly	<i>Limenitis archippus obsolete</i>	Sen
Early Elfin	<i>Incisalia fotis</i>	Sen
Comstock's Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys comstocki</i>	Sen
Spotted Skipperling	<i>Piruna polingii</i>	Sen



COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS
<b>SENSITIVE FISH (1)</b>		
Roundtail Chub	<i>Gila robusta</i>	SC, WC, Sen
<b>SENSITIVE PLANTS (6)</b>		
Eastwood Alumroot	<i>Heuchera eastwoodiae</i>	Sen
Flagstaff Penstemon	<i>Penstemon nudiflorus</i>	Sen
Cliff Fleabane	<i>Erigeron saxatilis</i>	Sen
Flagstaff Pennyroyal	<i>Hedeoma diffusum</i>	Sen
Milk-Vetch	<i>Astragalus rusbyi</i>	Sen
Arizona Bugbane	<i>Cimicifuga arizonica</i>	C, Sen
<b>OTHER MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES (10)</b>		
Macro-invertebrates	-----	MIS - Riparian
Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>	MIS – Riparian
Lucy's Warbler	<i>Vermivora luciae</i>	MIS – Riparian
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	MIS – Riparian
Juniper (plain) Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus griseus</i>	MIS – P/J
Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	MIS – MC/PP
Mexican Spotted Owl	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	MIS – MC/PP

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS
Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	MIS – MC/PP
Elk	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	MIS – MC/PP
Abert Squirrel	<i>Sciurus abertii</i>	MIS – MC/PP
Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	MIS – P/J

The diversity of vegetation and habitat structure in Oak Creek Canyon support many species of birds. The majority of these birds are passerine (songbirds) but other groups include waterfowl, wading birds, fowl-like birds, raptors, and miscellaneous non-passerine birds such as kingfishers, pigeons, doves, hummingbirds, and woodpeckers. Some riparian dependent birds include American dipper, painted redstart, black phoebe, and yellow warbler. Upland birds dependent on snags and cavities for nesting include species such as northern flicker, hairy woodpecker, house wren, and mountain chickadee. The plumbeous vireo, western tanager, hooded oriole, hepatic tanager, sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, band-tailed pigeons, Stellar's jay, and brown creepers are a few upland birds that nest among the branches of mature trees. Some species, like the black-chinned sparrow and spotted towhee, nest in mid-story vegetation such as shrubs. The Virginia's warbler and dark-eyed junco nest on ground. Cliff and rock nesters include Canyon wren, white-throated swifts, violet-green swallows, and the common raven. In addition to the year-round residents, many of the bird species in Oak Creek Canyon are neotropical migrants and spend only a portion of each year breeding in or migrating through the Canyon.

Mammals in Oak Creek Canyon include elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, bear, mountain lion, bobcat, fox, coyote, javelina, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, bats, mice, rats, voles, gophers, woodrats, skunks, ring-tailed cats, and coatimundis.

Amphibian and reptiles in Oak Creek Canyon include several species of toads, frogs, lizards, and snakes. Amphibians include Canyon tree frogs and lowland leopard frogs. The numerous species of lizards in the Canyon include horned lizards, zebra-tailed lizards, collared lizard, side-blotched lizards, spiny lizards, skinks, alligator lizards, and whiptails. Snake species that are present include: various garter snakes such as the narrow-headed, black-necked, and wandering; whip snakes; king snakes; gopher (bull) snakes; and rattlesnakes such as the Arizona black and black-tailed.

Oak Creek supports a variety of native as well as non-native (introduced) species of fish. Native species include Sonoran sucker, desert sucker, longfin dace, and speckled dace. The Gila trout was endemic to Oak Creek but has been extirpated as a result of competition with non-native fish and hybridization with the non-native rainbow trout. Introduced fish species include rainbow trout, brown trout, small-mouth bass, blue and green sunfish, carp, and catfish.

## Sterling Springs Fish Hatchery

The Sterling Springs Fish Hatchery, operated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, is located on a property under special use permit from the Forest Service. Approximately 100 people visit the hatchery per year and can participate in a pre-arranged 15-minute tour. The site is briefly visible from the highway. The hatchery is stocked with several million eggs, which are hatched and raised to 1 to 2 inch fingerlings. The majority of the fingerlings are transferred to the Page Springs Hatchery where they are raised to stocking size.

## Plants

Oak Creek supports a lush and diverse plant community. The Forest Service has recognized the unique plant life by designating two areas in Oak Creek Canyon as “Research Natural Area (RNA)” with the purpose of preserving natural ecological processes. A RNA is defined as an area that contains natural resource values of scientific interest and is managed primarily for research and educational purposes. It is also an area in as near a natural condition as possible, which exemplifies typical or unique vegetation and associated biotic, soil, geological, and aquatic features. The area is set aside to preserve a representative sample of an ecological community primarily for scientific and educational purposes; commercial and general public use is not allowed. Twelve species of moss and 32 species of lichens are known to exist in this area. Rare plant species include Arizona bugbane (state sensitive), which is impacted by high amounts of recreation use along stream banks. Also cliff fleabane (state sensitive) grows in inaccessible, shaded cliff-faces and boulders in the shady Canyon. Flagstaff pennyroyal is also a state sensitive species that prefers open pine forests of the Rim areas.



PHOTO BY MAX LICHER

Casner Canyon Research Natural Area, located about three miles northeast of Sedona, was created in 1973. It comprises 565 acres of extremely rough topography with steep slopes and rock outcrops. Arizona cypress, *Cupressus arizonica*, of various ages forms an almost pure stand across the RNA. Both smooth and rough bark varieties of the Arizona cypress are present. Reddish-brown Supai sandstone underlies the area.

## Historical/Archaeological/Cultural Qualities

Because of the unique physical qualities of Oak Creek Canyon, people have long considered it a sacred place. The lush vegetation attracted use by early Native Americans and continues to play a valuable role in contemporary Native American life. Human occupation of the Verde Valley and Oak Creek Canyon extends back to at least 12,000 B.C. and continues to the present. The Paleo-Indian period (12,000 -8,000 B.C.) is sparsely represented in the archaeological record at this time, but is expected to be present in deeply buried settings. Evidence of Archaic Period - Dry Creek Phase (8,000 B.C. – A.D. 1) occupation of the Verde Valley is more abundant. Dry Creek Phase sites have been identified along Dry Creek, Spring Creek, Oak Creek, and Coffee Creek; most of them reflect hunting and plant gathering activities. Near the end of the Squaw Creek Phase (A.D. 1-800) ceramics appear for the first time in this area. Immigration into the region by Hohokam



people may have contributed to dramatic cultural changes that occurred in the Verde Valley around A.D. 700. Many sites dating to the Camp Verde Phase (A.D. 800-1125) have been located in the Upper and Middle Verde Valley. These sites are generally thought to have been occupied by the Southern Sinagua, an extension of the Sinagua cultural tradition identified in the area around Flagstaff. The Southern Sinagua were sedentary farmers of corn, beans, squash, and cotton and primarily settled along the perennial water courses of the Verde Valley. The Honanki Phase (A.D. 1125-1300) is marked by changes in settlement patterns, architecture, and material culture. Sites dating to the Honanki Phase tend to be located at higher elevations than sites from earlier phases and consist of small pueblos and cliff dwellings, pit houses, and contiguous masonry rooms. During the Tuzigoot Phase (A.D. 1300-1425) the previously dispersed population aggregated; as many as 40 pueblos with at least 35 rooms each have been recorded. Until recently, the Verde Valley was thought to have been abandoned about A.D. 1425, however, the Yavapai had clearly entered the Verde Valley prior to A.D. 1540 and perhaps as early as 1300 or before. The Apache are resident by A.D. 1540 as well. Historic use of the Middle Verde, Fossil Creek, and Oak Creek drainages included both Yavapai and Apache groups, with no permanent habitation in the upper Oak Creek Canyon project corridor.

Physical evidence of prehistoric occupation in Oak Creek Canyon is currently limited, with only six sites known to indicate prehistoric use in the Canyon corridor. The prehistoric site types located thus far include rock art, caves/rock shelters, and lithic scatters (stone tool manufacturing sites). The majority of Oak Creek Canyon and its immediate environs have not been subject to an intensive archaeological inventory, except for the ADOT Highway 89A right-of-way of approximately 120 feet wide. Although physical evidence is limited by the lack of archaeological inventory, the prehistoric value of the Canyon is otherwise well known in the ethnographic record.

For the settlers who came in the 19th century, Oak Creek provided a permanent water source, a relatively warm climate in the spring and adjacent flat lands that proved suitable for fruit orchards. Historic site types include lodges, bridges, caves/rock shelters, homesteads/farms, orchards, irrigation ditches, campgrounds, trails/roads, and a store. Additional archaeological inventory outside of the ADOT right-of-way is likely to identify additional prehistoric and historic properties that will add to the archaeological record and inform our interpretation of the Canyon's historic occupation.

Remains of the historic homesteading period of activity, in the form of old cabins, irrigation ditches, fruit trees, wooden water pipelines, trash dumps and old roadbeds are present in some locations throughout the Canyon. The history of the Canyon during the last 100 years provides rich material for interpretation.

In the 1920s, a group of cabins known as Glenwood beckoned guests to a place of beauty. Additional structures were added to the original six cabins after Don and Nita Hoel purchased the property in 1945. The first cabins are still popular today.

#### POTENTIAL INTERPRETIVE SITES

Site Name	Map #	Interpretive Value	Site Type
Pump House Wash Bridge	1	Moderate to Poor	Bridge

Site Name	Map #	Interpretive Value	Site Type
Troutdale Ranch	2	Moderate	Ranch/Lodge Homestead
Cave Springs	3	Moderate to Poor	Rock Shelter
Cave Springs Campground	4	Excellent to Poor	Homestead/Lodge
Call O' Canyon Lodge	5	Moderate to Poor	Lodge/Homestead
Mayhew Lodge	6	Excellent	Homestead/Lodge
Cross Cave	7	Excellent	Rock Shelter, Petroglyphs
John L. Thomas	8	Excellent	Homestead
Bear Howard Trail	9	Moderate to Poor	Historic Trail
Thompson's Ladder	10	Excellent	Historic Trail
Sedona to Indian Gardens Road 1919	11	Moderate	Historic Road
Casner Trail	12	Excellent	Historic Trail
Midgley Bridge	13	Excellent	Historic Bridge
Thompson Wagon Road 1876-1890	14	Moderate	Historic Road

Starting in the 1920s, tourist use of the Canyon began to increase. Today, it is one of the most popular recreation areas in Arizona. Because of its early use, it also contains unique sites that represent educational and interpretative opportunities for the Canyon visitors. Examples include Troutdale, Mayhew Lodge and Call of the Canyon.

## Land Ownership and Land Use

The area of Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Corridor for this plan includes approximately 6,745 acres within Coconino County, Arizona. Most of this land (6,280 acres) is National Forest System land managed by the Coconino National Forest. The remaining 465 are either privately owned or owned by Arizona State Parks. The private land holdings are interspersed within the national forest in small isolated parcels throughout the lower elevations of the Canyon. Much of the land in the Canyon is steep and rocky. Existing uses on private land vary from single-family residential to commercial uses, such as stores, restaurants, cabins and other overnight accommodations. Other development includes a fish hatchery, utilities and parking facilities. Where publicly owned, the flat ground has been developed for camping and day-use recreation managed by the Forest Service and Arizona State Parks.

The Forest Service does not issue leases, but there are special use permits and easements for roads, utilities, ditches, temporary permits for Slide Rock pit, occasional filming, the fish hatchery, concessionaire permits and Native Americans Community Action (NACA) permits. There are no recreation residence tracts in the Canyon.

## Recreational Qualities

Public and private entities work together to meet the high demand for recreation opportunities in Oak Creek Canyon. Popular recreation activities include sightseeing, camping, scenic driving, fishing, photography, swimming and hiking. Although popular, camping is limited and people on day trips comprise a vast majority of the users. Many visitors seek a short (less than a day) Canyon experience in which they can enjoy safe, friendly, family-oriented and easily accessed recreation sites.

Forest Service campgrounds available in Oak Creek Canyon provide 174 developed sites for forest visitors. Campgrounds and developed day-use sites in the Canyon are full most weekends and often during the week between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The Forest Plan recognizes the sensitivity of Oak Creek's riparian environment and consequently does not support the construction of additional campgrounds.



PHOTO BY TOM JOHNSON

## Red Rock Pass

The mission of the Red Rock Pass Program is to conserve, protect and restore the natural and cultural resources on 160,000 acres of national forest in red rock country. It is a conservation tool designed to enhance the visitor experience and support the local community by contributing to the quality of life and healthy local economy. Anyone who parks a vehicle on the National Forest around Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon is required to have a Red Rock Pass (or equivalent, see below) displayed in their vehicle unless at Oak Creek Vista, in an area designated as a separate fee area or a campground. The passes available are:

- **Daily**  
Expires at midnight of the day purchased



- ✦ **Weekly**  
Good for seven consecutive days
- ✦ **Annual**  
Good for 12 months, expires on the last day of the month purchased
- ✦ **Grand Annual**  
Covers four day use sites in addition to basic coverage.  
Same expiration as the Annual Pass.
- ✦ **Grand Annual Discount**  
With a Golden Age or Golden Access Pass. Same as the Grand Annual Pass.

A Golden Eagle Hologram, Golden Eagle, Golden Age or Golden Access Pass may be used in lieu of the regular Red Rock Pass. A Golden Age or Golden Access Pass may be used for a 50% discount in all developed recreation fee sites and campgrounds, however, they do not apply to State Parks. Red Rock Passes may be purchased at the Red Rock Ranger Station, the Visitor Information Center in the Village of Oak Creek, the Sedona /Oak Creek Canyon Chamber of Commerce, the Oak Creek Canyon Visitor Center, Oak Creek Vista and the Cultural Heritage sites. They may also be purchased at many local grocery stores, service stations and other vendors in the area. In addition, there are self-pay machines located at Midgley Bridge, Halfway Picnic, Encinoso Picnic and Indian Gardens.

#### **CAMPGROUNDS IN OAK CREEK CANYON**

Additional charge for a second car– up to 8 people per site.

**Pine Flat West** – 37 sites, toilets, water, picnic tables, fire rings  
Season, March 1 – November 15  
Tents, trailers, RVs to 36 feet

**Pine Flat East** – 21 sites, toilets, water, picnic tables, fire rings  
Season, April 1 – November 15  
Tents, trailers, RVs to 36 feet

**Cave Springs** – 80 sites, toilets, water, showers, picnic tables, fire rings  
Season, April 15 – October 15  
Tents, trailers, RVs to 36 feet

**Manzanita** – 18 sites, toilets, water,  
picnic tables, fire rings  
Year-round  
Tents or small vans

**Bootlegger** – 10 sites, toilets,  
picnic tables, fire rings  
Season, April 15 – October 31  
Tents only



PHOTO BY BOB & SUZANNE CLEMENZ

## DAY USE SITES IN OAK CREEK CANYON

**Call of the Canyon** – charge per vehicle, picnic tables, toilets, West Fork Trailhead

**Banjo Bill** – charge per vehicle, picnic tables, toilets

**Grasshopper Point** – charge per vehicle, picnic tables, toilets

**Encinosa** – Red Rock Pass or equivalent required, toilets, water, picnic tables

**Halfway** – Red Rock Pass or equivalent required, picnic tables, toilets

**Midgley Bridge Parking Area** – Red Rock Pass or equivalent required, picnic tables

**Oak Creek Vista** – Top of Oak Creek Canyon, free, picnic tables, toilets, water

**Slide Rock State Park** - charge per vehicle (covers 4 adults, additional charge for each adult thereafter), toilets, picnic tables – the most popular spot in Oak Creek Canyon. Recreation activities offered are swimming, walking, and historic interpretation of the site.

**Indian Gardens** – historic site, shops, restaurant, parking, Recreation Resource Management Visitor Information Center.

## HIKING TRAILS

Allens Bend, #111 – .6 miles

Wilson Mt. Trail, #10 – 5.2 miles

Huckaby Trail, #161 – 2.9 miles

Wilson Canyon Trail, #49 – .6 miles

Casner Canyon Trail, #11 – 2 miles

Thompson's Ladder Trail, #14 – 1.5 miles

N. Wilson Mt. Trail, #123 – 2.2 miles

Sterling Pass Trail, #46 – 2.4 miles

Purtymun Trail, #65 – .9 miles

AB Young Trail, #100 – 2.1 miles

Thomas Point Trail, #142 – .6 miles

West Fork Trail, #108 – 3 miles

Telephone Trail, #72 – 1.1 miles

Harding Springs Trail, #51 – .7 miles

Jim Thompson Trail, #124 – 2.4 miles

Cookstove Trail, #143 – .7 miles

Oak Vista Trail, #117 – .2 miles

Oak Creek Trail, #71 – .6 miles

Oak Creek Spur A, # 71A – .2 miles

Oak Creek Spur B, #71B – .1 miles

Oak Creek Spur C, #71C – .7 miles

Oak Creek Spur D, #71D – .5 miles

Oak Creek Spur E, #71E – .5 miles

Cave Springs Nature Trail, #107 – .4 miles

Wilson Mountain A, #10A – 1.2 miles

Wilson Mountain B, #10B – .3 miles

Wilson Mountain C, #10C – .2 miles

Wilson Mountain D, #10D – .3 miles

### Slide Rock State Park

Slide Rock State Park, originally the Pendley Homestead, is a 43-acre historical apple orchard located in the Canyon. As one of the few homesteads left intact in the Canyon today, Slide Rock State Park is an example of early agricultural development in central Arizona. The site also was instrumental to the development of the tourism industry in Oak Creek Canyon. The completion of the Canyon road in 1914 and the paving of the roadway in 1938 were strong influences in encouraging recreational use of the Canyon. Hence, Pendley followed suit and in 1933, built rustic cabins to cater to vacationers and sightseers. On July 10, 1985, Arizona State Parks purchased the park



SLIDE ROCK APPLES

PHOTO BY BRIAN ERICKSON



SLIDE ROCK FUN

PHOTO BY BOB & SUZANNE CLEMENZ

property from the Arizona Parklands Foundation. The park was dedicated in October 1987 and accepted onto the National Register of Historic Places on December 23, 1991.

The State Park is named after the famous Slide Rock, a stretch of slippery creek bottom adjacent to the homestead. It hosts 2,000 visitors per day and may approach 3,000 per day on major holiday weekends. Visitors may slide down a slick natural water chute or wade and sun along the creek. The swim area is located on National

Forest land, which is jointly managed by Arizona State Parks and the Forest Service under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arizona State Park Board. It has been the long-term goal of the United States Department of Agriculture-Forest Service that Slide Rock will be owned by Arizona State Parks.

### **Private Commerce**

Restaurants, shops, motels and lodges in Oak Creek Canyon are also popular. Approximately 136 cabins or rooms are available at any one time that can serve approximately 500 people, however, vacancy rates are typically low. There has been a steady increase in day use in the Canyon during the last 10 years. Parking is the factor that most limits day uses such as swimming, fishing and picnicking. An Arizona State Parks study in 1997 indicated an annual, direct economic impact within 50 miles of Slide Rock State Park to be \$30.3 million.

## **AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS THAT INFLUENCE THE CORRIDOR VISION**

### **Arizona Department of Transportation**

Responsibility for managing SR 89A belongs to ADOT; The section that winds through Oak Creek Canyon is administered by the ADOT Flagstaff District. As a designated State Scenic Highway, SR 89A is managed to preserve and enhance its intrinsic qualities. While ADOT has legal easements in some locations, most of the roadway is under special use permit from the Forest Service-Coconino National Forest. As time and funding permit, the Forest Service is working with the Federal Highway Administration to convert permits to DOT easements.

### **USDA Forest Service**

National Forest System lands in the Canyon are governed by federal laws, specifically applied to this area through policies set forth in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. In 1998, the Forest Service updated management policies for the area around Sedona, including for National Forest System lands in Oak Creek Canyon. Emphasis was placed on protecting and conserving wildlife habitat, water quality and scenery, while allowing for continued use by residents and visitors.

All National Forest campgrounds and most National Forest picnic areas are operated by the Forest Service under a special use permit to a private enterprise.

### **Arizona Game and Fish Department**

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) manages state wildlife and fisheries resources. Management activities include hunting/fishing regulations and licensing, monitoring and research of wildlife populations as well as law enforcement. In Oak Creek Canyon there is ongoing monitoring and research of native and sport fish as well as stocking of sport fish. There is also considerable survey work associated with amphibian, reptile and mammal species. Maintaining Oak Creek Canyon's biological diversity has been and continues to be a priority in the Northern Arizona Region. AGFD has also been an active partner of the Oak Creek Task Force, which addresses water quality issues.

### **Other State Agencies**

Other state agencies that have management responsibilities in the Canyon include Arizona State Parks and Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. Arizona State Parks manages

Slide Rock State Park. The Arizona Game and Fish Department regulates hunting and fishing. The ADEQ regulates air and water quality.

### **Coconino County**

Private land development in the Canyon is under the jurisdiction of Coconino County. In 1983, Coconino County developed the Oak Creek Canyon Design Overlay Plan and recognized the need for controls on private land to preserve scenic beauty. In 1984, the County adopted the Oak Creek Area Plan, which establishes policies for development of private lands within Oak Creek Canyon. The policies set the tone for development in the area, restricting development of lands to single family uses at a density not to exceed one unit per net developable acre.

A design review zone was adopted with the Area Plan. It includes standards for architectural style, building materials and color. Currently these standards do not apply to single-family residences. Site planning and signs that are not consistent and compatible with the historic and natural environment are restricted or prohibited.

### **Homeowners Associations**

There are several homeowners associations in Oak Creek Canyon that participate actively in planning efforts within the Canyon. See list in appendix.

### **City of Sedona and Sedona Chamber of Commerce**

The City of Sedona and the Sedona Chamber of Commerce have a vested interest in the Oak Creek Canyon CMP. These entities will be involved in strategies surrounding existing and new development and the economic impacts involved.

### **Public/Private Efforts**

Two notable public/private partnerships exist in Oak Creek Canyon. The Oak Creek Canyon Task Force was formed in response to the need to have regulatory agencies work together to address the water quality issues of Oak Creek Canyon. The original Task Force representatives included Coconino County Department of Health Services, ADEQ, the Forest Service and Slide Rock State Park. The objective of the group was to identify water quality related problems within Oak Creek Canyon and establish/implement long-term interagency solutions to those problems. The Oak Creek Task Force meetings have since expanded to include the Oak Creek National Monitoring Project Advisory Committee meetings and are regularly attended by several public interest groups. These meetings provide an open forum for all interested entities to express concerns and offer solutions to water quality problems.

The second partnership provides fire protection through cooperation among the Forest Service, the City of Sedona Fire Department and private landowners in the Canyon. Efforts are underway to update fuels management plans to gain better protection for both private and public lands in the Canyon.

Partnerships between agencies and the community should be built to develop a network of “gateway” centers and “orientation” sites to serve visitors entering the area. The Chamber of Commerce in Uptown, a location in West Sedona and a location south of the Village of Oak Creek could serve as “gateway centers.” Bell Rock and Oak Creek Vistas, Slide Rock and Red Rock state parks are examples of “orientation sites.” Gateways serve as visitor information centers and possible future transfer points to access a shuttle.



## ISSUES

Physical limits exist that will make the achievement of the corridor vision a challenging effort. These limits are listed here as issues. Issues are also identified as problems that could drive corridor plan actions.

### Traffic

Safety concerns have increased on SR 89A. Vehicles pulling on and off the shoulders, vehicles making left turns and vehicles pulling out of parking areas raise safety concerns. Pedestrians and bicyclists along the side of the road and crossing the roadway place themselves and others at risk.

The following factors contribute most to the transportation situation along State Route 89A through Oak Creek Canyon:

- Visitor demand is high and will continue to grow.
- Growth in traffic volume will parallel visitor demand.
- SR 89A is beyond its carrying capacity.
- SR 89A becomes congested during peak periods.
- Parking is severely limited, and opportunities for additional parking are limited.
- Accidents along SR 89A have a high proportion of single vehicle and rear-end accidents.
- Major improvements to SR 89A in the Canyon are not feasible due to environmental constraints.
- To access features in the Canyon, there are no existing alternatives to SR 89A.
- Other than tourist buses, private auto traffic provides the only access into the Canyon.

Constraints to improving transportation in the Canyon include the terrain and need to preserve natural resources along the highway and within the forest. Possible alternative routes that provide access into the Canyon do not exist. State Route 89A provides a detour route to I-17 for emergencies and conversely, I-17 provides an alternative route to the Oak Creek segment of SR 89A. Truck traffic is not allowed and vehicles more than 40-feet long are restricted.

Traffic capacity is defined as the maximum number of daily vehicles that a roadway can carry under the prevailing roadway and traffic conditions. The Level of Service (LOS) that represents the roadway operating conditions at given traffic volumes ranges from LOS A to F. For rural highways, Level of Service is a function of the percent of vehicle time delay, average travel speed, and flow traffic, high speeds and no traffic interruptions. LOS C is the desirable level of service for SR 89A through Oak Creek Canyon. A rural highway operating at LOS C would still have relatively high travel speeds but experience some congestion due to turning traffic and slow moving vehicles. The traffic demand in the Canyon is approaching capacity, and the estimated LOS for the year 2007 in the Canyon is E. This demand exceeds the estimated capacity for the switchback curves.



**AERIAL VIEW OF SWITCHBACKS (EMPHASIZED)**

Three miles of switchbacks along the highway cause vehicles to slow down. Although there are various passing zones along SR 89A, there are virtually no passing opportunities due to the relatively high traffic volumes.

Because SR 89A carries a mix of commercial, commuter and tourist traffic, hazardous situations can result. As traffic demand in the Canyon approaches the capacity of a rural highway, delays will increase. With traffic congestion, emergency vehicles are more likely to be impeded. Maintenance activities also present safety

issues on this narrow highway as crews maintain shoulders, trim overhanging trees, clear rockfall and plow snow.

Accident rates on the highway in the Canyon are three times the state average for rural Arizona highways. Parking is one of the most serious safety issues facing the Canyon. Parking is currently a problem at Slide Rock, the Garlands store, Grasshopper Point and the scenic overlook.

In addition to the physical constraints, staff resources, funding and environmental constraints limit traffic solutions. Funding for improvements to the highway is limited and highly competitive with other projects. Any solutions along this segment of SR 89A may impact the City of Sedona. Limiting vehicles in the Canyon will put pressure on Sedona's street and parking system.



**SAFETY CONCERNS IN OAK CREEK CANYON**

A comprehensive approach to travel demand management could reduce vehicle traffic in the Sedona area. A comprehensive transit system could provide greater access to more visitors to recreation activities. If staging locations were located in or near Sedona, commercial activity within the town might benefit. Left-turn lanes and turnouts on SR 89A could reduce the number of conflicts and improve safety.

## **Fire & Floods**

During the last century, lack of fire in the ponderosa pine plant community has led to an unnaturally dense forest. Frequently occurring, low-intensity fires were the normal pattern in these forests. The current overgrown conditions pose a higher likelihood of a high-intensity catastrophic fire. On any given day, about 24,000 people pass through or use the Canyon. Because of limited access in and out along the road, a high-intensity fire occurring has the potential to cause extensive loss of life and property.

The adverse impacts of a wildfire may include safety, natural resources and the economy. Egress problems and panic can combine to make for a high potential for injury or death. Catastrophic

fire presents a serious threat to all the intrinsic values of the corridor. Wildfire within the Canyon may present a severe economic impact on the community of Sedona, the region and the state. Topography and other resource issues may restrict the ability to conduct large-scale treatments in this corridor, but reinforces the need to implement effective FireWise building standards on private property, and to conduct treatments downwind, where fire could exit the Canyon and threaten either Munds Park or Flagstaff.

This analysis is based upon a landscape-scale study; threats to some areas (Sedona, Winona, City of Flagstaff) are not clearly depicted, but all threat levels are known to exist. Site-specific interpretation is required by local experts, owners and jurisdictional agencies. Fuel reduction actions may result in short-term impacts to scenery but will decrease the likelihood of larger fire and its potential effects. Fuel reduction also can affect wildlife; therefore, treatments should maintain important habitats.

Several plans exist that address fire, fuels, evacuation, air operations, interface pre-attack, travel corridors and land use within the Canyon, including the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Coconino County, which is a collaborative effort completed in January 2005. In addition, private landowners, both businesses and residential, have been involved in various fire protection programs with the Fire Department and to a lesser extent, the Ranger District. Landowners have expressed a keen interest in learning more about opportunities to improve the safety of their property.

The Sedona Fire District has been working with Arizona State Parks for the past three years to develop a governmental partnership for a fire station in-or-around Slide Rock State Park. This partnership would allow for a single fire station in Oak Creek Canyon in lieu of the current two fire stations. Furthermore, 70% of all emergencies that occur in Oak Creek Canyon occur at Slide Rock State Park. This collaborative venture would save taxpayer dollars and improve emergency services in the Canyon. The Sedona Fire District governing board has approved the concept in principal. The Arizona State Park is seeking approval from its board.

Fire management in the Canyon is shared between the Coconino National Forest and the Sedona Fire Department. Fire suppression on State lands is contracted to the Fire District. The Sedona Fire District uses four of its eight stations to support fire protection efforts in the Canyon. The three stations in the Canyon are staffed with personnel who reside and/or work within the Canyon. Constant dialogue occurs between various agencies for evacuation and fire management, including monthly meetings to discuss the status of plans and communication. Issues include lack of "safety zones" and heliports.

The Arizona Department of Transportation works in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Department of Public Safety, County Sheriff, City of Sedona, Oak Creek Canyon Task Force, Keep Sedona Beautiful and state parks on fire and flood contingency planning efforts.

During the winter of 2004-2005, the Canyon and higher areas experienced above average snowfall. As a result, major flooding tore many of the trees from the banks, littered the area with debris and caused damage to recreational facilities.

## 2005 OAK CREEK CANYON FLOOD DAMAGE

Cave Springs Bridge and Entrance – asphalt damage, wood debris on low water crossing structure, bridge grate washed away, wooden walkway damaged and flood debris.  
Cost for repair: \$18,159.82

Manzanita Campground – washed out sites 11, 12 and 13; fill dirt and gravel required to repair. Cost combined with Banjo Bill Picnic Area.

Banjo Bill Site – washed out 5 sites that face the creek; washed out picnic tables and grills.  
Cost for repair combined with Manzanita: \$7,442.59

Pine Flat Water System – washed out pipe at creek crossing. Cost to repair: \$120,000.

Total damage to recreation facilities in Oak Creek Canyon from 2005 floods: \$146,567.39.

### Scenery

Although Coconino County policies provide some protection for the scenery and rustic architectural character of the Canyon by regulating commercial development, a relatively recent trend is found in large-scale homes constructed in the Canyon, some of them at visually obvious locations. As development continues and land becomes scarcer for new development, existing developed parcels could be purchased for redevelopment with large and more visually intrusive structures. These may detract from the rustic quality of the Canyon.



CALL OF THE CANYON

Many of the existing buildings blend with the natural features and contribute to the valued eclectic and rustic architectural character of the Canyon, yet other structures have introduced elements of form, line, color and scale that detract from the desired character. The remaining undeveloped, relatively level natural areas near the creek are now rare and are important for maintaining scenic integrity in the Canyon. Pressure to develop facilities on these remaining parcels will increase as



MAYHEW LODGE

Canyon visitation increases. A scenery analysis by the FS (2003) indicates that the overall experience of the traveler is one where views of nature predominate, even with the current amount of corridor development. However, any substantial new development of currently undeveloped parcels may change this balance between development and nature, which is viewed by the traveling public.

Because of its narrowness, the existing highway through the Canyon does not detract from the “view from the road.” Road widening could compromise scenic integrity both from short-term construction impacts and from an increase in the dominance of the road in the landscape.



## Water Quality

In spite of appearing clear most of the year, water quality in Oak Creek suffers from high levels of biological pollution, which current evidence links to both human and animal sources.

Three potential sources of bacterial contamination have been identified.

- Domestic and wild animals tend to congregate in and around meadows and riparian areas consequently depositing large amounts of fecal material. Runoff from these areas moves directly into streams. The wildlife fecal load in Oak Creek is artificially inflated because of attraction caused by food and human waste associated with recreational activities.
- Contamination may also be attributed to recreation such as full body contact by humans near or in the water, sub-surface seepage from campground toilet and shower facilities, and runoff from campgrounds and populated areas where people and animals congregate.
- Effluent from non-functioning residential septic systems may also contribute bacterial pollution to the Oak Creek Watershed.

Land uses such as building sites, paved parking lots and roads eliminate infiltration and create runoff. The high density of dirt roads throughout the 6,745 acres in the Oak Creek Canyon watershed means a large area of compacted soils that permit little infiltration of water.

Unrestricted roadside parking and creek access continues to impact water quality by an increase in sediments and loss of stream bank vegetation.

## Wildlife and Fish

Numerous activities in the Canyon contribute to the loss, destruction or modification of wildlife habitat. In addition to recreational use, other activities include maintenance of infrastructure, resource management, and activities occurring on private land. The additive effect of these activities result in: loss of soil-stabilizing ground cover; soil compaction; decreased amount of grasses, forbs, shrubs,



PHOTO BY MAX LICHER

and recruitment trees; increased potential for invasion by nonnative organisms; decreased infiltration of water during rain events; increased rates of run off; increased sedimentation into streams; increase of contaminants into streams; decreased water quality, and exacerbated flood conditions. Trails, roads, and recreation sites within the riparian corridor fragments habitat, disrupts wildlife movement, and reduces the amount of unaltered habitat. Trails are often used by wildlife as travel corridors, but use of the trails by humans can deter this. Because of the Canyon's topography and the phenomenon of inversion, smoke from campfires, fireplaces, and other prescribed burning activities in the



watershed can linger in the Canyon. It is possible that too much smoke can drive away aerial insects upon which bats and birds feed. Over the years, the introduction and spread of nonnative plants, fish, crayfish, and bullfrogs have resulted in reduced composition and diversity of wildlife species.

The presence of people, pets, and vehicles in Oak Creek Canyon can result in aural and visual disturbance to wildlife species, particularly during critical periods such as breeding, roosting, and feeding. Disturbance that occurs frequently and over a period of time can result in increased physiological stress, nest, roost, or site abandonment, flushing of birds from eggs, premature fledging of young from nests, and reduction in the amount of suitable nesting and foraging areas. Some activities result in direct mortality of wildlife. Cumulatively, the disturbance of wildlife and modification of their habitat can cause site abandonment ultimately resulting in the loss of suitable habitat for native species, decline in native species populations, shrinking of their ranges, and in some cases, extirpation.

Highways can reduce natural movements of wildlife. As a consequence, populations can become fragmented both physically and genetically. Planning of modified highway features to reduce the sprawl of recreational activities from existing sites and restore areas disturbed from social trails and dispersed recreational activities, while facilitating the movement of people and wildlife along and across the roadway is desired.

## **Plants**

Main threats to plants in the Canyon include uncontrolled stream bank trampling, the creation and use of a network of “social” trails, and competition with invasive non-native species such as Himalayan blackberry, Vinca, and Dalmation Toadflax. The Forest Service discourages collecting plants with the exception of Native American medicinal and traditional uses.

## **Native American Stewardship**

More than 204,000 citizens in Arizona are of Native American descent (more than 5% of the state’s population). The experience of using and passing through this Canyon should be as valuable and meaningful to this group as any other. The more accurate the interpretation of their past and current use, the more likely their future experiences in the Canyon will be meaningful to them. Native Americans have been the stewards of this Canyon for most of its existence; only recent non-Native threats (tourism, development, traffic, etc.) have brought about potential harm to this area. Clearly continued input from these communities would be beneficial to this plan. Native American participation on the Steering Committee is highly recommended.

## **Recreation**

The Canyon is extremely popular for all types of recreation. During some summer months there is no place to park and traffic moves at a crawl. Lack of information about recreation



PHOTO BY BOB & SUZANNE CLEMENZ

opportunities in and near the Canyon creates confusion. Unclear access to recreation areas adds to the congestion and frustrates visitors. Inter-connected pedestrian pathways, interpretive information and sanitation such as restroom/shower facilities, garbage cans and collection, are lacking. Trails in the Canyon receive a range of use with some exceeding acceptable visitor levels.

### **Interpretation and Information**

Surveys of visitors to Oak Creek Canyon show a strong demand for more information about recreation opportunities, the environment, and cultural and historical information. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan (SCORP) shows that Arizona residents consider environmental education to be extremely important.

The Canyon, with its many visitors and natural elements, offers outstanding interpretive opportunities. Currently there is very little interpretation in Oak Creek Canyon, with the only interpretive trail being at Slide Rock State Park. Campground interpretive programs (which have proven to be very popular) are intermittent at best and interpretive signs are few and far between. Areas for safe interpretive facilities may be limited due to topography and existing development. Information for visitors, whether about overnight accommodations, trails, sanitation or traffic is currently provided in an uncoordinated, informal and inconsistent way by a combination of private and public sources. Key safety and orientation messages are either not communicated or are hard to find in the array of commercial media.

### **Outdoor Advertising Controls and Sign Plans**

Roadside signs in Oak Creek Canyon can make a big difference to visitor enjoyment and scenic quality. Roadside signs are primarily governed by ADOT and Coconino County. Coconino County regulates all signing on private lands under the Design Review Guidelines of the Oak Creek Area Plan. The County Zoning Ordinance prohibits all off-site commercial signs, including billboards. Billboards are also prohibited on Scenic Highways. ADOT controls signs that are placed in the roadway right-of-way (ROW). ADOT generally disallows all private signs in the ROW for safety and scenic quality reasons. Both State Parks and the Forest Service have authority for signing on State and Federal lands, consistent with County and ADOT guidelines.

Feedback from the motoring public indicates that they would like to have signs notifying drivers about the state law (State statute #28-704) that requires vehicles to pull over when five or more cars are behind someone impeding the normal flow of traffic. Motorist frustration with obstructed or abnormally slow moving traffic leads to aggressive driving behavior, which is a contributing factor to the high accident rate in Oak Creek Canyon.

### **Shuttle Feasibility**

The Forest Service sponsored a transit study (Transit Plus 1997), which provided a preliminary evaluation of the feasibility of providing transit service in conjunction with parking staging areas. A local citizens group, the Action Coalition for Transportation Solutions (ACTS), has worked for several years on a vision for a system to serve the activities in the Sedona area, including those along SR 89A. A study by the Community Transportation Association of America (1998) recently confirmed the feasibility of a shuttle system to address some traffic issues around Sedona. Additional planning for the shuttle concept was conducted under a joint effort by the City of Sedona, Forest Service, Coconino County,

Yavapai County, ADOT and ACTS and carried out by Nelson Nygaard consulting associates out of San Francisco.

The Sedona City Council accepted the plan in the spring of 2003 but continued to have questions about creating a successful and financially sustainable initial service. The City of Sedona entered into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Coconino County Transportation Services to attempt to answer these questions. Coconino County operates Mountain Line and Van Go public transit services for the City of Flagstaff. The IGA created a Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) made up of stakeholders who helped create the plan. The stakeholders include the City of Sedona, Yavapai and Coconino Counties, the City of Cottonwood, ADOT, USFS and local citizens.

In June of 2004 the Sedona City Council adopted a three-phase Transit Plan and committed to launching the first phase, which includes commuter service from Cottonwood to Sedona and a high-frequency circulator system in the commercial area around Uptown. The Council was asked to look at launching future phases once performance benchmarks were met and financial mechanisms established to support the system. Phase One is scheduled to commence in the spring of 2006. Phase Two of the system includes service from the Village of Oak Creek to West Sedona. Service into Oak Creek Canyon is not anticipated until Phase Three. The description of the Oak Creek Canyon portion of Phase Three is excerpted from the Transit Plan below.

### **Phase Three: Oak Creek Canyon and All-Day Cottonwood Service**

Phase Three requires that the first two phases of service be well established in order to create the connectivity necessary to make this component viable. The addition of Oak Creek Canyon service during Sedona's visitor high season completes the goal of connecting all the major traffic generators and attractions within the region with convenient and usable operations.

The PAC concurs with the Nelson\Nygaard Plan that service is only viable within the high visitor period of late February through October. This Transit Plan recommends that service should run from the municipal parking lot area of Uptown Sedona as far north as the West Fork trailhead on SR 89A. In that corridor, there are a number of high demand recreational facilities, with Slide Rock State Park being the largest. At this time, there is insufficient demand to extend the service further up the Canyon, and the added route length would require additional vehicles to maintain the necessary frequency.

Residents and the Forest Service hope that public transit can help protect Oak Creek Canyon and help manage demand for access. Currently, excessive parking demand is degrading the creek banks and roadway shoulders throughout the corridor.

**The benefits and supporting policies of providing an alternative public transit system in the Canyon are:**

- ✦ Completes the goal of providing connectivity between major tourist generators and attractions throughout the region.
- ✦ Helps address the environmental degradation issues at trailheads and roadside throughout the Canyon.

- Improves the safety for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic within the Canyon by reducing parking demand.
- Provides convenient access throughout the greater region to employment centers, commercial areas and social services.
- Right of Way improvements within Oak Creek Canyon by ADOT and the Forest Service to safely accommodate bus pullout and merging movements.
- Forest Service cooperation and support to build proper shelters and signage.
- More extensive parking management within the Canyon.
- Transit planning and operations support commitments from the Forest Service.

## **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

The following goals and objectives will play a crucial role in achieving the community's vision for the corridor. Included with each objective is a recommended list of actions that may be used to achieve the objective. During January 1998, a public workshop was held to identify the key issues and actions for the Canyon. Although a wide variety of creative ideas arose during the workshop, this corridor management plan brought forward ideas that are immediately pertinent and have the strongest support from participants. These goals and objectives were also reviewed during the June 2005 meeting. A full listing of the workshop results can be found in the appendix.

An advisory committee, comprised of citizens, groups, tribal members and agencies should be re-formed immediately to carry out the vision and goals of the plan and to set a schedule for implementation of the CMP.

### **GOAL #1 – CONSERVATION**

*Preserve the natural setting with its inspiring vistas and intimate streamside. Developed areas remain rural and retain the historical character of past years without an increase in commercialism. Natural values of the rich and diverse Canyon are treasured and protected for future generations to enjoy. The air and water are clear and clean; the wildlife and plants are abundant and healthy.*

#### **Objectives to achieve the Conservation Goal**

**Revise the Coconino County Oak Creek Canyon Area Plan to emphasize the maintenance of the rustic character of Oak Creek Canyon. Specifically the revision should look at the following changes:**

- Extend design review criteria to include single-family residences and other non-commercial uses (as was recommended by the 1989 Area Plan Revision Committee).
- Identify privately owned parcels that have the greatest potential for compromising scenic integrity and explore options for avoiding that result such as: purchase of the parcel for public land, purchasing a scenic easement, encouraging landowners and other agencies to be sensitive to scenic issues.
- Consider adopting a sensitive lands or slope preservation ordinance to keep construction off highly visible ridges and hillsides.
- Gain agreement between the Forest Service, County and State Parks for consistency of

management regarding commercial uses and building character.

- Encourage public ownership or conservation easements on larger properties.
- Encourage controlled access.
- Provide cultural signage regarding the ethic of not disturbing archaeological resources and the fines for doing so.
- Encourage minimal impact to archaeological/cultural properties (casual and serious looting, foot and vehicle traffic, increased visitation).
- Promote the use of the Canyon by various groups in a manner consistent with and respectful of their traditions, e.g. plant gathering, making offerings, etc.

**Provide sign guidelines to encourage compatibility of colors and style and so that information is easy to find and understand.**

- Secure funding for sign planning in the corridor. This planning should include new signs needed to implement the recommendations of this CMP.
- Develop a multi-agency memorandum of understanding that addresses signing consistent with the goals of this plan and the community plan.

**Reduce the impacts to the scenery caused by existing facilities.**

- Identify the more distracting structures in the Canyon and encourage the owner/agency to rectify the facility flaw.
- Encourage the use of architectural elements that complement the natural or valued cultural elements in the Canyon.
- Encourage the use of native construction materials.
- Encourage the use of compatible color, form and scale on both public and private land.
- Encourage changing the color of the bridge at Slide Rock and the handrails at the bridge near Don Hoel's cabins.
- Encourage changing the bridge structure at the Shangri La subdivision.
- Establish vegetative screening between Pine Grove Campground and the road.
- Acquire approximately 8 acres north of Don Hoels (2 parcels) for protection of scenery and important wildlife corridor.
- Acquire the following larger undeveloped private properties or protect scenic character using easements or other tools: 15-20 acres near Don Hoels, area near Forest Houses, creek area across from Slide Rock Lodge, 28 acres west side of SR 89A and south of the Trout Farm (Dunn and Harris properties), and a 5-acre parcel south of the Trout Farm and east of Oak Creek.
- While existing public recreation developed sites should be improved as needed, undeveloped sites such as Troutdale and the Thompson property should remain largely undeveloped.

**Reduce traffic and parking congestion along SR 89A.**

- Encourage development of a shuttle system or other transportation options to reduce pressure for highway widening and alleviate parking congestion and impacts to wildlife.
- Install passing lanes, slow vehicle turnouts, pedestrian walkways and wider shoulders where possible. Pedestrian walkways provide access from proposed shuttle stops to the nearest developed recreation site.
- Develop a parking plan for the corridor that addresses the issue of road-side parking.



- Encourage a controlled access in front of Garland's store and the adjacent Forest Service property and residence with planted islands to reduce the expanse of graveled surface along the highway. (Plans to establish a similar controlled access in front of the Dairy Queen were met with a lawsuit against the County, which the County did not win.)

#### **Improve recreation benefits in the corridor.**

- Acquire land for trailhead parking for Casner Canyon and Thompson Ladder Trails.
- Improve and increase trailhead parking for the 28 trails in Oak Creek Canyon.
- Emphasize recreation activities in developed areas to take the pressure and impact away from more sensitive areas.
- Acquire the following properties from willing sellers, to reduce potential conflicts with recreation use: isolated developed inholdings south of Indian Gardens and Call of the Canyon, including lots across Oak Creek from the day use area.
- Emphasize natural quiet.
- Avoid streamside trails that bisect the wildlife refugia located in between high-use sites.
- Encourage land exchange of Slide Rock to change ownership from USDA-Forest Service to the Arizona State Parks Board.
- Upgrade and redesign all day-use sites and campgrounds to meet changing recreation use demands and needs.
- Upgrade all day-use sites and campgrounds to meet ADA and general maintenance requirements.

#### **Reduce impacts to wildlife, plants and water.**

- Emphasize recreational activities in existing areas rather than throughout the corridor.
- Identify important habitat and designate these areas as refuge for wildlife and plants. The refugia located between designated sites will resemble natural historic conditions.
- Minimize creek crossings with trails.
- In areas where social trails occur along the creek, designate and delineate one trail tread and obliterate the remaining social trails. Social trails that occur in areas with special status wildlife, fish or plants may have to be completely obliterated.
- Consider the timing of the annual opening of recreational facilities to avoid critical periods for wildlife, particularly special status species.
- Build structures to improve road crossing opportunities for wildlife.
- Build new bridges and culverts with proper bat roosting features.
- Leave snags and dead and down woody material as habitat for birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish.
- Avoid constructing trails in sensitive habitats, i.e. riparian areas.

#### **Reduce impact of invasive plants.**

- Eradicate or control giant reed, bull thistle, blackberry bushes, tree of heaven, and other species of invasive plants especially where they are displacing native plants. Tribes should always be consulted in this process as many plants are used extensively in ceremonies and as a medicinal agent.
- Control blackberry bushes and Tree of Heaven especially where they are displacing native plants.

- ✦ Require native plants and seed as well as certified weed-free soils in re-vegetation and landscaping projects.
- ✦ Encourage vehicles and people to stay in designated areas and on designated trails to minimize the potential for spreading and/or introducing invasive weeds.

## GOAL #2 – STEWARDSHIP, INTERPRETATION AND COMMUNICATION

*Serve as loving stewards of Oak Creek Canyon. Our actions sustain a healthy environment. Visitors and residents alike appreciate the exceptional nature of the Canyon. Their behavior is mindful. Their choices are responsible and show care for the Canyon.*

### Objectives to achieve the Stewardship Goal

**Provide effective stewardship messages with coordinated interpretation at key locations where visitors may have an opportunity to view them.**

- ✦ Establish gateway centers outside the Canyon at Oak Creek Vista and in Sedona. Services at the gateways would include Canyon orientation and intelligent messaging systems in addition to the amenities provided at a full service node. These gateways could also serve as parking locations if a shuttle system were to be implemented.
- ✦ Expand the venue of recreation opportunities at Slide Rock State Park. Specifically increase trail connections and provide more orientation and interpretation of the park and Canyon.
- ✦ Emphasize Troutdale as a site for natural resource interpretation.
- ✦ A visitor center would be developed at the Oak Creek Vista location. This center would serve as a key interpretation and information site above Oak Creek Canyon.
- ✦ Agencies should work together with the public to implement key elements of the Interpretive and Communications Plan, especially to address safety, parking and traffic information.
- ✦ Implement the Oak Creek Canyon Interpretive Plan through partnerships, grants and other opportunities.
- ✦ Support Oak Creek Task Force to implement educational opportunities and expand opportunities to address water quality issues.
- ✦ Provide interpretational and directional signing and kiosks and funnel those who park along SR 89A through “choke points” which provide Leave-No-Trace outdoor ethics information.

## GOAL #3 – THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND RECREATION

*Oak Creek Canyon continues to astound and inspire each generation. We have remarkable choices of things to do and see in this incredible place. Our every activity helps us learn about the Canyon, building ownership and respect. Development meets our needs while blending with the unique environmental and historic character of the Canyon.*

### Objectives to achieve the Human Experience and Recreation Goal

**Provide a recreational setting that concentrates services in developed locations and minimizes additional development within the Canyon, while maintaining safety.**

- ✦ Create “service nodes” at existing designated recreation areas to provide information, access and transportation services within Oak Creek Canyon for residents and visitors.

These nodes can occur on private or public lands. The service nodes would provide full or partial services depending on the location. Full service nodes could provide amenities such as parking, restrooms, showers, trash receptacles, telephone, shuttle stops, orientation and interpretation. Partial service nodes could provide limited parking, site information, telephone, shuttle stops and trailheads. Restrooms would be optional.

- Trailheads may or may not be connected to the service node.
- Banjo Bill Picnic Area, Bootlegger Campground, Encinoso Picnic Area, Manzanita Campground, Pineflat Campground and Grasshopper Point are developed public recreation facilities that are considered partial service nodes with creek-oriented activities. They also serve as fishing stops and trailhead access.
- Encourage private enterprise to meet visitor needs that cannot be met on public lands in the Canyon, such as showers and more camping/picnicking. Trails created on private enterprises will not connect to National Forest System lands unless designated by Forest Service staff.
- With minimal improvements, Troutdale should become an informal recreation site with an emphasis on natural features, environmental education and interpretation.
- Evaluate the development of a new campground north of Oak Creek Vista that would be linked by shuttle to day use sites/trails in the Canyon.
- Redesign existing developed overnight and day use sites to be ADA compliant and accessible, to incorporate shuttle services and improved information and interpretation, and to link up with nearby trails and other activity areas.
- No recreation development should occur at the Sterling Fish Hatchery due to traffic and parking restrictions.

#### **Improve pedestrian access through the Canyon.**

#### **Gain dedicated public pedestrian access along the creek through Junipine Resort.**

- A trail system should be developed with the goal of linking key public recreation sites that are within close proximity to each other. It is important to protect sensitive resources by not developing trails between all sites. Expand the trail system with a focus on day hiking and interpretive trails that provide access along some portions of the creek and that link certain existing recreation sites together.

### **GOAL #4 – TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY**

*A transportation system serves pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists and gives them choices about how to access the Canyon and its attractions. Visitors and residents alike have a variety of experiences throughout Oak Creek Canyon without risk of accidents, injury or illness. Forest fire hazard and risk on private and public lands is reduced through cooperation between landowners and agencies.*

#### **Objectives to achieve the Transportation and Safety Goal**

**Maintain the road as a State Route to provide safe travel between communities as well as for residents and visitors to the Canyon, while enhancing and protecting the highway's scenic features.**

- Severely limit roadside parking within the Canyon. Strictly enforce no-parking regulations.
- Encourage implementation of safety improvements for parking areas along the highway at Dairy Queen and Indian Gardens. Identify access and egress and barriers in the vicinity.

- ✦ Implement a shuttle service as a solution to provide access to and among Canyon sites while reducing the impacts of parking and the impact of social trails between recreation sites.
- ✦ Secure funds for ADOT and the Forest Service to facilitate the design of a parking/no-parking strategy for the entire length of the Canyon that identifies where public parking would be appropriate, locations for material storage, improved school bus stop areas, and where maintenance and emergency parking and staging should be accommodated.
- ✦ Conduct an access/control study through the Canyon focused on commercial property access from SR 89A.
- ✦ Work should be identified on a site-specific basis to preserve trees where possible.
- ✦ Encourage ADOT to improve conditions at the Pumphouse Wash Bridge to make this area safer.
- ✦ Encourage ADOT to work with the Forest Service to convert the current special use permit for SR 89A to an easement.
- ✦ Construct slow vehicle turnouts northbound and southbound where feasible.

**Safety areas should be maintained where emergency vehicles, specifically helicopters, can access for evacuations, such as the Slide Rock helipad. These areas can also serve as staging areas and information centers in case of an emergency such as flood or fire.**

**Provide for bicycle and pedestrian use of the corridor while maintaining safety.**

- ✦ Where feasible, the road should be widened to accommodate bicycles as part of the roadway travel lane. A wider shoulder should be provided adjacent to the roadway.
- ✦ Where feasible, locate footpaths/bike paths away from the SR 89A roadway.
- ✦ Develop a pedestrian facility at Midgley Bridge.
- ✦ Develop a comprehensive approach to parking in the Slide Rock State Park vicinity.

**Provide a fire-safe environment for residents and visitors.**

- ✦ A government/private endeavor should produce a fire management plan that improves protection of life, property, and natural and cultural resources and that maximizes safety and improves forest health.
- ✦ Complete and update the current Wildland Urban Interface Analysis for fuels reduction and fire management in Oak Creek Canyon.
- ✦ Plan and implement an effective fire prevention public education program for residents and visitors. Use opportunities to communicate with property owners on topics of fire protection, forest management practices and ecosystem issues.
- ✦ Use interagency assets to implement the Total Fuels Management Plan. Opportunities exist to partner with entities such as APS and ADOT to reduce fire risk.

## **On-going Public Participation**

Public participation will be vital to continuing efforts to implement and revise the Corridor Management Plan. The Advisory Committee, consisting of public and private partners working to implement the Corridor Management Plan, should create a sub-committee with the specific task of ensuring that sufficient effort is made to keep the public involved. This sub-committee can take advantage of the following suggested ongoing community education and outreach programs to keep the community informed and active:

**Maintain Regular Contact with Local Media:**

Newspapers, radio and television should be kept informed of activities and progress related to the Corridor Management Plan. Local media may also be encouraged to do occasional stories highlighting specific aspects and/or developments along the corridor. Work with local media to establish regular coverage of updates on the Corridor Management Plan.

**Partner with Educational Institutions:**

Implement educational campaigns within local schools at all levels to teach students about the corridor and the Corridor Management Plan. Offer regular public educational opportunities as well.

**Oak Creek Canyon Website:**

Create a project web site. Post all information pertaining to the Corridor Management Plan, activities of the Advisory Committee, regular progress reports, a calendar of upcoming opportunities to become/remain involved, etc.

**Public Meetings & Open Houses:**

Regularly invite the public to in-person updates on the progress of the Corridor Management Plan. Encourage public participation in all major decisions regarding the corridor.

**Newsletter/Progress Reports:**

Widely distribute quarterly or bi-annual updates on the progress and activities of the Corridor Management Plan and the Advisory Committee.

**Annual Festivities:**

Invite the public to come together and celebrate their unique corridor once a year with a day of fun and exciting events focusing on the history, qualities and communities of Oak Creek Canyon.

**Marketing and Publicizing the Corridor**

A separate sub-committee should be created with the specific task of coordinating marketing efforts between all entities with an interest in the corridor: residents, businesses, public and private community organizations, and public agencies responsible for managing resources. Marketing efforts should be coordinated to maximize efficiency and to ensure that the interests of the various entities are not overlooked. Following are suggested activities for promoting the route:

**Develop a Marketing Plan That Incorporates the Following:**

Identity enhancement and name branding; road design elements for tourists; a method for evaluating the experiences of tourists; a system to track tourists' information sources about the Canyon.

**Create Partnerships:**

Businesses and public agencies should be encouraged to promote each other to a reasonable extent by providing information to the public about each other's services and activities. Share information about the Canyon with other regional tourist attractions, and offer to do the same for them.



**Tourist Oriented Publications:**

Create a book or pamphlet highlighting the history and intrinsic qualities of the Canyon as well as tourist attractions and activities.

**Media Relations:**

Keep regional media and tourist information outlets informed of Oak Creek Canyon activities and offerings.

## **ACTION PLAN** .....

**Short-Term**

If the vision and goals for Oak Creek Canyon are to be realized, the objectives listed above must be achieved. To achieve those objectives, the relevant strategies, techniques and tools listed above must be implemented to address the corridor's scenic, natural, recreational, historic, cultural and archaeological resources.

To implement the plan, an Advisory Committee should be established. This organization should consist of public and private partners working to implement the Corridor Management Plan. As a first step, a meeting should be held with interested stakeholders and to confirm Advisory Committee membership. An action plan should then be developed to address the priorities for the listed objectives and to assign strategies to specific groups/individuals to achieve.

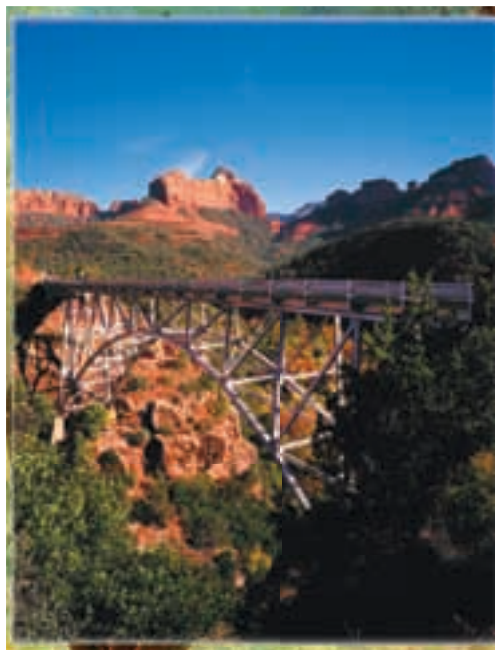


PHOTO BY TOM JOHNSON

## CREDITS

The preparation of this Corridor Management Plan, funded by ADOT, FHWA and USFS, involved many people from a variety of interest groups and agencies.

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<b>Scenery Assessment</b>	-	Jim Beard, Mari Jilbert
<b>Cultural Resource Assessment</b>	-	Kinlani Associates
<b>Transportation Assessment</b>	-	Pete Lima and Associates
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## MAPS





## APPENDICES





## HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL/CULTURAL QUALITIES







**SUMMARY —OAK CREEK CANYON VISIONING SESSIONS — JUNE 1997**





**OAK CREEK CANYON SCENIC CORRIDOR PLAN DRAFT**  
**WORKSHOP MEETING NOTES — JANUARY 1998**







## FUNDING SOURCES





## HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS LISTING





**NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM**  
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