



Colorado River flooding and damage

CHALLENGES

Confronted & Overcome



Trails restored





LETTER FROM THE CHAIR | SHELLEY MELLON

2023 was another year of progress for the Heritage Area. With our federal and local funding in place for another 15 years, we can more effectively envision and plan for our long-term goals.

The year was not without its challenges, however. Monsoon storms and historic high river events caused damage to facilities and trails, and inflation has impacted the Heritage Area, particularly related to construction projects for which we have secured grants. Staff has fortunately done an excellent job of making repairs and finding ways to move forward with these projects within the budgets available. We have also been mindful to make sure that our compensation plans for staff remain competitive in the marketplace.

The Board is enthusiastic about the Heritage Area returning to its traditional role of assisting the City of Yuma in redevelopment activities in the downtown area. While our immediate focus is to assist the City in leveraging their federal grant for the Hotel Del Sol to undertake a transformation of that area, we look forward to an ongoing role of assisting the City in developing the downtown into a vibrant urban neighborhood, featuring residential, office, commercial, and tourist elements. We envision over the next decade the downtown as Yuma's "24/7, 365" hub.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I am so proud to be building upon the work undertaken by past Chairs Brian Golding Sr., Thomas Rushin, the late Patty Ware, Gary Munk, and Steve Bell.

Sincerely,

Shelley Mellon

Chair, Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area



Two icons that mark Arizona's transition from a wild west territory to becoming the 48th state. The guard tower at the Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park and Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge silhouetted at sunset.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR | CATHY DOUGLAS

In my first full year as director, we have moved forward with key projects which are discussed in greater detail within this report. My focus has also been to enhance the capacity of staff.

Highlights include:

- *We continue to successfully lead Yuma's two State Parks, which have been under local management since 2010. We look forward to working with Arizona State Parks to undertake an ambitious capital program for the Yuma Territorial Prison. Design work is currently underway, and our primary focus is to see new restrooms built to accommodate our strong attendance.*
- *We are now at full staffing. In particular, we brought Brett Frame on full-time as our creative design manager which is enabling us to significantly advance our exhibit, print, and video development. We were very fortunate to attract Yanna Kruse as the new manager of the Yuma Territorial Prison. Yanna's great marketing and programming skills and Brett's creative design genius are already making a positive impact to the visitor experience. Lastly, we recently filled our grants and fund development manager position, freeing me up from doing "double duty" during the past year.*
- *With \$250,000 in grant funding secured from the Arizona Office of Tourism, we are working with the City of Yuma Parks and Recreation Department to landscape more of West Wetlands Park. Our goal is to see that work completed in 2024.*
- *After overcoming design and budget challenges, we look forward to the completion of the Sunset View Wildlife Area at the Yuma East Wetlands in 2024. We also had to recover from historic flooding which delayed a bank line restoration project and damaged riverfront trails.*
- *We are actively supporting the City of Yuma's ongoing efforts to redevelop City-owned sites in the downtown, as well as providing redevelopment consulting services to the City on the Hotel Del Sol Multi-modal Transportation project.*
- *We expanded our school field trip and educational outreach programs and hosted successful community and cultural events such as Space Day, Día de los Muertos, Haru Matsuri, and Christmas on the Colorado.*

Mindful of our financial responsibilities, we continue to address operational challenges in the Yuma East Wetlands, at the Colorado River State Historic Park and at Historic City Hall. However, we will overcome these challenges with the support of our many partners, including the City of Yuma, Quechan Indian Tribe, and Arizona Game and Fish Department, as well our federal and state funding partners, private contributors, and community volunteers.

My staff and I pledge to carry on the great work that the Heritage Area has been contributing to the Yuma community for the past 22 years. Feel free to contact me with any comments or questions at cathy.douglas@yumaaz.gov.

Sincerely

Cathy Douglas

Executive Director, Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area

Yuma East Wetlands



Since 2013, the Heritage Area has successfully operated and maintained the 400-acre Yuma East Wetlands (YEW), a Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCRMSCP) site. In consultation with our partners, we recently completed a five-year plan for our LCRMSCP operational funding for 2018 - 2023 and will be embarking on the next five-year plan in January 2024. While the LCRMSCP agreement provides funding for flood irrigation and basic site maintenance, the Heritage Area continues to seek additional grant funding to enhance habitat and to improve the visitor experience.

In 2023, our immediate goal was to secure sufficient funding and complete engineering and design for the new Sunset View Wildlife Area – a new nature park that will provide an elevated and shaded wildlife viewing overlook and trails connecting to the paved bike trail and the existing parking area. This project is funded through a variety of sources, including a federal ARPA grant through the City of Yuma, Arizona State Parks and Arizona Office of Tourism

grants, and a grant from AARP. With the rising cost of construction nationwide, the Heritage Area has supplemented the budget to fully fund the project. Our goal is to complete construction in 2024.

We continued to expand our tribal collaboration with the Cocopah Indian Tribe by assisting them with irrigation installation and trail development for their Final Keepers Riverfront Restoration project. It is our hope that the expertise we have developed over the decades can be shared with many of our partners in order to build local capacity for such work.



River Wild

A series of unexpected high-water flows on the Colorado River complicated our operations this year. While those flows benefited the South Channel marshland with a much-needed inundation, the flows restricted our operations and caused significant damage to our trail system and water infrastructure.



The flooding caused near-catastrophic damage to the water control outlet structure for the South Channel, a vital element that ensures marsh vitality. We have begun discussions with the Bureau of Reclamation to request future capital funding to replace the aging and deteriorating water control structures—a request which can be accommodated within our current LCRMSCP agreement.



Flooding caused delays to the 3,000 linear feet bank line clearing and revegetation project on the north side of the Colorado River, funded with a \$76,000 grant from the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and in cooperation with our partner, the Quechan Indian Tribe.

West Wetlands Park



Landscape design plan for trails and planting of 17-acres of parkland at West Wetlands Park.



Chipped trimmings are recycled into new landscaping design, outlining preliminary walking path.



At 80% complete, the West Wetlands Park offers walking paths, playgrounds, fishing, and riverfront beaches and recreational opportunities.

For over two decades, the Heritage Area has collaborated with the City of Yuma Parks and Recreation Department to develop the 150-acre West Wetlands Park. Recent developments include riverfront beaches, trails, an outdoor environmental classroom, and a thriving riparian habitat. Construction of West Wetlands is now 80% complete.

The Heritage Area is focusing on completing construction of West Wetlands Park. To that end, the Heritage Area secured a \$250,000 grant from the Arizona Office of Tourism to develop 17 acres of parkland. The landscape design for this development was initiated in 2023, and the City of Yuma's Parks and Recreation Department has been extremely helpful in leveraging the grant funds by importing the fill for the rolling linear landscape that will help disguise the park maintenance yard. This park enhancement project, slated for completion in 2024, will provide additional parking, trail connectivity, shade ramadas, and native landscaping.

Yuma's Arizona State Historic Parks



1

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Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park and Colorado River State Historic Park

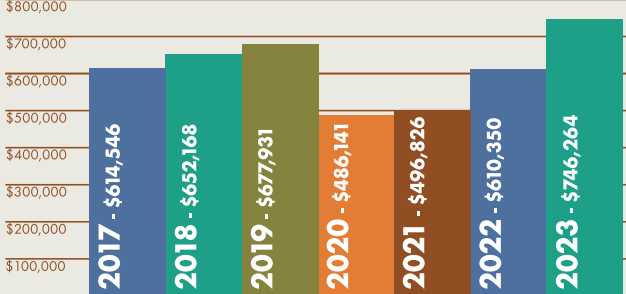
The Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park (YTPSHP), which has generally been financially self-sufficient, is continuing to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID pandemic. With the advent of new leadership there, we are excited to see what Yanna Kruse's marketing and programming skills can bring to the park.

We continue to make improvements to our exhibits including several new prisoner photo op exhibits positioned throughout the cell block, and a \$10,000 grant received from Union Pacific Foundation will allow us to add new sidewalks and railroad history exhibit improvements in 2024. The donation of a metal archway, welded by Gila Ridge High School students, will soon create a gateway to the Yuma Territorial Prison Cemetery. We are grateful that Arizona State Parks has, for the first time in decades, made a significant capital commitment to the YTPSHP, with design funds budgeted in July 2023 and significant construction funding coming in July 2024. Our immediate priorities include the construction of much needed new restrooms



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YCNHA State Historic Park Admissions & Sales - 2017 to 2023



4



to accommodate growing attendance, historic preservation of the Sally Port, upgrades to electrical and lighting systems to facilitate evening special events, and new cemetery fencing.

The Colorado River State Historic Park (CRSHP) has benefited from additional revenues from increased admissions, gift shop sales, and special events, though funding from the City of Yuma and the Heritage Area's National Park Service funding is still needed to meet the operational budget for this 11-acre historic park.

We continue to supplement state park operational funding through facility rentals for private weddings and events, as well as by offering community and cultural programming events. In 2023, the Heritage Area hosted cultural events, including a new event called Haru Matsuri which attracted nearly 1,000 visitors to celebrate and enjoy Asian and Pacific-Islander cultural performances and cuisine. Our Día de los Muertos event was expanded in 2023 through a growing partnership with the Chicano Art Collective, with whom we are

exploring new and upcoming events to celebrate the Heritage Area's largely Hispanic culture. Our annual Christmas on the Colorado children's event continues to be a community favorite, as do the Space Day and Exploration Station summer events which draw in hundreds of participants.



- 1 New photo ops at YTPSHP | 2 Día de los Muertos celebration at YTPSHP | 3 Gila Ridge High School welding team at YTPSHP cemetery | 4 YTPSHP special events at night | 5 CRSHP 11 acre park | 6 CRSHP Exploration Station events | 7 Haru Matsuri at CRSHP | 8 Christmas on the Colorado is a popular family event | 9 Night events allow visitors to experience the park in a new way under the stars



Educational Programs

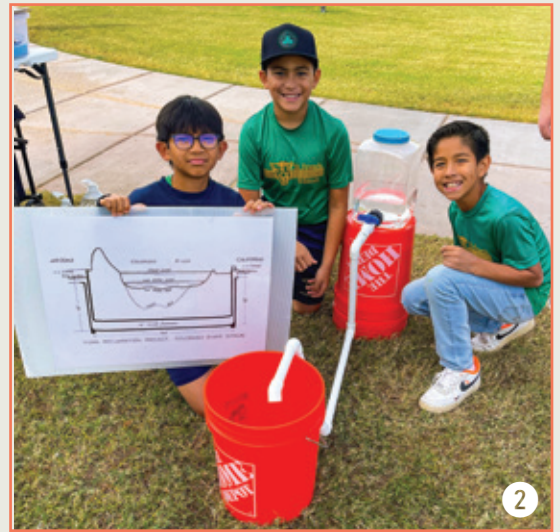


We continue to expand our educational programming for school children, particularly at the Colorado River State Historic Park (CRSHP), which tells the important and timely story of the past, present, and future of the Colorado River. Tammy Snook, manager of CRSHP, facilitates several in-classroom and on-site educational programs. A few new programs she began offering in 2023 include “Skull Detectives”, “A Soldier’s Life”, and “Emigrants of the Goldrush”.

With a third round of grant funding provided by the National Park Foundation in 2023, we have had the incredible opportunity to not only continue our field trip program at the Yuma Territorial Prison and the Yuma East Wetlands, but to also expand this program to include the Colorado River State Historic Park. This grant has allowed us to plan, create, and implement high quality, standards-based, interactive field trips that bring Yuma’s compelling history to life - all at no cost to Yuma County’s largely Title 1 elementary schools! We are also expanding our reach to a larger, national audience through digital programming. While this initiative has been entirely grant-funded, we are seeking ways to secure various sources of funding, including local philanthropy, to sustain this program well into the future.



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3

- 1 Students make a quick exit from the dark cell of the YTPSHP
- 2 Students build their own siphons, replicating the siphon that runs under the Colorado River at the CRSHP
- 3 Students test out their dam designs at CRSHP
- 4 Escape the Prison game sends students looking for clues through out YTPSHP

Downtown Yuma



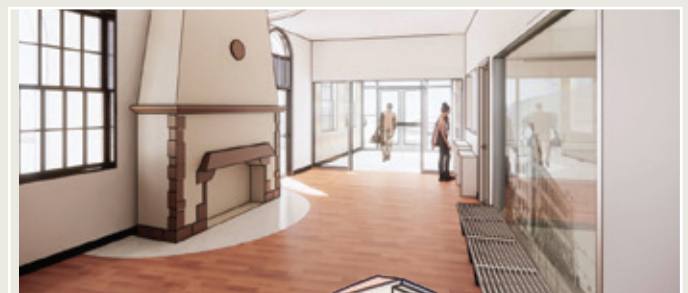
Historic Redevelopment

For fifteen years through 2018, the Heritage Area managed the City of Yuma's commercial redevelopment of the waterfront. The Heritage Area has once again returned to that role of assisting the City to advance downtown redevelopment. In particular, the Heritage Area has asked former Director Charles Flynn and a Tempe-based redevelopment consultant to assist in marketing and shaping the development of the Hotel Del Sol Multi-modal Transportation project. The City secured a \$10.6 million federal grant, and the goal is to leverage those funds to attract significant new private funding. The hope is to jump start more private investment throughout the downtown.

One of the results of the original waterfront redevelopment projects, which the Heritage Area assisted the City with, was the creation of the City's North End Redevelopment Fund (NERF). These earlier development projects now generate revenue for the NERF which are meant to incentivize further riverfront and downtown redevelopment. We look forward to seeing some new and exciting development happening in the downtown.



Future Del Sol lobby architectural rendering



Architectural rendering envisioning the historic Hotel Del Sol as a multi-modal transportation center with housing and retail shops.



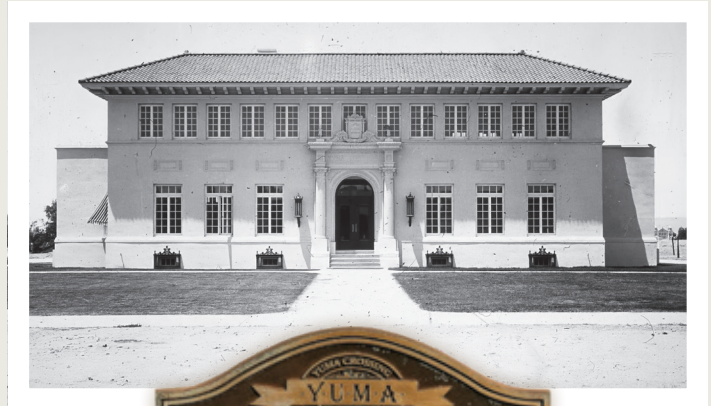
Historic City Hall



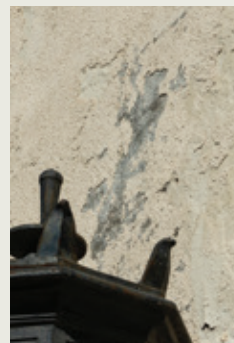
When City government moved into the new Municipal Complex more than 20 years ago, the Heritage Area stepped forward to lease the Historic City Hall from the City to occupy, manage, and maintain the building. It made sense as it was situated on the riverfront and was on the National Register of Historic Places, having been built in 1921. Since then, it has served as our headquarters and a hub for other non-profit organizations, like the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce.

Through those years, based on the rental revenues we receive and contribute, we have done our best to keep the building in good shape. We have periodically replaced the 12 individual air conditioners that serve the building, made significant roofing repairs, as well as replaced and repaired its aging plumbing and electrical systems. Balancing the operating budget for this building has been a challenge.

As this facility enters its second century, we look forward to working with the City to complete a full capital-needs analysis study and to help find funding to undertake the capital improvements needed to ensure the legacy of this important part of Yuma's history.



The historic Yuma City Hall building, completed in 1921, incorporates architectural craftsmanship, such as Corinthian columns and other fine details, that have fallen out of favor with modern architecture, making preservation all the more critical.



YUMA CROSSING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the Fiscal Period Ending September 30, 2023

Federal, State & Local Grant

● \$791,344

State Parks Entrance Fees & Merchandise Sales

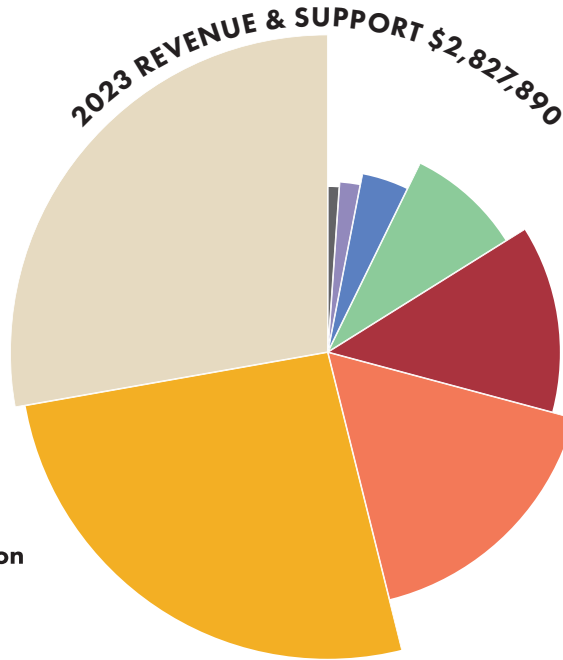
● \$746,264

Contractual Revenue

● \$473,328

City of Yuma In-Kind Contribution

● \$366,673



Private Grants & Projects

● \$241,613

Rental Income

● \$124,937

Special Events

● \$58,052

Charitable Donations

● \$25,678

State Parks - Operations & Maintenance

● \$928,090

Yuma East Wetlands Administration, Operation, Maintenance & Permitting

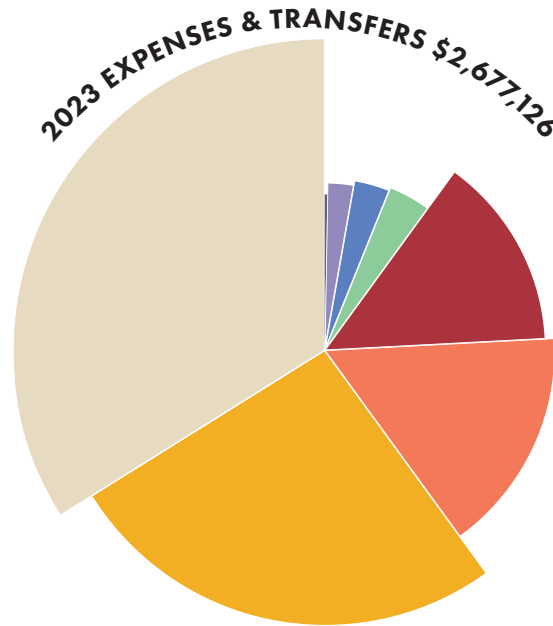
● \$687,987

General and Administration Expenses

● \$417,681

City of Yuma In-Kind Expenses

● \$366,673



Historic City Hall and Pivot Point Plaza

● \$92,789

Heritage Programming and Education

● \$87,724

State Parks - Exhibit Installation & Repairs

● \$86,745

Yuma West Wetlands Restoration Project

● \$9,438

Excess of Revenue Over Expenses 2023 - **\$150,764**

With Gratitude



OUR DEDICATED STAFF

- Cathy Douglas, *Executive Director*
- Priscilla Starr, *Accounting Manager*
- Sylvia Atondo, *Staff Accountant*
- Sarah Halligan, *Marketing & Communications Specialist*
- Brett Frame, *Creative Design Manager*
- Teri Ingram, *Events Specialist*
- Anna Reagle, *Grants & Fund Development Manager*
- Tracy Jones, *Administrative & Grants Specialist*
- Ken Waller, *IT Support*
- Yanna Kruse, *Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park Manager*
- Mario Ochoa, *YTPSHP Guest Service Supervisor*
- Tammy Snook, *Colorado River State Historic Park Manager*
- Martin Trujillo, *Retail Operations Coordinator*
- *State Historic Park Guest Service Representatives:*
Daniella Hammond, Louise Valdez, Jaime Valle, Jr., Nicole Crawford, Angela Snyder, Marissa Urias, Patrick McFarlane, Nick Okada
- Jesus Melendrez, *Wetland and Facilities Operations Manager*
- *Yuma East Wetlands Project Field Staff:*
Jorge Prado, Sr., Pio Fernandez, Jorge Prado, Jr., Jesse Lopez, Rodrigo Cervantes
- Susana Famanias, *Custodian*

YCNHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Shelley Mellon, *Board Chairman*, RL Jones Insurance & MVD Services
- Chris Wheeler, *Vice Chair*, Prison Hill Brewing Co.
- Tom Rushin, *Secretary/Treasurer*, Retired - Yuma School District #1
- Emilia Cortez, Arizona Children's Association
- Amber Shek, Greater Yuma Economic Development Council
- Reetika Dhawan, Arizona Western College
- Linda Elliott-Nelson, Arizona Historical Society
- Clint Harrington, Pilkington Construction
- Brian Golding, Sr., Quechan Indian Tribe
- Douglas Nicholls, Mayor, City of Yuma
- Chris Morris, Deputy Mayor, City of Yuma
- Jonathan Lines, Yuma County Supervisor
- Brian Fernandez, Arizona State Senator, District 23

OUR GENEROUS INVESTORS

- Allo Fiber
- Amanda Coltman
- Amber Shek
- APS
- Avenir (AEA Federal Credit Union)
- Big O Tires
- Bose Corporation
- Edward Otto
- Elliott Family Charitable Fund
- Exceptional Community Hospital
- Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona
- Gowan Company
- Kevin & Michelle Stoleson
- National Bank of Arizona
- NexGen
- Prison Hill Brewing Company
- Rachele Richards
- Rancho Melendrez
- Russell & Janet Jones
- Shelley Mellon
- Visit Yuma
- Yuma County Chamber of Commerce

