



YUMA CROSSING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA CORPORATION
ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015



Forging Ahead



Letter from the Chair

A view looking east from the Herb Guenther Scenic Overlook in the Yuma East Wetlands. Only a 5-10 minute walk from Gateway Park, this spot gives you a 360 degree perspective of this remarkable marsh and upland restoration project.

2015 marks my fourth year as Chairman of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, following in the footsteps of past Chairs Steve Bell, Gary Munk, and Patricia Ware, who guided Yuma’s riverfront redevelopment since 2002. Aided by many partners, volunteers, and a dedicated staff, they oversaw the completion of two beautiful riverfront parks, an extensive multi-use trail system, 400 acres of restored wetlands, major private investment on the downtown riverfront and the saving of Yuma’s two state historic parks.

Recent years have focused on making these projects sustainable in the long term. We are working with local partners and the Bureau of Reclamation to ensure that the 50-year maintenance agreement for the East Wetlands can keep that area as beautiful as it is now. The City of Yuma and the Heritage Area are in negotiations with Arizona State Parks to ensure that Yuma retains local control of the two state historic parks. Senator McCain was instrumental in ensuring that authorization to receive National Park Service funding would continue, at least through 2022.

We are also looking to the future and undertaking new initiatives. We are working with the City’s Parks and Recreation Department to implement major improvements at the riverside in West Wetlands Park. And with the help of a generous donation from a local contractor, we are improving recreational access to the East Wetlands at very little cost. Another historic adobe has been restored and put back on the tax rolls.

We thank the Yuma community and our governmental and private sector partners for their ongoing support, and look forward to continued improvements along the Colorado River.

Sincerely,

Thomas Rushin
Chair, Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area



Yuma West Wetlands

This 110-acre riverfront park is unique in that it is located atop the former City of Yuma landfill, which operated from 1910-1970. In the 1990’s, an environmental analysis determined that it could be converted to a park. Six feet of clean fill was trucked in from construction projects throughout the area. First phase construction was completed in 2002 in the eastern section of the park. A roadway through the entire park was completed in 2006. In 2007, the Wolfe Creative playground was built by the community in the manner of an old-fashioned “barn-raising”. In 2010, a lit and paved multi-use path was completed alongside the roadway.

A considerable amount of the land area, however, is yet to be developed, but the Heritage Area is committed to working with the City of Yuma to complete the park. Our major emphasis has been to take advantage of 40 acres along the river. The Heritage Area completed a new plan for those 40 acres and secured the necessary permitting. In 2013, Centennial Beach was completed east of the boat ramp. In 2015, the Heritage Area partnered with the Parks and Recreation Department to clear and restore the bank line, developing an outdoor environmental classroom in the process. The focus is now creating a second beach with good access from the park.

Clockwise from top: A new beach at the West Wetlands. Park features picnic areas, a lake, restrooms, and convenient parking. A new mile-long trail was made possible through a partnership with the City of Yuma Parks and Recreation Department and the Heritage Area.



Promoting Private Investment in the Downtown and Riverfront

In 1877, the Southern Pacific Railroad came across the Colorado River into Yuma, spawning a commercial building boom along Madison Avenue. The adobe structures along Madison survived the flood of 1916 (which resulted in a municipal ban on further adobe construction) and, later on, became the foundation for the Brinley Historic District.

In 2010, the Heritage Area purchased three adobe National Register buildings along Madison Avenue which were in a serious state of deterioration. 106 S. Madison Avenue was restored in 2012, but funding was not available for any further restoration. In 2014, the Heritage Area offered 102 S. Madison for lease. The prospective tenant was so enthusiastic about the project that he offered to buy the building upon its

restoration, and invested more in exterior improvements. This interest from the private sector reflects a positive trend for the downtown in general and historic properties in particular.

While the deep recession of 2008-9 had slowed private investment on the riverfront, the City of Yuma achieved a major breakthrough with the announcement of a 64-residential apartment complex along the canal front from 2nd to 4th Avenues, scheduled to open in late 2017. Increasing downtown living is considered a key to downtown revitalization.

Top: Rendering of the new 64-unit residential development along the Yuma Main Canal. Right: The Union Pacific Foundation provided grant funding to re-roof and stabilize this 1880's era freight depot, a National Register property donated to the Heritage Area. Far Right: The Heritage Area saved and helped restore three endangered Madison Avenue National Register properties, with the eventual goal of getting them back into private ownership.





Top: Overlooking the entire restoration area, which involved the planting of 200,000 trees, grass plugs, and marsh plant over the last decade. Center: Yuma's multi-use trail has been extended next to the East Wetlands, popular with walkers, runners, and bicyclists. Bottom: A 3.5 mile maintenance trail serves double duty for hikers and equestrians alike.

Yuma East Wetlands

The Yuma East Wetlands is considered a model for wetlands restoration in the desert Southwest. A jungle of non-native vegetation, trash dumps and hobo camps was transformed into 400 acres of wetlands and cottonwood/willow forests, thanks to a partnership among the Heritage Area, Quechan Indian Tribe, Arizona Game and Fish, and the City of Yuma.

The concern of how to maintain the 400 acres was resolved when the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (MSCP)—a coalition of the federal government, southwestern states, and irrigation districts committed to restoration on the Colorado River—agreed to partner with Yuma to maintain the area for a 50-year period.

The local partners are currently in discussions with the Bureau of Reclamation (who manages the MSCP program) on how to maintain the area in a cost-effective manner. Major issues include securing a source of fresh water for the South Channel; converting away from drip irrigation, which can be costly

to maintain; and a sustainable system of pumps to irrigate the project area. As the East Wetlands is rather unique in the portfolio of MSCP projects, the challenge is to find an approach that meets the community's needs within the constraints of the MSCP program.

Improving Access to the East Wetlands Through a Creative Partnership

People enjoy fishing in the Yuma East Wetlands, but vehicular access is necessarily limited. At the Pacific Avenue/2E alignment, there is a road that goes over the levee and the MODE which people use to access the South Channel in the East Wetlands but with no parking. The Parks and Rec Department, the Heritage Area, and a private heavy equipment operator (donating his equipment and operators) teamed up to improve the road surface; clear and improve a parking lot; and secure/patrol the site at night. Public response has been terrific.



East Wetlands integrates public access and recreation with its primary goal as a wildlife area. Above: The Quechan Indian Tribe built Sunrise Point Park (Anyá-Nitz-Pak). Left: Better access for fishing at the 2E alignment was made possible with help from a contractor and from the City's Parks and Recreation Department.



Arizona State Parks: The Way Forward

Clockwise from top: A magnificent view from the Prison Guard Tower. The original cell block is a major draw for visitors. Increased retail sales have made the Prison financially much stronger.

With the wholehearted support of the Yuma community and the City of Yuma, the Heritage Area took over operations of the Yuma Territorial Prison and Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Parks in order to prevent their closure by Arizona State Parks. The results have been nothing less than phenomenal.

The Territorial Prison has doubled its revenues in six years through a creative and aggressive advertising program; has undertaken a comprehensive program to address deferred maintenance; has entirely revamped the museum and its exhibits; and, most importantly, brought a renewed sense of community pride back to this iconic site.

The Quartermaster Depot features stories of Colorado River history but also serves as

Yuma's Arizona Welcome Center in a joint venture with the Yuma Visitors Bureau. It also is a community gathering place for weddings, special events, farmers markets, concerts, and conferences. While not as financially robust as the Territorial Prison, the Quartermaster Depot is supported financially by the City of Yuma, the Heritage Area, and the Yuma Visitors Bureau.

With the immediate task of saving the parks in the past, the focus turns to the long-term sustainability

of the parks. In 2015, the Heritage Area completed a Master Plan for both parks, which will serve as a blueprint for future improvements. (yumaheritage.com/docs/Parks-Master-Plan-2015.pdf)

The most thought-provoking element of the Master Plan is the proposal to change the name of the Quartermaster Depot to the Colorado River State Historic Park, telling the story of the past, present and future of the Colorado River. Given the river's primary importance of sustaining life and growth in the Southwest, this story is one of compelling significance. Discussions are now underway with both private foundations and government leaders on how to advance this most ambitious program.

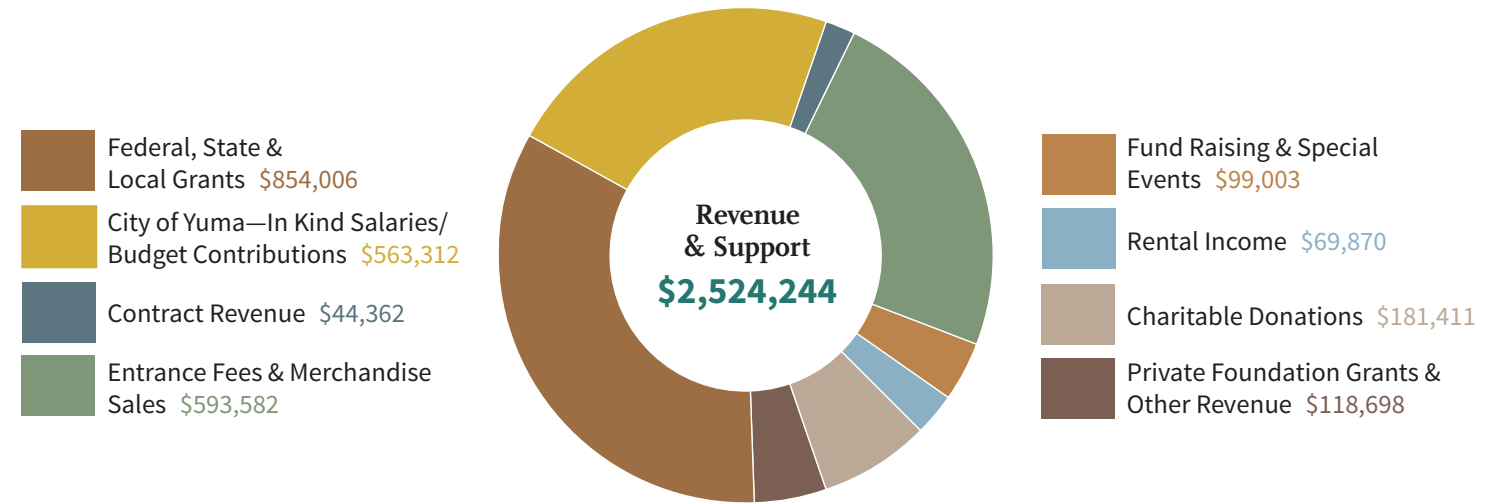
Another key factor to resolve is the long-term relationship between the Yuma community and Arizona State Parks. The current short-term lease terms were developed during emergency conditions to get the parks into local control back in 2010. In order to facilitate strategic planning and investments in the parks, it is essential that a longer-term agreement be worked out in which the community retains the degree of flexibility and freedom needed to operate the parks effectively. It is hoped that these arrangements can be put in place in 2016.

Restored original adobe structures, a Sunday Farmer's Market in the winter, and engaging museum exhibits bring the story of the Colorado River to life.



YUMA CROSSING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES (PRELIMINARY)

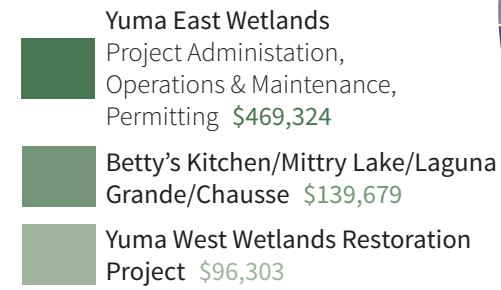
For the Fiscal Period Ended September 30, 2015



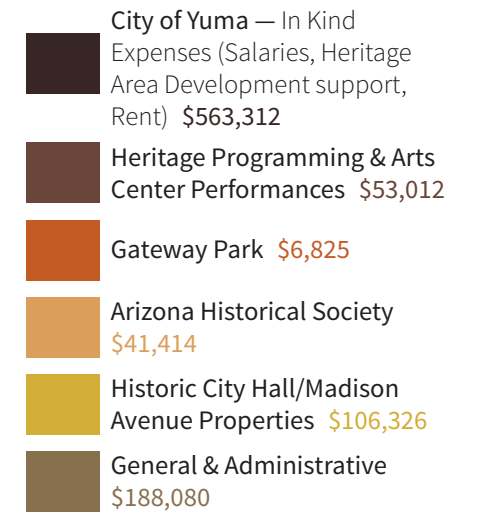
State Historic Parks (YTP/QMD)



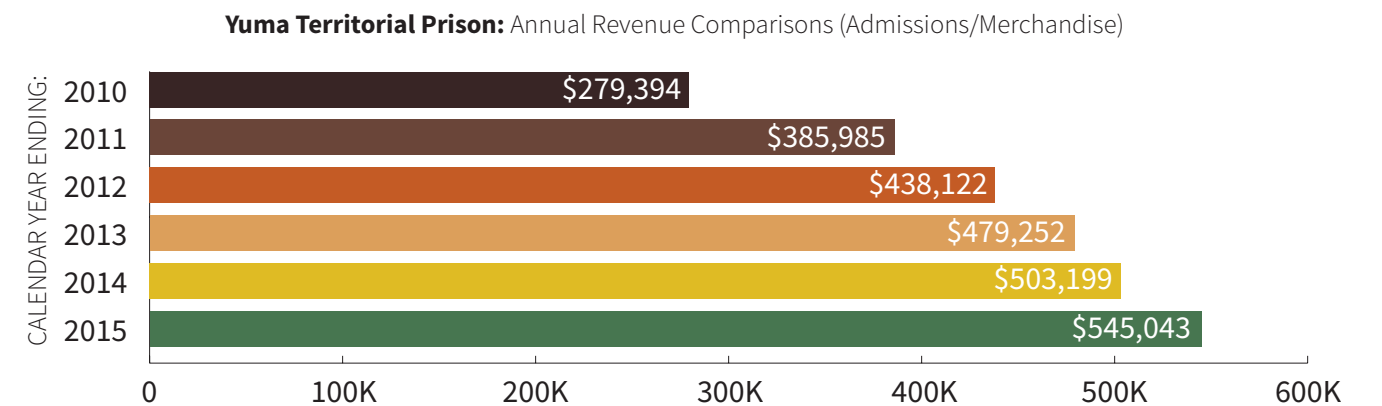
Wetlands Restoration



Administration & Operations



Excess (Deficit) of Revenue over Expenses: \$87,366





A SPECIAL THANKS

OUR DEDICATED STAFF

Charles Flynn,
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of Operations and
Finance

Tina Clark, Curator and
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Manager

Cathy Douglas,
Administrative
Specialist and Grants
Manager

Tammy Snook,
Interpretive Park
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Teri Ingram, Events
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Suzy Abril, Bookkeeper

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Lauryn Trujillo

Daniella Laurel

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Custodian

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