

Forging Ahead in a Year of Challenges and Opportunities



ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2019/2020

Without question, 2020 presented significant challenges for the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area due to the impact of COVID-19 across the globe and upon our region. I am immensely proud of our remarkably resilient staff, and of the steady leadership exhibited by Lowell Perry, Jr., our Executive Director, as they all faced uncertainty while infection rates rose and workplaces began to close. They quickly secured operations funding and began implementing cleaning and disinfection protocols to assure public safety upon the reopening of the two state historic parks we manage. As shutdowns and stay-at-home orders ended, our staff managed to oversee more improvements within the Yuma East Wetlands, including fuels reduction and revegetation work within some of our earliest restoration project sites.

The global pandemic presented the Board of Directors with the opportunity to also look hard at our internal capacity and I believe our organization made wise use of the time to enhance our ability to recruit, retain, and potentially expand our already diverse Board. We updated our governing documents and approved several new operating policies to strengthen our accountability and responsiveness to the Yuma community. I acknowledge the contributions made by my fellow Directors through their consistent and thoughtful governance—much of it occurring virtually—in pursuit of our shared vision of a vibrant riverfront and an economically robust Downtown Yuma.

I am fortunate to have experienced firsthand the leadership of past Chairs Steve Bell, Gary Munk, Patricia Ware, and Tom Rushin, and I strive to honor their contributions through my service. Most of all, I remain grateful to the Yuma community for its support of this organization since its founding in 2002, and its trust in us to share the one-of-a-kind places and stories that make up the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area.

Sincerely,

Brian Golding, Sr.

Brian Golding, Sr.
Chair, Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area





High Performing Heritage Area Team Responds to the Challenge

Thank you for taking time to review our current annual report that summarizes the many recent highlights and achievements for the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (YCNHA). The team has shown tremendous perseverance and resilience throughout a pandemic that is still having an impact on the country as well as the organization. That important variable, among a number of other challenges, may well make this year's performance, one of the strongest during my tenure as Executive Director. It is why I approach this next year with much, albeit cautious, optimism.

We have managed to keep staff working near full capacity by successfully securing two rounds of federal PPP funding, and kept our parks open during a pandemic, with well thought out COVID protocols to keep the team and visitors safe. YCNHA hired high performers for several key open positions, all of whom contribute greatly to a continually improving vibrant corporate culture. As part of our organizational strengthening efforts, we instituted two additional standing board committees, fund development and governance, to improve the workflow, and better position us for managed growth and evolution moving forward. We added three new intern board members who have all hit the ground running, and are actively investing their time, talent, and treasure in the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area. One of these community leaders even made a record-setting gift for YCNHA board members. Attendance at board and committee meetings remains consistently strong.

If the above challenges were not enough, YCNHA, along with 29 other national heritage areas, are due to sunset later this year without reauthorization from Congress. As a board member of the

Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA), and chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, I have been actively engaged in reauthorization efforts for the YCNHA individually (S-1318), as well as important national program legislation (HR 803 & S-1942) that would best ensure long-term stability for the YCNHA. While confident that this will ultimately take place, the current frenetic pace in Washington, D.C., could delay the process.

Nonetheless, there have been an extraordinary number of highlights over the past year, chronicled in the following pages of this annual report, including advancing the mega park concept known as the Historic Yuma Experience. This forward thinking, collective impact economic development approach to making Yuma a regional destination, if done correctly, will be a game-changer for our community. This [brand-building vision video](#) sums up the concept very well.

To improve the visitor experience, YCNHA continues enhancement efforts within the assets we manage, which provide low cost, quality of life family entertainment for locals, winter-visitors, and tourists alike! We invite you to engage with the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area in our quest as complete and accurate storytellers dedicated to restoring, preserving, maintaining, and promoting Yuma's history. Visit YumaHeritage.com today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lowell Perry, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lowell Perry, Jr.
Executive Director, Yuma Crossing
National Heritage Area



Colorado River State Historic Park & Yuma Crossing Discovery Center

It was a big year of change, challenges, and opportunities at the Colorado River State Historic Park this fiscal year. While the year started out with an increase in park visitation, great attendance at the annual Civil War Days event, and nearly every weekend booked with weddings and assorted special event rentals, things changed drastically in the spring when the COVID-19 pandemic exploded around the world. The park closed down from mid-March through mid-June, during which time Heritage Area staff worked hard to clean and sanitize all park surfaces and catch up on park maintenance including painting the interior of the Quartermaster's office and welcome center. The park reopened in mid-June with additional safety parameters set in place including mask requirements, social distancing, new hand sanitizing stations, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing protocols, and new virtual educational programming options.

In the midst of the pandemic, Visit Yuma relocated their visitor center to a new location on Main Street, thus presenting an opportunity for the Heritage Area to assume full responsibility for park admissions, as well as establishing a gift shop. Within a short 3-month window, Heritage Area staff succeeded in rebranding and revamping the park welcome center into the Yuma Crossing Discovery Center (YCDC). The YCDC now functions with a triple-duty purpose: 1) the park welcome center; 2) a gift shop; and, 3) a much-needed location to present all things pertaining to the Yuma Crossing. The YCDC successfully opened at the end of September 2020 with all new merchandise, a new point of sale system, an art gallery displaying local art featuring sites within the Yuma Crossing, a new Yuma Crossing wall mural, updated theater room, and new park signage.

Additional park improvements included construction of new ADA accessible trails at the Dr. Khaled M. Bali xeriscape garden funded via a grant from Arizona State Parks and Trails, as well as a new interpretive exhibit, titled "The U.S. Army at the Yuma Crossing", funded via a grant from the Arizona Community Foundation.

The Heritage Area continues to work diligently with state, federal, and local sources to obtain funding needed to maintain and restore the parks' many historic adobe buildings. The required restoration to preserve these historic structures will take substantial funding from multiple sources, including corporate and private donations.





- 1/2** Newly branded Yuma Crossing Discovery Center signage **3** Educational programming went virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic **4** New ADA-accessible trails and bench at the xeriscape garden **5** Fabulous gift options at the Yuma Crossing Discovery Center Gift Shop **6** Yuma Crossing Discovery Center grand opening ribbon-cutting ceremony



- 1 Group tours offered at the prison
- 2 Seeking ghosts at children's ghost tour event.
- 3 Every last inch of the museum cleaned and sanitized in preparation for guests during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 4 Staff learned adobe maintenance techniques at an NPS-sponsored class held at the Casa Grande National Monument
- 5 Adobe preservation needed! Help save the Sally Port with a tax-deductible donation





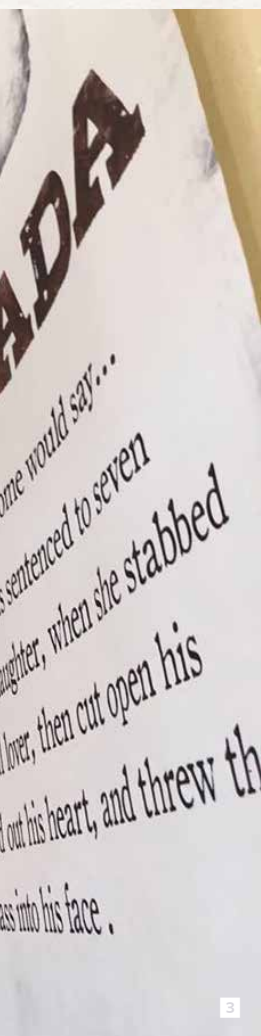
Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park

The Yuma Territorial Prison State Park (YTP) continues to thrive under the local management of the Heritage Area. Since the Heritage Area took over management of the park in 2010, revenues have more than doubled and the park continues to be Yuma's top tourist destination! Adding to the park's allure are those seeking spirits of the past. Voted by USA Today readers as the #1 "Best Haunted Destination in the U.S." in 2019, the YTP came in a strong 2nd place in 2020. Thank you to all of the devoted YTP fans who voted! The YTP continued to capitalize on the "Best Haunted Destination" distinction by offering specialized ghost tours for children, adults, and paranormal ghost hunters. The park was also featured in several paranormal television shows and utilized as a set for a movie about Pearl Hart, one the prison's most infamous inmates.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on park attendance and revenues this fiscal year, we were fortunate to have received federal Paycheck Protection Program funding which allowed all of our staff to remain gainfully employed during this pandemic. Park staff kept very busy during the 3-month park closure ensuring every inch of the park was cleaned and sanitized and ready to welcome guests back to the park in mid-June following updated safety and cleaning protocols.

The Heritage Area continues to invest in ongoing general maintenance at the park and assessment and evaluation of the park's adobe structures, specifically the iconic Sally Port which is in dire need of historic adobe restoration. This fiscal year, staff attended a National Park Service sponsored adobe preservation workshop at Casa Grande Ruins National Monument to gain knowledge on adobe maintenance and preservation techniques.

The Heritage Area continues to work closely with Arizona State Parks & Trails and Arizona legislators to solidify future state funding commitments for park restoration and improvements. It will take substantial funding from multiple sources, including private entities and individuals, to restore and preserve the park's historic assets. The Heritage Area will lead the effort to ensure that these important community assets remain standing for future generations to come.



Yuma's Wetlands

For over 20 years, the Heritage Area has led the charge to transform Yuma's riverfront, including the development of West Wetlands Park and the Yuma East Wetlands Conservation Area. These developments came about through strategic collaboration with many stakeholders including the City of Yuma, Quechan Indian Tribe, and Arizona Game and Fish Department, as well as millions of dollars invested from federal, state, and local funding partners, private donations, and community volunteers. Due to these successes, the Heritage Area was featured in the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum and Arizona Community Tree Council's 1st Annual AZ Virtual Plant Festival. Heritage Area staff began developing a virtual tour of Heritage Area sites in late FY2020 and the site went live in early FY2021. Link to the tour, which features the Heritage Area's unique, natural cultivated plant heritage: [AZ Virtual Plant Fest](#).

EAST WETLANDS For several years now, the Heritage Area has successfully operated and maintained the 400-acre Yuma East Wetlands (YEW), a Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program site. In FY20, additional grant funding was awarded from the AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM) to remove invasive vegetation and enhance riparian habitat in over 17 acres at YEW. This project was featured in the May 1, 2020 issue of the National Audubon Society's Western Water News, – [Native Plants Help Restore the Colorado River | Audubon](#). Additionally, DFFM awarded a grant to remove hazardous fuels within 50 acres at YEW, and Arizona State Parks & Trails awarded a grant to begin construction of a nature park called Sunset View Wildlife Area. Both of these projects commenced in FY21.

While the Heritage Area continues to be successful in obtaining grant funding for habitat restoration, an increase in funding and volunteer involvement are required to assist with ongoing site maintenance and to improve amenities to enhance the visitor experience.

WEST WETLANDS Since 1999, the Heritage Area has collaborated with the City of Yuma Parks and Recreation Department to develop the 150-acre West Wetlands Park—now Yuma's most popular park.

This fiscal year, the Heritage Area completed a \$600,000 grant-funded project from DFFM by assisting City Parks & Recreation staff to develop a new video nature trail, complete with QR code signage and corresponding brochure. This educational project entices patrons to explore the riverfront trails to learn about and appreciate our natural environment. Links to videos in both English & Spanish: [English: West Wetlands Park Video Nature Trail - English](#) and [Spanish: West Wetlands Park Video Nature Trail - Spanish](#).

The Heritage Area's riparian restoration work provided the framework to allow the City to receive funding from Arizona State Parks and Trails to develop 3,200 linear feet of riverfront trail at West Wetlands. This new trail is slated for construction in FY2021 and will connect the entire 3.5 mile contiguous riverfront trail system from the western boundary of West Wetlands to the eastern boundary of East Wetlands.

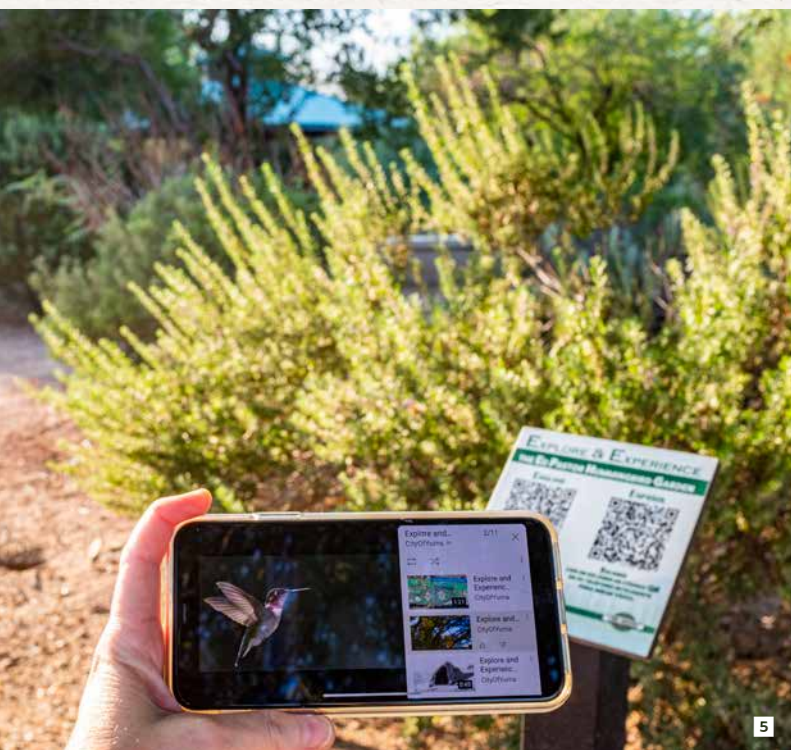
The Heritage Area continues to work with the City on future park development. Donations of time, treasure and talent will help complete park development and perform ongoing maintenance.



1



2



5

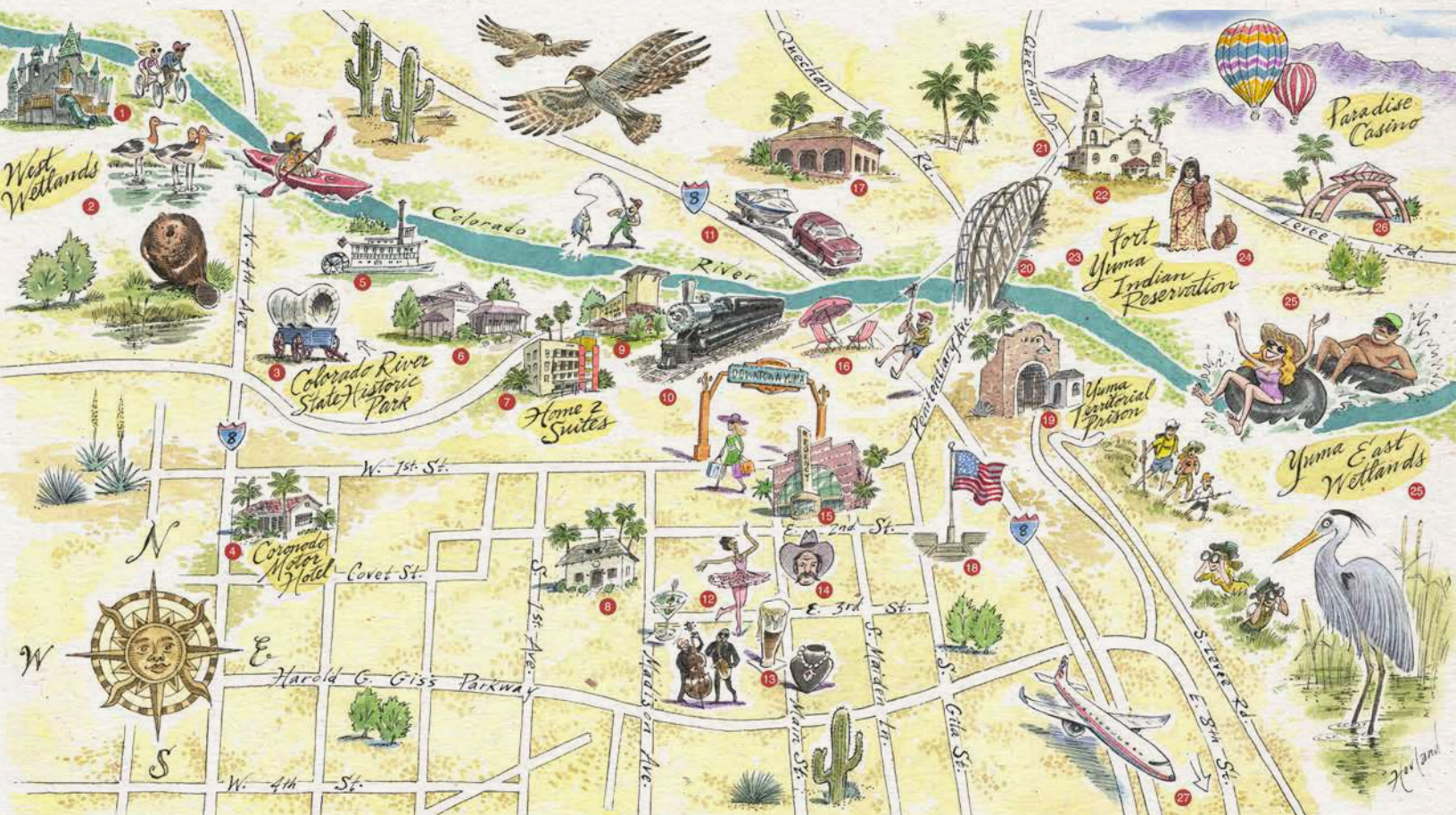


3



4

1 Enjoy the sunrise while exercising on over 5 miles of walking and bike paths at Yuma East Wetlands 2 Invasive species control is an ongoing task 3 Chipping invasive vegetation with grant funding received from AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management 4 & 5 Learn while you walk through the West Wetlands by scanning signage on the QR Code Nature Video Trail



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN YUMA

The “Historic Yuma Experience” Vision Concept

Fiscal year 2020 brought about the official kickoff of a collaborative effort to create the “Historic Yuma Experience” vision concept in an effort to make Yuma a historic entertainment destination. Along with the City of Yuma, and other strategic partners, the Heritage Area is leading an effort to drive increased tourism to Yuma. The concept will effectively promote the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area footprint as a singular destination with many facets including, but not limited to, outdoor activities in the riverfront parks and wetlands,

two state historic parks, a cadre of museums, Historic Downtown Yuma entertainment district, theatre and arts, and eventual upgrades in interpretive exhibits utilizing the latest audio and visual technology.

The long-term project may take 5-10 years, with a likely budget of \$20-30 million dollars to complete, including development costs to bring the Master Plan visitor enhancements for the Yuma Territorial Prison and Colorado River state historic parks to life. After extensive vetting of the idea among myriad leaders in Yuma, a logical next step to gain traction includes testing the concept in practice, utilizing the tools already in existence. This will not only build enthusiasm and the ability of the coalition of partners to work together, but also attract

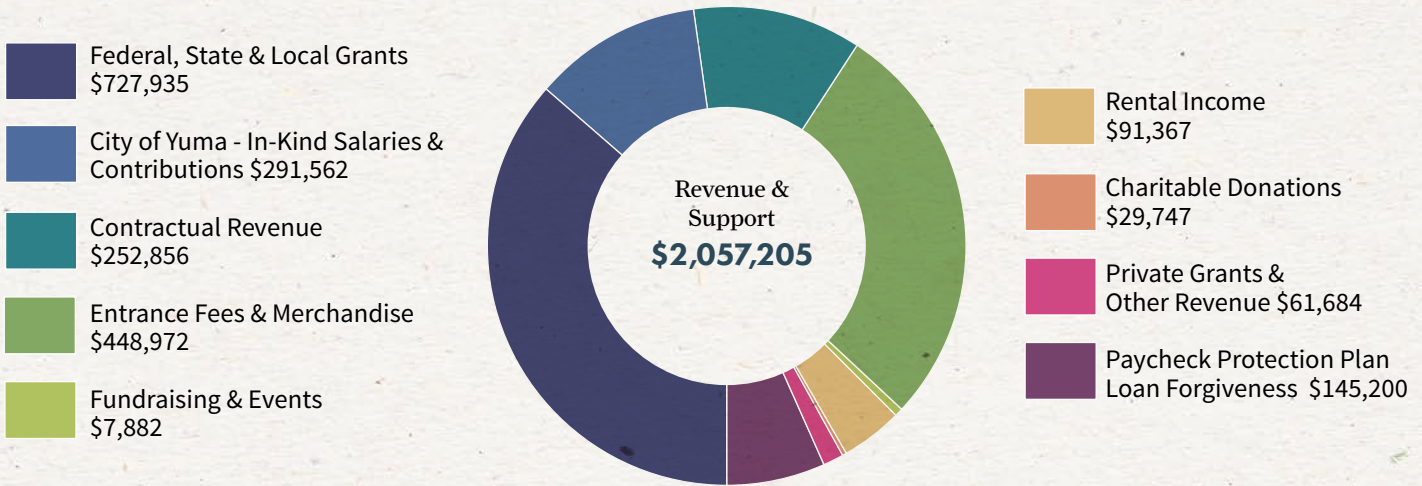
the level of financial support required to bring the vision to ultimate full fruition. Links to videos produced this year which capture the concept vision as well as all the beautiful sites to visit within the Heritage Area: [Discover the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area](#) and [Beautiful Yuma](#).

YCNHA staff kicked off its first annual Giving Tuesday fundraising campaign this fiscal year, “Be Yuma’s Future by Investing in its Past”. Nearly \$28,000 was raised and ongoing fundraising campaigns will be coordinated to help us to preserve important YCNHA historical assets, provide general operational funding, additional environmental preservation, and educational programming and exhibits.

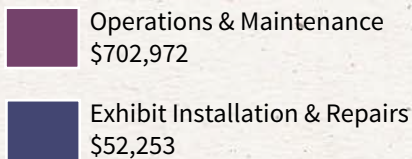
YUMA CROSSING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

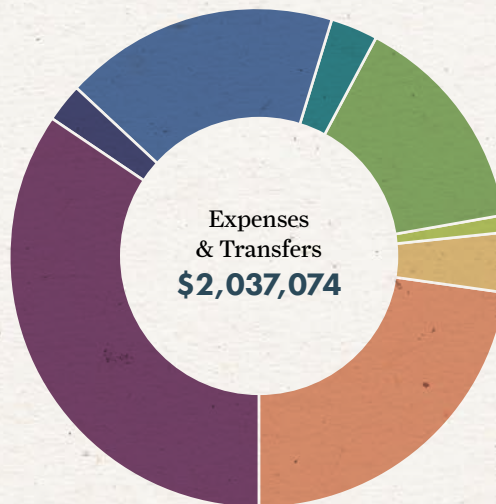
For the Fiscal Period Ended September 30, 2020



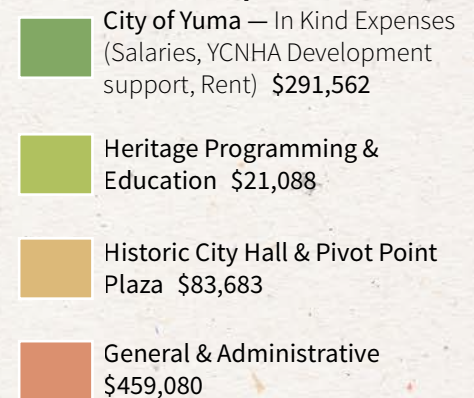
State Historic Parks (YTP/CR)



Wetlands Restoration



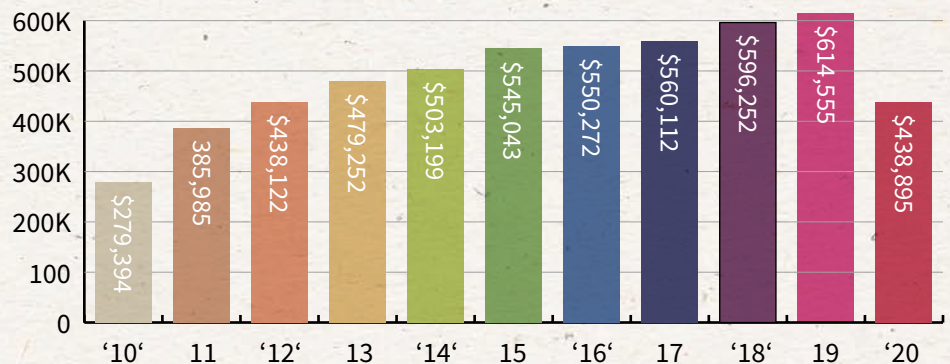
Administration & Operations



Excess (Deficit) of Revenue Over Expenses | **\$20,131**

Yuma Territorial Prison Annual Revenue Comparison 2010-2020 (Admissions/Merchandise)

Prior to the pandemic, YTP increased revenues by 220% over the past decade.



• WITH GRATITUDE •



OUR DEDICATED STAFF

- Lowell Perry, *Executive Director*
- Africa Carrasco, *Executive Assistant*
- Mike Guertin, *Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park Manager*
- YTP Guest Services Representatives:
 - Martin Trujillo
 - Mario Ochoa
 - Daniella Hammond
- Tammy Snook, *Colorado River State Historic Park Manager*
- Lindsey Hunsaker, *Retail Operations Coordinator*
- Colorado River Park Guest Services Representatives:
 - Nicole Crawford
 - Onya Filatoff
- Jesus Melendrez, *Natural Resources Program Manager*
- Yuma East Wetlands Project Field Staff:
 - Jorge Prado
 - Pio Fernandez
 - Jorge Roberto Prado, Jr.
- Cathy Douglas, *Management Analyst*
- Priscilla Starr, *Accounting Manager*
- Maribel Hansen, *Sr. Staff Accountant*
- Amanda Hexel, *Staff Accountant*
- Sarah Halligan, *Communications Specialist*
- Tina Clark, *Curator and Historian*
- Teri Ingram, *Events Specialist*
- Custodians
 - Susana Famanias
 - Jesus Lopez

YCNHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Brian Golding, Sr., *Chairperson*, Quechan Nation
- Bruce A. Gwynn, *Vice-Chairperson*, Yuma Community Food Bank
- Thomas Rushin, *Secretary/Treasurer*, Retired Yuma School District #1
- Chris Wheeler, Prison Hill Brewing Company
- Shelley Mellon, RL Jones Insurance & MVD Services
- Emilia Cortez, Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona
- Amber Shek, Greater Yuma Economic Development Council
- Douglas Nicholls, Mayor, City of Yuma
- Karen Watts, Councilmember, City of Yuma
- Jonathan Lines, Yuma County Supervisor
- Lisa Otondo, Arizona State Senator, District #4
- Reetika Dhawan, Arizona Western College
- Linda Elliot-Nelson, Arizona Western College
- Clint Harrington, Pilkington Commercial Construction

OUR GENEROUS INVESTORS

- Linda Elliot-Nelson Family Charitable Fund
- Shay Oil
- Julie Engel
- Kathy Wong
- Thomas Rush
- Pat Connor
- Prison Hill Brewing Co.
- Barbara Lee
- Alan & Hilda Barr
- John T Osterman
- John Abrams
- Bob Sloncen
- Wilbur Drywall Co., Inc
- Karen McCabe
- Karl Koenig
- Anne V. Fisher
- Edward Oller
- Naomi R Mulhern
- Margaret Sheehan
- Wayne Benesch
- Kim Vaughn
- Russell Jones
- Harrison Farms
- Colleen Brenner
- Doug Pancrazi
- Bob Kamman
- Luis Encinas
- S.C. Houggard
- Anthony Tew
- Patrick Griffin
- Richard Gramley
- Mike Morgan
- Louis Didier
- Tom Edwards
- Ken Truett
- Sunny Breeze Farms
- Mike Vandeveld
- Kevin Stoleson
- Larry Lord
- Hilton Garden Inn Pivot Point
- Brian Phelps
- Robert Wheeler
- Fred Phillips
- Walter Bain
- Richard Loebig
- Jeff Penny
- Dalton Lewey
- James Sheldahl
- Laurel Adair
- Tom Tyree
- Delon Dalke
- Marty Dillon
- Steve Steinfeld
- AEA Federal Credit Union
- Joann Nickel
- Jeanne Glover
- Rusty McBride
- M. Angelina Ruiz
- Lloyd Williams
- Frances Horsman
- Tammy Snook
- Richard Files
- Paul Moreno
- Jane Hamilton
- Guenter A. Geldmacher