



FRIENDS OF SABINO CANYON

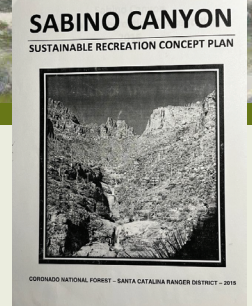
SABINO CANYON

'Visitor Center - Re-imagined'

Inside - A look at the new 'Canyon Interpretive Outpost' project!

SUMMER 2023

Special Edition Newsletter Sabino Canyon 'Visitor Center Re-Imagined' Master Plan



The Friends of Sabino Canyon has launched the Sabino Canyon '*Visitor Center Re-Imagined*' master planning initiative.

An updated, sustainable, and innovative visitor center has been a long-term vision of the USFS since the adoption of its Sustainable Recreation Concept Plan in 2015. The existing facility has served the community well for over 60 years but is in need of a major renovation. In the early 2000's the Gateway Plaza was built by Friends which included the existing restroom facilities, but they too, are in need of a major refresh.

In April, the Friends and the USFS entered into a formal agreement to fund and undertake the initiative. The planning effort is estimated to cost \$250,000 with the USFS contributing \$75,000 and the Friends committed to fundraising \$175,000.

The Friends have created a Project Steering Committee that will oversee the planning process over the next 12 to 18 months including the recruitment and selection of a professional planning team. We will soon be issuing a competitive 'request for proposals' to solicit proposals from experienced firms.

The planning work is organized into two phases and several tasks:

Phase I The Visitor Experience

Task 1-1 Assessing the Visitor Experience: Through a series of interviews, surveys, and research, assess visitor needs to enhance the Sabino Canyon experience. This will form the basis of the physical planning work that comes in Phase II.

Phase II Master Plan

Task 2-1 Program statement that describes in text and supportive graphics the description of the proposed new visitor center components, facilities, systems, and

other program elements

Task 2-2 Planning level site plan and structure renderings

Task 2-3 Planning level final design and construction budget estimates

Task 2-4 Plan of Finance that identifies the source of funds for final design and construction

Task 2-5 Schedule and timeline to build a 'Re-Imagined Visitor Center'

Task 2-6 Project messaging plan to guide the project through completion

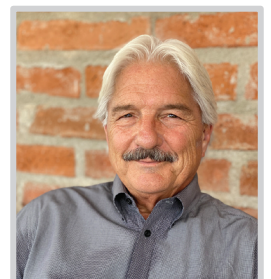
The opportunities are only limited by our imagination and hard work. There will certainly be challenges along the way –we ask each and everyone of us that cherish the Canyon to step up and lend support to the effort.

Our commitment is to be true to these guiding principles through design and construction-

- **Conserve** natural and financial resources through sustainable design and development
- **Protect** the cultural, historic, and ecological character of the Canyon
- **Enhance** the 'affordable experience' of Sabino Canyon to all users

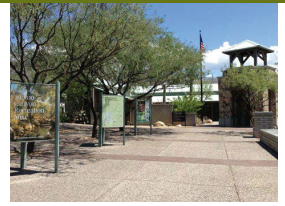
Thanks for your continuing support

-Jim Darling, President
Friends of Sabino Canyon



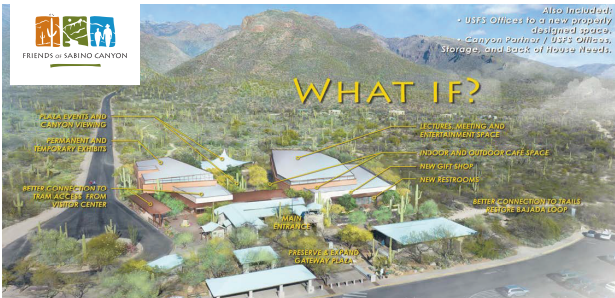


Friends of Sabino Canyon Reception Project Kick Off-March 8, 2023



About 140 members of the Friends of Sabino Canyon, partner organizations, and guests gathered at the pavilion in Tohono Chul Park on March 8 to celebrate the work of the Friends, the contributions of our members, and hear about the projects being developed in the years ahead. Friends president Jim Darling described the mission of the Friends as “to provide resources that conserve, protect, and enhance the Sabino Canyon recreation area.” In addition to thanking the attendees for their support and volunteer efforts and describing the Friends projects going forward, Darling invited the guests to become involved in helping “Re-Imagine” the experience of Sabino Canyon as we work to protect it for future generations.

While an enthusiastic crowd listened appreciatively, Senator Mark Kelly greeted them by video and shared how much he and his family enjoyed their hikes in the Canyon. Governor Katie Hobbs also appeared by video and thanked the crowd for their efforts to protect “one of Arizona’s premier natural riparian areas.” She called the Canyon, with its over 30 miles of hiking trails, “one of the jewels of Pima County” and noted its importance both to the residents of Arizona and to visitors from around the world.



Conrad Grims, current vice president and former president of the Friends, summarized the major projects the Friends have undertaken over the years. The list is a long one, including information signage on the plaza and around the park, shade ramadas in various locations, trail construction, maintenance of the historic stonework in the Canyon, and benches at Crawler stops and scenic locations. In recent years, and in conjunction with the National Forest Foundation, the Friends have been deeply involved in funding the identification of areas of buffelgrass infestation and aiding in its removal, thus reducing fire danger.

Jim Darling introduced Hank Harlow, a member of the Friends board, to describe the first of the new projects the Friends are undertaking in 2023. This first project is the adaptive reuse of the structure at the intersection of the Rattlesnake Trail and the Tram road. A fuller description of this project appears later in this issue of the newsletter. Jim Darling noted, the Santa Catalina Ranger District published a **Sustainable Recreation Concept Plan in 2015** which looked to the future of the Canyon. The overall goal of the Concept Plan was an updated Visitor’s Center, solar powered and LEED certified, with improvements to visitor parking, shuttle facilities, and conservation education facilities by 2025. Darling announced the Friends were embarking on an effort to raise the money to engage public comment and conduct a professional redesign of the 60-year-old Visitor Center.

Santa Catalina District Ranger Don DelMastro described the increase in visitor use of the Canyon since the Visitor Center was built. There are over 1.2 million visitors a year in the Canyon, and peak season sees 4,500 visitors a day. Pima County has grown 4X since the Visitor Center opened in 1963. 25.9% of the visitors to Tucson come from more than 500 miles away, and 7.3% are international. Since the average visitor to Pima County spends approximately \$953 on their trip, the Canyon has an important economic impact on the local economy.

The Visitor Center is crowded, and the permanent exhibits are in need of refreshing and update. Critical infrastructure such as plumbing is failing due to age and overuse by crowds much larger than it was designed to handle. As the 2015 **Concept Plan** forecast, the success of the Canyon in serving the Tucson community has hastened the need for its Re-Imagining.

“Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists (SCVN) are thrilled that FOSC has asked for our participation and a seat at the table of the FOSC Steering Committee for the Visitor Center Re-Imagine project. The revival of the 2015 USFS plan has us all excited and looking forward to the next steps in planning and support. We are eager to assist in making this effort a soon-to-be reality. The Re-Imagine project will be a new wonder for our children and grandchildren as they become environmental educators in this new and environmentally sustainable redesign. A hearty thank you for the reimagine effort to all on the FOSC board.”

-Jo Eaton, President - SCVN

The next steps in the **Re-Imagining** process include launching the Project Steering Committee made up of the volunteer partner organizations (Friends of Sabino Canyon, Sabino Canyon Volunteer Patrol, Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists), the National Forest Foundation, and the United States Forest Service to guide the work of the Re-Imagining. A professional consulting team will be hired to help gather community and user input, as well as identify needed renovations, new facilities and updated infrastructure.

“We are not building this facility for us, it’s for our children’s children and those many generations to come.”

2

-Jim Darling President FOSC

From the District Ranger



For more than sixty years the Sabino Canyon Visitor Center has served millions of visitors, but it is showing its age. Sabino Canyon, a national asset, is a wildland urban interface that serves as the transition between the wilderness and developed urban property. The visitor center plaza serves as a gateway to the wilderness, leaving urban life behind as you pass through.

Close proximity to the urban area has made it a popular daily hiking location that provides easy access to interact with southern Arizona's beautifully diverse ecology. But that interaction comes with a great deal of wear and tear on the facility and the supporting infrastructure. Increased demand has expanded well beyond the capacity anticipated in the 1960's.



Despite our best maintenance efforts, the Visitor Center's infrastructure is stressed beyond its design capacity. The result is a compromised experience as our visitors struggle with the basics-like fully functioning restrooms. In addition to their condition the facilities do not meet the functional needs of the USFS staff, our partners, and our visitors. The current exhibit space is limited and

outdated, the public areas such as the bookstore are small and often crowded, and the temporary USFS offices structures have outlived their useful life.



Despite this, visitor usage is growing. As I mentioned on March 8th, we see more than 1.2 million visitors a year. Over a quarter of our visitors come from a distance of at least 500 miles to enjoy beautiful Sabino Canyon. We expect this number to continue to grow as Tucson grows and new generations fall in love with the outdoors as we did. The proposed Visitor Center Re-Imagined master plan and the adaptive reuse of the retired structure at Rattlesnake Trail are intended to modernize and update the canyon and ensure its sustainability for future generations. These two projects are some of the most exciting and ambitious the USFS has undertaken since we took on the responsibility of managing Sabino in 1908. The Santa Catalina Ranger District has a unique strength: our 23 partner organizations. Our combined team of USFS employees, partners, and volunteers allows us to accomplish far more together than we ever could alone. This team, combined with a renewed national interest in the outdoors, gives us a

once in a lifetime window of opportunity to make such an ambitious vision possible. Working together, our diverse team will create a vision for the future, much like our predecessors did in the early 2000's to build the current Gateway Plaza.

Together we can ensure that Sabino Canyon remains a sustainable recreation area despite the increased demands and that its facilities continue to faithfully serve future generations.

Please join the Coronado National Forest and Santa Catalina Ranger District team in designing Sabino Canyon 'Visitor Center Re-Imagined'.

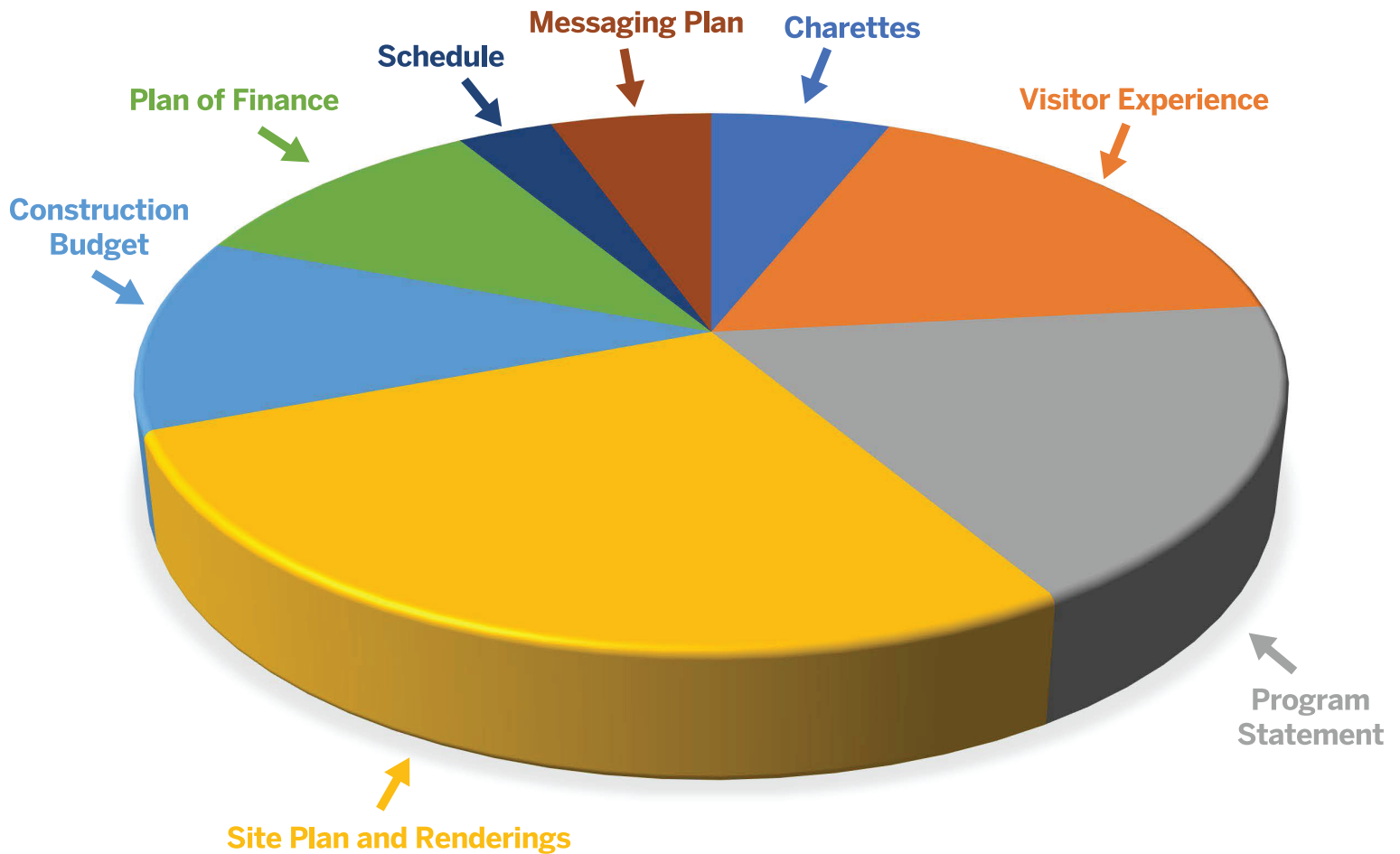
- Don DelMastro, Santa Catalina District Ranger



"Let's build a facility that, because of its notable and sustainable design, will be nominated in sixty to seventy years to the National Historic Register"

- Adam Milnor, USFS

Master Planning Components



"The projected cost of the Visitor Center Master Plan is \$250,000. With a commitment of \$75,000 from the USFS, Friends will be fundraising the balance of \$175,000 to make the initiative a reality."

-Ty Tingley FOSC Board Director



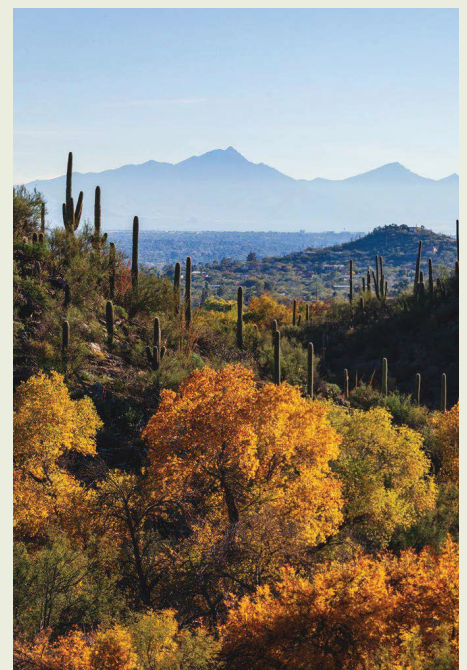
Just Imagine...



Today's Visitor Center



FRIENDS OF SABINO CANYON



Interpretive Outpost Update

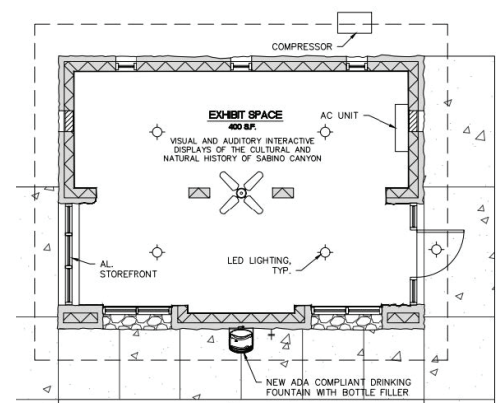
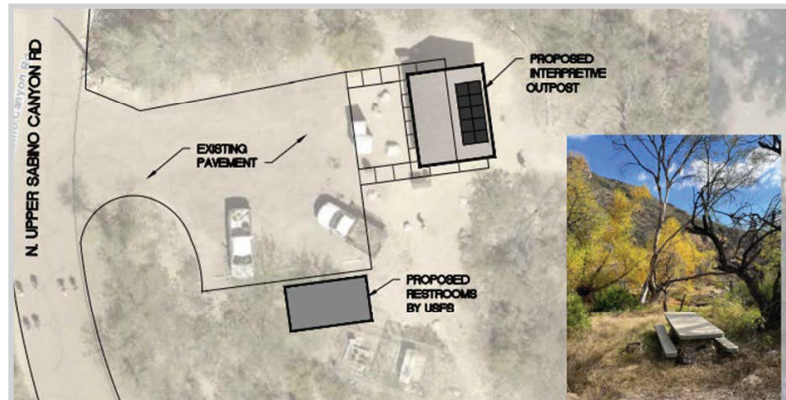
-Hank Harlow, FOSC Board Director

Ongoing discussions with the Santa Catalina Ranger District have taken place with the decision to name the new facility the "Canyon Interpretive Outpost". Estimated budget expenditures for this project are \$80,000 in construction costs and \$40,000 to produce interpretive displays. We are pleased that FOSC presently has funds of \$71,000 from member donors, as well as \$24,000 presented as an anonymous gift and a \$25,000 match from the U.S. Forest Service to make this project a reality by FY 2024.

Our proposal to invite indigenous tribes to use this facility as a platform of self-expression was formally submitted by the USFS Cultural Heritage Team to the four Southern Tribes (Tohono O'odham Nation and the Gila River, Salt River Pima Maricopa, and Ak-Chin Indian Communities) as well as the other 8 tribes the USFS consults over matters dealing with Sabino Canyon. Interpretive themes on the culture, history, and ecology of the Canyon are being developed to make this Outpost a unique backcountry learning experience.

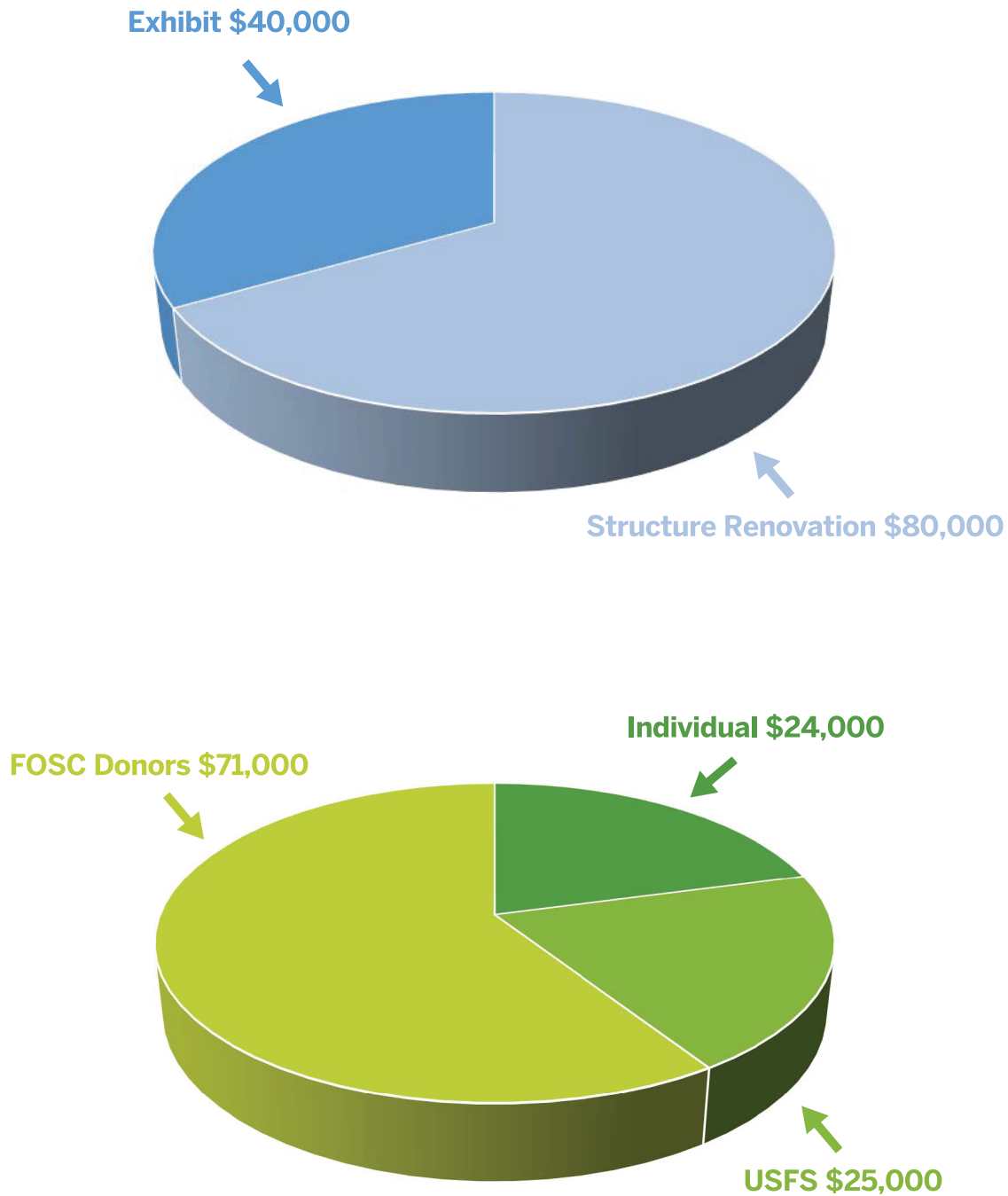
Our poster displaying the beauty and logistics of this site and the architectural design for the adaptive reuse of the building was received with enthusiasm at our March 8th event at Tohono Chul. We have converted this into a 4' x 6' sign identifying the site as the Canyon Interpretive Outpost sponsored by Friends of Sabino Canyon, to be completed in 2024. The sign will be displayed at the proposed Outpost site so visitors to the Canyon will know what is being planned.

- Hank Harlow, FOSC Board Director



Big Thank You to Our Donor Members

with their continuing support we have raised sufficient funds to launch the Canyon Interpretive Outpost project this year





FRIENDS of SABINO CANYON

Sabino Canyon Recreation Area
5700 N Sabino Canyon Road
Tucson, AZ 85750

FOSC Special Edition Summer 2023

FOSC Directors

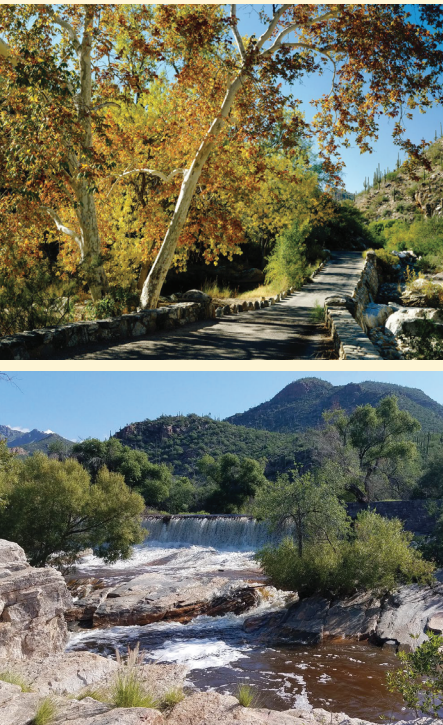
Riley Blute	Conrad Grims
Jim Darling	Hank Harlow
Linden Darling	Jim McDougal
Jim DeGrood	Diane Meuser
Arianna DuPont	Michael Reynolds
Cassie Gonzales	Tyler Tingley
	Susan Walker

FOSC Directors Emeritus

Terry DeWald	Jude McCarthy
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Regional Partner Organizations

Regional Partnering Center - Tram
Southern Arizona Rescue Association
National Forest Foundation
Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol
Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists



Join Us in Support of the 'Visitor Center Re-imagined'

Your donation of \$25 or more registers you as a member of Friends of Sabino Canyon (FOSC) for one year.

If you would like to donate to the Visitor Center Re-Imagined campaign, please use the enclosed return envelope or go to our website - sabinocanyon.org - to make a specific contribution to this historic effort.

Significant contributions are recognized on tile fresco panels at the Visitor Center.

FOSC is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



**SCAN FOR
MORE INFO!**

In Memory...Mel Zuckerman 1928-2023

Founding member of Friends of Sabino Canyon and avid supporter of the Canyon experience