



FRIENDS OF SABINO CANYON

SUMMER 2026

Dear friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire Sabino Canyon community, I want to extend our deepest gratitude for your continued financial support. Your commitment as a **Friend of Sabino Canyon** is what allows us to protect and enhance the Canyon that we all hold dear.

Because of members like you, we have been able to provide interpretive exhibits, maintain trails, manage invasive species, rebuild historic structures, and ensure that the beauty of the Santa Catalina Mountains remains accessible to every hiker, family, and visitor to the Canyon.

As we reflect on our recent accomplishments, we also look forward to a transformative new chapter. We are excited to share that the Friends—in collaboration with the U. S Forest Service—are actively pursuing funding for the new Visitor Center Re-Imagined.

Designed to serve as the “front porch” of the Canyon, this new facility will replace our aging 1960s structure with a modern, environmentally sustainable space that blends seamlessly into the landscape. This vision includes interactive exhibits, expanded visitor areas, and a design that prioritizes the stunning views of the Canyon.

The path to this new center is closely tied to the **America the Beautiful Act**, which is currently being considered by the **Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee**. This landmark bipartisan legislation aims to reauthorize the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund—a primary source of funding for essential infrastructure projects like ours.

Funding through this Act would provide the momentum needed to bring our “re-imagined” vision to life. The Friends have already committed to raising a significant local match for this project, and your continued membership ensures we have the strong community foundation that is critical to secure federal funding. In addition to the Visitor Center Re-Imagined, we have a number of projects underway this year. Two of those projects, the restoration of the stone stairs by the dam and the reconstruction of the Bajada Loop Trail, are featured in articles in this newsletter.

Next year promises to be a busy one, so we have set a target to raise \$140,000 through the generous donations of our members. Our fundraising toward this goal currently stands at \$40,000 so there is much to do to fund these important projects. If you wish to help us make our goal, a gift envelope has been included with this newsletter. You may also make a gift through our website at sabinocanyon.org.



With gratitude,

Jim Darling
President, Friends of Sabino Canyon

Dam Steps Under Repair



Original steps washed away in the flood of 2006

Regular visitors to Sabino Canyon will recognize the two men working on repairing the stone steps at the Sabino Creek dam that were washed away in the flood of 2006. Darrell Klesch and Rodney Anderson have been working in the Canyon for fifteen years, repairing the bridges and stone structures. Recently they did the stonework on the newly renovated Canyon Interpretive Outpost at Shuttle Stop 1.

The steps provide an easy, safe, and direct route from the lower banks of Sabino Creek to the upper level of the dam. Darrell and Rodney have unearthed many of the original boulders that support the stairs and the enormous slabs of granite that formed the original steps. Seeing the size of the steps, it is hard to imagine the force of the water that moved them thirty yards down the Canyon. But in a few weeks, they will be back in their original location. A new railing will be installed, as well as a stone bench, and the dam steps, missing for twenty years, will be back in place.

Darrell and Rodney's work on the dam steps and the historic stonework in the Canyon is supported by gifts to the Friends of Sabino Canyon. The budget for this project is \$49,500, donated by generous members of the Friends. If you are interested in learning more about the Friends and supporting the Canyon, visit our website at sabinocanyon.org.



The new dam steps begin to take shape



1957 photograph of the Stone Steps by the Dam. Thanks to David Lazarof for the picture.

Philanthropy Corner

Find out more about ways to give by emailing us at devcoord@sabinocanyon.org.

NEW: we have a new donor page! Show your love for the Canyon and become a Visionary Donor. ❤️

A New Bajada Loop Trail



Life on the Bajada is defined by adaptation, movement, and interdependence

For young children, folks with mobility issues, and thousands who are visiting the Canyon for the first time, the Bajada Loop Trail provides an important introduction to the vegetation and ecosystems of Sabino Canyon. Quoting from the interpretive sign at the start of the trail, “*This 0.25-mile loop introduces you to one of the Sonoran Desert’s most important landforms, the Bajada (bah-HAH-dah), a broad slope formed where sediment washes down from the Santa Catalina Mountains.*”

Center in 1964. In subsequent years the trail went through several evolutions. In a land subject to extremes of temperature and episodic water, vegetation changes over time. As a result, volunteers occasionally rerouted the trail. The original Loop was packed earth bordered by small stones. Minimal effort was made to level the path, and thus those with mobility issues were not always able to follow the trail.

To make room for the Re-Imagined Visitor Center, the Bajada Loop now needs to be rerouted, with \$71,000 raised by the Friends of Sabino Canyon to finance the new Loop.

The design and construction of the trail, including the informational signage that will be placed at the six “landings” along the route, is overseen by a committee chaired by Hank Harlow, a retired professor of zoology and physiology at the University of Wyoming and a member of the board of the



Hank Harlow, chair of the committee planning the new Bajada Loop

Friends of Sabino Canyon. Members of the design committee include representatives of the U. S. Forest Service, Friends of Sabino Canyon, and Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists.

After plotting a new route for the trail that takes advantage of significant views of the Santa Catalina Mountains, the committee is working on displays to convey the image that, while hot and dry, the Bajada is an ecosystem of beauty, supporting unique cacti, shrubs, trees and animal life that provide sustenance for both human and animal survival. In this environment, life is defined by adaptation.

Recently, Flagline Trails has completed marking the trail’s route with small flags and stakes.

Negotiations are underway with a contractor to lay a path of crushed stone, which will minimize erosion and provide a good surface for people with limited mobility. The committee continues to work on informational signage. The Friends of Sabino Canyon hope to have the project completed by the fall of 2026 in time for the new trail to be enjoyed by the many people who visit the Canyon in the cooler months.



Flags mark the route of the new trail



A great view of the Canyon from the Bajada Loop



FRIENDS OF SABINO CANYON

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

FOSC Summer 2026

FOSC Directors & Contributors

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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
Public Land Interpretive Association



Renew Your Membership Today and Make a Difference

Your donation of \$35 registers you as a supporting member of the Friends of Sabino Canyon (FOSC) for one year.

The best way to contribute to our exciting projects is to go online to our website at sabinocanyon.org.

You can also donate using the enclosed return envelope. FOSC is a 501c(3) charitable foundation.

Scan here to go to our website.



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