ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2020
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020
Dear Community Partner,

What an incredible year FY 2020 has been for the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy mission! We now have a small, professional, full-time staff, along with 700+ volunteer stewards who contributed more than 63,000 hard-worked hours towards our goals.

The generous contributions from donors like you make it possible for us to achieve our objectives of expanded awareness in our local community and beyond.

As you will learn in the coming pages, we have expanded and improved programs to support our mission, allowing us to: preserve land and increase awareness of the need for natural open space; provide access to free educational and experiential opportunities for all—with an ever-increasing focus on youth and underserved communities; expand scientific research to impact the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the region and beyond.

Looking ahead, we have a number of exciting initiatives, outreach opportunities and programs in the works, which will depend heavily upon the continued support of donors like you.

It is my honor and privilege to lead this organization, and none of this would be possible without your support. I hope we can count on your continuing encouragement and engagement with the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, where science is in our nature.

As you read more about our achievements and initiatives, I welcome your feedback.

Justin Owen, CNAP
Chief Executive Officer

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Arid and semi-arid environments, like the Sonoran Desert, are the least-studied of all environments, yet they cover over 40% of the world’s landmass. By 2040, it’s estimated at least 50% of the world’s population will live in these environments. It is essential to determine how to live within them in a sensitive and sustainable way.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy Parsons Field Institute, in collaboration with donors like you, is conducting a number of scientific research projects aimed at this important mission.

### Wildfire-Prevention Research

Non-native, invasive plants are one of the major threats to biodiversity worldwide. Wildfires in many areas of the world are caused, and worsened, by the fuel-load generated from invasive plant species. In partnership with the City of Scottsdale, the Conservancy is researching different removal techniques to compare cost-effectiveness and impact on native plant communities. The results will directly benefit the Preserve and will also be shared broadly with regional partners, and beyond, including through international journals, conferences, and public outreach. At the same time, with the help of our volunteer base, we are actively removing invasive species from the Preserve and recruiting and training other organizations to do the same across the region.

Through cooperation, research, and implementation of remedies that work, we can all make a difference in helping to protect the Sonoran Desert, and arid lands, for generations to come.

### Desert Restoration

In addition, the Conservancy is actively researching innovative approaches for restoration of damaged areas, including wildfire-affected landscapes. We recently completed a study of past restoration practices, with findings published in an international peer-reviewed journal to be shared with land managers in arid lands across the globe.
This year, the Conservancy initiated two, new, restoration field studies; and, we completed a four-year study of how to restore degraded land. Those results will also be submitted for publication.

Soil Crust Experiments Have Global Impact

As part of our satellite program at Northern Arizona University, we continue with our soil crust experiments, which involve “growing” soil crust in controlled environments and then transferring the crusts to the field for establishment in disturbed areas. Results to date show that in only 11 weeks, crusts increased by 38–62% in the controlled environments. This type of growth in its natural environment can take more than 15 years! We have now replanted the grown crusts in the natural desert for the ultimate test of viability. This research will have global impact in the fight against dust storms because missing soil crusts contribute to dust storms, which can lead to rapid environmental degradation and negative consequences for life at all levels.

RestoreNet Field Trial Collaboration With the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

Over the past year the Conservancy initiated a region-wide field trial called RestoreNet in collaboration with the USGS. The initiative provides an opportunity to compare restoration practices in the Sonoran Desert with those being used in other North American deserts. This large-scale experiment helps identify conditions and approaches that are most suitable for different disturbance conditions in a changing climate. The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is a global partner in protecting biodiversity.

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve is home to more than 1,000 types of plants and animals—identified by our Parsons Field Institute and Citizen Scientists—making the Preserve one of the richest ecological areas in the valley. This year, the Conservancy added nine mammals to its species list, which tripled the number of bats identified, and added the iconic Ringtail.

- 417 plant types
- 178 bird species
- 39 mammal species
- 36 reptile and amphibian species
- More than 350 invertebrate types

The Conservancy monitors the health of the Preserve, not only by tracking species, but by applying scientifically-sound monitoring techniques to identify whether target-species groups maintain their populations in the face of urbanization and climate change. This data is shared with regional and global partners through online databases.
Education Mission: Inspire, develop and support environmental stewardship of the Sonoran Desert and natural open space through impactful education.

The Changing Nature of Education

Conservancy Kids Online

COVID-19 has encouraged us all to be more creative. With that in mind, and with the goal of continuing our support for youth, teachers and parents, in March of 2020 the Conservancy launched Conservancy Kids Online.

Formatted as weekly video newsletters delivered by email, these new, youth-education offerings combine inquiry-based exploration with structured lesson plans designed for both teacher and parent implementation.

Hard copies of materials were also provided free of charge so schools could print and send them home with children who may not have internet access.

Conservancy Kids Online will continue to provide fun, interactive lessons to help youth understand their place in our ecological environment and how they can help support its health.

Expedition Days

Prior to COVID-19, the Conservancy held its annual, flagship, STEM program: Expedition Days. Hosted at the Lost Dog Wash Trailhead, the curriculum was re-written this year to incorporate the new Arizona Science Standards, and to emphasize place-based learning that helps youth understand their place in the Sonoran Desert.

The event continues to center on Title I students from across the Valley. The revised program also delivers ready-to-use lesson plans for teachers that are in keeping with state guidelines, allowing Expedition Days to provide meaningful support as teachers work to fulfill new state standards.
This past year, the Conservancy committed to a goal of becoming a regional leader in adult, youth, and steward conservation education by increasing public understanding and appreciation of desert environments, leading to systemic change.

Due to generous donations, the Conservancy was able to double the student capacity of this year’s Expedition Days.

Saturday remained “public day” as we welcomed families and multi-generational groups to learn from the student lessons as well as additional stations produced by stewards and partners.
Nearly 50,000 adults participated this year in Conservancy facilitated hikes, bike rides, walks, lectures and other activities, offering many adults their first Sonoran Desert experience.

Adult Education

The Conservancy believes that through education, we all become part of the environment, and will learn to respect and value our unique and diverse desert ecosystem.

Each year new activities are added that focus on encouraging all to become stewards of the land. This year, we added Sensory Hikes to the Nature as Therapy program, as well as topic-driven, educational bike rides. We also increased the number of planned, free public hikes and bike rides to over 150. Moving forward the Conservancy will continue to seek ways to encourage our community to understand and appreciate the world in which they live.

GUIDED HIKES
Free, public hikes continue to expand in frequency and number. More lead stewards are being trained so that we can keep up with the demand for these popular programs.

INTERPRETIVE HIKES
Interpretive Hikes are interpretive, walk-and-learn experiences. These flat, short, easy “hikes” are ideal for those who would not normally use the Preserve, and do not see themselves as “hikers,” but would still like to experience the desert. Interpretive Hikes offer us a unique opportunity to expand our educational reach, and to develop new, non-typical supporters of the Conservancy mission.

“NATURE AS THERAPY” HIKES
These are another type of interpretive hike that include frequent stops to discuss using the five senses, This successful and highly-requested hike has of focus of mindfulness and appreciation of our place within the desert environment.

EDUCATIONAL BIKE RIDES
All educational bike rides have a specific focus on topics such as regional history, native flora, wildlife and conservation.
Stewardship Mission: Train and equip 700+ volunteer stewards with the knowledge, tools and structure needed to discover, learn and ultimately teach people to be stewards of the land.

Stewardship is at the Heart of Everything We Do

Our volunteer-steward population continues to grow as more locals and seasonal-residents commit to joining us in delivering our mission of becoming stewards of the land. We aim to teach our stewards, so that, in turn, they can teach others.

The Conservancy currently has over 700 dedicated and skilled stewards who work tirelessly to deliver meaningful experiences, both within the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and the Sonoran Desert at large.

With the arrival of COVID-19, many programs were severely impacted and in March, 2020, we made the difficult decision to pause all public-facing activities to ensure the safety of both the community and our stewards. Up to that point, the Conservancy was on track to deliver the most events, as well as impact the largest number of people, in our 29-year history.

Through COVID-19, the Conservancy continued scientific research, as well as trail-maintenance and trail-ambassador activities—all with an overarching focus on social distancing and safety.

A Look Back

Throughout the past year, the Conservancy:

- Patrolled the Preserve’s 225 miles of trails (two thirds of stewards help patrol the trails regularly on foot, bike and horses), identifying trail-condition issues.
- Partnered with the City of Scottsdale to maintain trails, including involvement in over 400 projects to both repair identified trail concerns and mitigate potential trail hazards. All projects outcomes are geared towards visitor safety and optimum trail conditions for hiking, biking and equestrian use.
• Advised and assisted over 34,000 visitors at trailheads, and over 12,000 on trails, to maximize their enjoyment and ensure their safety.

• Held 124 free hike and bike events, although an additional 30 had to be postponed due to COVID-19. Even so, 2,300 regular trail users and new visitors attended the 124 events to enjoy the interpretive and fitness aspects they provided.

• Delivered education to youth, families and adults through place-based and virtual learning opportunities. Long-term plans include both in-person and virtual events allowing the Conservancy to expand the number of people impacted and encouraged to become stewards of the land.

• Involved an increasing number of stewards and community members in scientific research in the Preserve.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy currently has **700+ stewards**. During 2019, these stewards provided **63,000+ volunteer hours**, representing a **value of $1.5M**, or the equivalent of almost 50 full-time staff.
New Trailheads
During 2020, the Conservancy partnered with the City of Scottsdale to open the new Fraesfield and Granite Mountain Trailheads. Each of these trailheads includes interpretative signage and trailhead ambassador service to enhance the visitor experience.

We are currently partnering with the City of Scottsdale to complete a new interpretative trail at the Fraesfield Trailhead, which is planned to open in 2021.

A Look Ahead
Many Pastfinders have qualified as Site Stewards, which means they are able to identify and care for the historic sites within the Preserve.

During 2020-21, the Conservancy will officially formalize the Site Steward Program for the Preserve. Working in conjunction with the City of Scottsdale, the Conservancy will further develop this program to ensure that historic sites are identified, monitored and protected for future generations.

Steward Appreciation
Conservancy stewards donated more than 63,000 hours in 2020, which is valued at over $1,500,000 or almost 50 full-time employees. Many of our stewards are also financial donors, and in 2020 they donated over $230,000, representing an increase of 76% over the prior year. Our stewards truly believe in, and support, our mission, and we are incredibly thankful for them.

Without supporters like you, the Conservancy would not be able to deliver important services that make such an impact on both visitors and our community.
In December 2019, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy concluded a year-long initiative with Points of Light—the world’s largest organization dedicated to volunteer service—and we were honored to receive Service Enterprise certification from the Governor’s Office of Youth, Family and Faith. A Service Enterprise is an organization that strategically leverages volunteers to achieve operational efficiency and greater social impact. The Service Enterprise Program helps organizations gain a greater return on volunteer investment to better achieve their mission.

Achieving Service Enterprise certification is a very prestigious accomplishment for an organization. In fact, organizations that meet certification criteria join the top 11% of nonprofits nationwide in volunteer management and organizational performance.
Financials

Statement of Financial Position
FY 2020 - For the year ended June 30, 2020

CURRENT ASSETS

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<tr>
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<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Cash</td>
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LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

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<td>Net Assets With Donor Restrictions</td>
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<td><strong>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,609,265</strong></td>
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*Unaudited financials
Statement of Activities  
FY 2020 - For the year ended June 30, 2020

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUES</th>
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<td>Individual Contributions</td>
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<td>Corporate &amp; Events</td>
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<td>Program Services</td>
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<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>$1,179,815</td>
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*Unaudited financials
The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is grateful for the many people, companies, and organizations that supported our work through donations between January 1 and December 31, 2019. Every effort has been made to ensure that this list is accurate. Due to space constraints, we are only able to include those who contributed $25 or more. Regardless of the amount, your contribution helps us preserve and advance natural open space through science, education and stewardship in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and beyond.

**INDIVIDUAL DONORS**

**Champions ($10,000)**
- Anonymous
- Bob and Hazel Clayton
- Jim and Lynda Frantz
- Rick Harrington
- Bill Hurtle and Cathy Campbell-Hurtle
- Christine and Rick Kovach
- Lynn and Richard Mushorn
- Roger and Patricia Riepe
- Don and Gina Shawl
- The James C. and Norma I. Smith Foundation
- Bob and Emily Vincent

**Leader ($5,000 – $9,999)**
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- Rick and Judy Cooper
- Dick and Jane Dana
- Leslie Dashew and Jack Salisbury
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- The Robert C. Nyman Fund
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Jana Huggins and Lee Nickloy
The Arizona Hughes and Bufka Family Fund
The Johnson-Kazar Charitable Foundation
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Cathy Long
David Lorenz
A. Lee Lundy
The Honorable Mary and Larry Manross
Elba Martinez
Lois and James McGinnis
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Lynne and Floyd Russell
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Max and Steve Sukenik
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BJ Tatro and Frank Romaglio
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Leena and Howard Weinstein
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Mark Winkleman
Kristina Woods
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Bernie Finkel
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Martha Fogler
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Roger and Ethel Freeman
Mary and Dale Gardon
Jacques Giard and Mercedes Ballem
Mitch Glicksman
Elizabeth and Edward Goff
The Goldberg Family Multi-Generational Fund
Iris Goodman
John and Maria Gorsky
Henry Graef
Monique and Jerry Greene
John and Julia Griffin
Robin and Kurt Gutisinde
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Stephen and Eleanor Hammerman
Dale and Jim Hardt
Jonathan and Nancy Harris
Thomas and Sally Hartley
Christine and John Hatfield
Peter and Suzanne Haverkampf
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Cathy and Jim Heitel
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Andrea and Kenneth Keck
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Ronald Komo
Virginia Korte
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Marian Kuzma
William Lee
Michael Levenson
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Bob and Shari Levitan
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Katheleen and Steven McClain
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Donald Mowry
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Michael Muscara
James Nafziger
Sandy and Gary Neale
Doug and Judy Newton
Joe Nychay
John and Linda Oliver
Rick Parsons and Linda Harrison-Parsons
Rick and Frances Pearce
Thomas Pfaffman
Joanne Phillips
Theodora and Robert Potts
William and Karen Powell
With more than 30,500 acres in Scottsdale’s McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy oversees and protects the largest urban preserve in North America.

Through our three pillars of Science, Education and Stewardship, we research, educate and raise awareness of the importance of conservation and stewardship of the land.
science is in our nature

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Barb Pringle
Jeff Quirk
Don and Liz Raiff
Rich and Leanne Reel
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Enid Seiden
Len Shindel
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Sandra and Vincent Streech
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Walter and Frances Thurber
Tom and Ann Timmer
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Byron Ubermosky
Rich and Kathy Umfrid
Jennifer Unger
Lindsay Vanegas
Maryse Vigneault
Denise Villalon
Rainer and Marie Von Minden
Anne Walsh and Steven Buller
Arthur and Judith Watt
Meg Way
John Webster
Linda Whitehead
Wild Bunch Desert Guides, LLC
Darrel Wood
Shung and Tse Fang Yeh
Joe Zazzera
The Zia Trust
Patti and Reid Ziegler
John Zikias
Greg Zugmier

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Greg Albert
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Richard and Sharon Allen
Andrea Alley
Harvey Alstadter
Katelin Anderbery
Marilyn Anderson
Christine Andras
Leanne Andreasen
Lisa Andrews
Keith Angel
Maryanne Annan
Barbara and Joseph Anshell
Lisa Anthony
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James Ball
Gretchen and Jeffrey Barylak
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Mary Conway
Daniel Cottrell
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Cay Cowie
Robert Crawford
Bluebird Crossman
Kathleen and James Cummings
Hannah Cummiskey
Claren Cummiskey
Reidun Daeffler
science is in our nature

Doris Dale
Richard Dale
Jeanne Danaher
Ann Darke
David Davis
Diane Davis and Fred Krakowiak
Jona Davis
Patricia Davis
Mike Davitt
Lori Dawe
Tara Deck
Ethel DeMarr
Kristin DeNeice
Natalie Ann DePace
Desert Pointe Garden Club
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William and Lorraine Dicke
James Dickover
Robert Dixon
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Sondra and Michael Dorman
Teresa Dorn
Johnathan Douglas
Deborah Downs
Drew Drazin
Julius Drelick
Timothy Dube
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Linda Dupont
Denis Duran
Suzanne Durkin-Bighorn
Kathy Dwyer
Patricia Eckel
Jim and Kaitlin Eckler
David and Rita Edge
Barbara Edwards
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