



Media Contact:
Carlotta Soares
Director of Communications
carlotta@mcdowellsonoran.org

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and Scottsdale Unified School District Build an Innovative Science Curriculum

The partnership expands the science program for 7th-grade students.

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (March 3, 2022) – [The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy](#) (the Conservancy) and a group of teachers from Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD) have joined forces in building a science curriculum to engage the participation of 7th-grade students in climate change and invasive species projects.

The SUSD/Conservancy teacher program is comprised of a group of 7th-grade teachers who actively participate in science programs conducted by the Conservancy. With the assistance of the Conservancy and its group of volunteer stewards, these teachers are building a science curriculum that will provide their students with hands-on participation in natural open space.

This new curriculum will give students an opportunity to engage in scientific studies that are being done in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve, connecting their findings to natural sciences in a way that only direct experience allows—collecting scientific data and comparing it to larger datasets allows them to see a much broader picture regarding climate change, invasive and non-invasive species.

“Education and science have played a critical role in inspiring future generations about the significance of our Sonoran Desert,” said Justin Owen, CEO of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. “We are extremely excited about the collaboration of the SUSD teachers in building a science curriculum surrounding the projects we have initiated. Educating young students on the fragility of our arid ecosystem and giving them the opportunity to become involved is instrumental in expanding the awareness of our treasured desert,” said Owen.

Earlier this year, SUSD teachers met with Conservancy staff and its stewards to learn how to collect data concerning plant and animal phenology, which is the study of seasonal changes. This methodology provides valuable information about how plants and animals are responding to shifts in temperature and precipitation. In addition to phenology, the teachers also learned the method of removing invasive species, such as fountain grass and buffle grass, from the Preserve which protects the land from wildfires and loss of biodiversity.

About the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that preserves and advances natural open space through science, education and stewardship. Through a unique partnership with The City of Scottsdale, and the dedication of nearly 650 volunteer Stewards, the Conservancy protects more than 30,500 acres in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, which is enjoyed by over 1.2 million visitors annually. To learn more about its mission and achievements visit [mcdowellsonoran.org](#).

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