

PRESS RELEASE

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Clarkdale's Verde River Ambassadors Key to Stewardship

Clarkdale, AZ (August 14, 2014) – When the Town of Clarkdale founded the Verde River Verde River @ Clarkdale (VR@C) project three years ago, they did so believing that improving access and recreation opportunities on the river would give the community an opportunity to personally connect with the river. Those personal connections would help strengthen people's understanding and desire for stewardship of this precious resource.

With the opening of the Lower TAPCO River Access Point (RAP) 2 months ago, Clarkdale launched the Verde River Ambassadors Program. The Ambassadors, who are part-time employees hired with revenues from fees generated from commercial uses at the RAPs, help ensure safety, preservation, stewardship and proper use of the recreation areas. Key to their role is promoting positive relationships and experiences with the public, and helping support safe outdoor recreational sites on the river.

According to Town Manager Gayle Mabery, the program has exceeded the Town's expectations. "We couldn't be happier with the success of the Ambassador program. Under the direction of Clarkdale Police Sergeant Bill Relyea, our 9 part-time Ambassadors are playing an integral role in providing stewardship at our River Access Points. In addition, the program was successfully self-funded through fees generated from commercial kayak tours and tubing rentals at the site during its first two months of operation."

According to Sgt. Relyea, the Ambassadors serve as the first-line of communication with the customers at these facilities, and their interactions and communications are key to the Town's goal of balancing public recreation access with protection of the natural environment. A visit to the Lower TAPCO RAP, a float down the 3 miles between there and Tuzigoot, and the



daily observations from the Ambassadors confirm that the public is doing their part to preserve river access. In the first two months of operation, people have been very respectful of the “Pack It In/Pack It Out” ethic that is both required and promoted at the access point.

While most of the Ambassador’s time is focused at the Lower TAPCO RAP, there are also daily walk-throughs at the Tuzigoot RAP. Volunteers who have provided weekly litter patrol at that site for years have reported that since Clarkdale’s recent installation of a portable toilet and trash container at the RAP, litter has become almost non-existent. The Town hopes to expand their activities at the Tuzigoot RAP in the coming year, but that will depend on modifications to their existing Cooperative Management Agreement with Arizona State Parks who are the land owner of the site. The first step in modifying that agreement will coincide with the adoption of a master plan that is currently being drafted.

According to Mabery, Clarkdale’s ability to keep the Lower TAPCO River Access Point open to the public is dependent on the on-going cooperation from the public. “The Lower TAPCO RAP is located on 110 acres of private property owned by Freeport-McMoRan, Inc. The site is managed by Clarkdale under an Access License Agreement. The Access License can be revoked if the area is not used responsibly.”



Both RAPs in Clarkdale are day use areas and open seven days per week, so plan your visits during daylight hours. The Tuzigoot RAP is located at 15 E. Tuzigoot Road, and the Lower TAPCO RAP is located approximately 2.5 road miles north at 3400 Sycamore Canyon Road. For those interested in boating between the two RAPs during normal river flow conditions, plan to spend 2-3 hours to kayak the 3 river miles between the two river access points. If you are floating on an inner tube, the trip will take approximately 4 hours.

Visitors at the Lower TAPCO RAP will find an information kiosk and Self-Pay Station at the park entrance. In addition to the history of TAPCO, visitors will also find a site map, river safety information, and the rules for use of the River Access Point at this entry kiosk. All visitors entering the park must stop at this location to secure a Vehicle Access Pass. The Access Pass is required, and while there is no adopted fee for the Pass, a \$5 per vehicle per day donation is suggested and is used to offset the operations costs for the River Access Points.