Southwest Vegetation Management Association

Annual Training 2026

FINAL SCHEDULE

Venue and Accommodations:

We-Ko-Pa Casino, Wassaja Conference Center, Rooms 111-113
10438 Wekopa Way, Fort McDowell, AZ 85264

**Note - presentations and field trip sites may be subject to change.*

Day 1 -- Wednesday, October 28th
Start time 8:00 am / End time: 5:00 pm

Continental breakfast and boxed lunch will be provided. Presentations will be followed by a sponsor-hosted outdoor social hour with appetizers and beverages in the courtyard.

8:00 am Registration, Continental Breakfast, Networking
*****Please arrive by 8:00 am for CEU registration*****

8:30 am Welcome – Tom Ohmart, SWVMA President

8:40 am Keynote Address (20 min) Alexa Lopezlira (*SWVMA Vice President, ADOT*) and Jonathan Horst (*SWVMA Secretary, baselineshift*)

Session 1: Fire Prevention Strategies and Tools (*Moderated by Alexa Lopezlira*)

9:00 am (30 min) Fire Prevention Strategies at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum (*Stephen Fuchs, Boyce Thompson Arboretum*)

9:30 am (30 min) Flipping the Switch: Accelerating Alternative Stable States after the Hazen Fire (*Jake Eberspacher, DFFM and Hunter Watson, AZGFD*)

10:00 am (30 min) Using Fire as an Invasive Plant Management Tool (*Alan Sinclair, Siphon Draw Fire and Fuels*)

10:30 am Break 1 (15 minutes)

Session 2: Invasive Plant Treatment and Pesticide Safety (*Moderated by Jonathan Horst)*

10:45 am (45 min) Challenges of Pesticide Use and Volunteer Coordination (*Paul Staker, Jessie Dwyer, McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, John Scheuring, AZ Native Plant Society*)

11:30 am (30 min) Correct Me If I'm Wrong: Pesticides and Their Containers (*Jennifer Weber, UofA Cooperative Extension*)

12:00 pm Boxed Lunch (75 min) and Poster Sessions - vegan / vegetarian options available

12:00pm - 12:15 pm Word from our Platinum+ sponsors and Board Nominations (*Tom Ohmart, SWVMA President*)
12:15 pm - 1:15 pm Poster Sessions/Open Discussion (*DFFM, ADOT, ASU, UofA)*

Session 3: Invasive Plant Management Research (*Moderated by Tom Ohmart*)

1:15 pm (30 min) Can Herbicides Control Stinknet and Improve Biocrust Restoration Outcomes? (*Anita Antoninka, NAU*)

1:45 pm (30 min) Managing Buffelgrass: Considering Competitive Dynamics and Restoration Strategies (*Hanna Farrell, SWCA*)

2:15 pm (30 min) The Waterman Restoration Project: From Monoculture Buffelgrass to an Upland Sonoran Landscape (*John Scheuring, AZNPS*)

2:45 pm Break 2 (15 minutes)

Session 4: Native Plant Health Monitoring and Projects (*Moderated by Monique Laraway*)

3:00 pm (30 min) Desert Icon Saguaros, Will They Survive Fires? (*Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg, Maricopa County Parks and Rec*)

3:30 pm (30 min) Riparian Vegetation Monitoring: Landsat-based Greenness, Phenology, and Evapotranspiration on the Gila River to Support Critical Landscape Conservation Planning and Habitat Management Needs (*Pamela Nagler, USGS*)

4:00 pm (30 min) The Central Arizona Conservation Alliance Plant Swap Program (*Mary Chisolm and Challie Facemire, CAZCA*)

WRAP UP

4:30 pm (15 min) Weed Manager of the Year Award Announcement (*Monique Laraway, SWVMA Treasurer*)

4:45 pm (15 min) Grant Awards Announcements (*Jennifer Becker, SWVMA Board Member*)

5:00 pm (15 min) Field trip info (*Alexa Lopezlira, SWVMA Vice President*)

5:30 - 7:00 pm Sponsored Social Hour in the Courtyard

Day 2 -- Thursday, October 29th, 2026
Start time 8:00 am / End time: 12:30 pm

Itinerary:
8-8:30AM - Meet and Greet / Carpool from We-Ko-Pa Casino
9-10:30AM - Tour of Phon D Sutton Recreation Area Project (Jacob)
- Meeting Location

10:45AM- 12:15PM Tour of McDowell Regional Park Project (Jessi)
- Meeting Location: TBD – pending vehicle count

12:30PM - Arrive back at We-Ko-Pa Casino

Background Information on Field Trip Sites
Phon D Sutton Recreational Area: Guided by Jacob Draper (DFFM) and Justin Eddinger (Ecoculture)
Project Objective: Riparian restoration. Treatment of salt cedar, buffelgrass, and fountain grass.

The Lower Salt River Restoration Project (LSRRP) is located in the Mesa Ranger District, Tonto National Forest (TNF). The LSRRP is a collaborative partnership between the Ecoculture, National Forest Foundation (NFF), Northern Arizona University (NAU), Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM), and the TNF. This long-term collaborative restoration initiative started in 2018 after the 818-acre Cactus Fire. The goal is to reduce/eliminate non-native invasive species and restore native riparian plant communities along the approximate 14-mile stretch of the Lower Salt River (LSR) from Stewart Mountain Dam downstream to Granite Reef Dam.

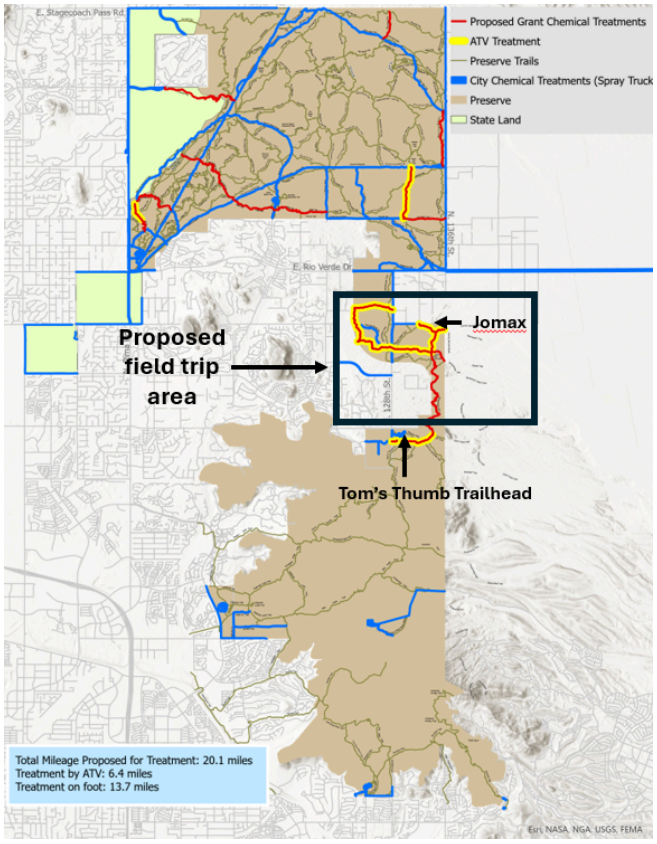
Treatment began in 2018, focusing on salt cedar (Tamarix spp.) and giant reed (Arundo donax) removal. The LSRRP is poised to make tangible progress towards rebuilding the ecosystem, restoring natural diversity, benefitting wildlife, and increasing high quality water to one of the largest cities in the U.S., and enhancing the human-nature interactions needed to bolster a global conservation ethos in an urban setting. The existing native vegetation along the Lower Salt River in this area includes Fremont cottonwood (Popu/us fremontii), Goodding willow (Salix gooddingii) and mesquite (Prosopis spp.) which provide shade and habitat resources.

McDowell Regional Park: Guided by Madison Barasha (City of Scottsdale) and Jessica Szopinski (DFFM)

Project Objective: Fine fuel breaks. Treatment primarily focusing on red brome and stinknet.

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve (MSP) is 30,580 acres of permanently protected Sonoran Desert habitat.

The MSP is owned and managed by the City of Scottsdale (COS), with invasive plant removal support from its non-profit partner, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy (MSC). The MSP and surrounding areas have recently experienced multiple human-caused fires fueled primarily by red brome, which has naturalized across the Sonoran Desert. In 2019, COS began applying pre-emergent herbicides via spray truck to strategic alignments in and around the MSP to interrupt the continuity of fine fuels to provide firefighters an advantage with suppression efforts. Targeted areas Include adjacent road shoulders, trailhead parking lot perimeters, and drivable routes within the MSP such as the high-voltage transmission lines. This grant will expand these efforts by applying pre-emergent herbicide along trails strategically selected to enhance the overall effectiveness of the City's wildfire management program.



Topics will focus on the purpose and features of the different approaches, treatment methodologies, workforce engagement, treatment mapping, and all our lessons learned. Shuttles will be provided due to limited parking at McDowell Regional Park site, carpooling is strongly encouraged. Easy road and rocky trail hiking may be required.

Bring field attire: water bottle, hat, hiking shoes, boot brushes, sunglasses, binoculars, etc.