ARIZONA’S STATE CULTURAL PARKS: Innovation and Creativity in the Great Recession

Governor’s Archaeology Advisory Commission
PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Governor’s Archaeology Advisory Commission has prepared this report to examine and celebrate the community partnerships that sustained Arizona’s archaeological and historic parks when state funding was cut in the wake of the nationwide economic crisis that began in 2008-2009 and is known as the “Great Recession.” Through their efforts to avert park closures, while supporting programs and facilities that benefit local communities and Indian tribes, such partnerships represent excellent examples of “public archaeology.”

The Commission is a statutory body charged with advising the Governor and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on:

- the protection of Arizona’s archaeological heritage
- public education
- related issues and activities

As the SHPO is housed within Arizona State Parks, the Commission has a great interest in supporting resource protection, educational programs, and heritage tourism within the parks whose primary purpose is the preservation of prehistoric and historic sites. These parks offer significant benefits to the people of Arizona.

- They connect citizens to the state’s history through direct experience of significant historical sites and landscapes.
- The parks preserve and protect important scientific and cultural heritage values, while offering the public opportunities to learn about our history.
- They promote stewardship of archaeological resources.
- Parks also provide opportunities for family oriented recreation by offering special events, such as festivals and historical reenactments, as well as facilities for picnicking, hiking, and enjoying scenic vistas.

Such opportunities support local economies through heritage tourism that contributes millions of dollars annually to local communities and businesses.

As the economic crisis of the Great Recession intensified, Arizona drastically cut its budget for parks programs in response to declining state revenues. General fund appropriations dropped to zero. The State Legislature diverted enhancement funds from park entrance fees, lottery revenues from the Heritage Fund, and funds from various grant programs away from the parks and into the state’s general fund for use elsewhere. The loss of millions of dollars from several funding sources led to drastic reductions in on-the-ground staff, programs, and services, as well as deferred maintenance. In early 2010, the Arizona State Parks Board voted to begin closing 15 parks in a phased sequence, due to drastic reductions of funds “swept” from six different funding
sources by the Legislature. By April of that year, five parks had been closed to the public, and four others were operating on reduced schedules. By mid-2010, approximately half of the 31 state parks were slated for partial or total closures, due to a nearly 40 percent personnel vacancy rate from mandatory furloughs, reductions in staff, and vacancies left unfilled. The Arizona State Parks Foundation anticipated that by the end of that year, only a quarter of the parks would remain open as before. The dire funding situation persisted, with funding for the state parks system reduced by 82 million dollars between 2008 and 2012.

The situation was particularly dire for the archaeological and historic parks, which typically receive fewer visitors and generate lower revenues than the larger recreation parks that offer water sports, other popular activities, and unique sightseeing opportunities, such as Lake Havasu, Slide Rock, and Kartchner Caverns. Yet archaeological and historic parks share in the broad public support for parks. In a public survey conducted by Arizona State Parks for the 2008 Arizona Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 85 percent of the respondents reported having visited a park, natural, or cultural feature in the prior 12 months, and 47.9 percent said they would visit a natural or cultural feature, park, or archaeology site in the future.

Archaeological and historic parks met the challenges of the Great Recession by strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones, more actively engaging local communities and volunteers, and employing other creative approaches. This report highlights the success of selected partnerships. It describes associated challenges, lessons learned, and opportunities to sustain parks in future years through strong partnerships with more reliable funding sources.

ARIZONA’S ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC STATE PARKS

Nine of the 31 properties within the Arizona State Parks system are cultural and historic parks that tell the story of Arizona’s past, from its Native American cultures, through Spanish colonial and territorial times, to the history of the western frontier and statehood. The prehistoric and Spanish colonial periods are represented by archaeological sites and exhibits at Homolovi and Tubac Presidio. The parks that focus on various aspects of military and territorial history are Tubac Presidio, Fort Verde, Jerome, McFarland, Riordan Mansion, Tombstone Courthouse, Yuma Territorial Prison, and Yuma Quartermaster Depot. In addition to these nine parks, many of the system’s recreation parks offer sites and exhibits that feature archaeology and history. For example, the public can visit and learn about prehistoric sites at Catalina and Lyman Lake parks. At Roper Lake State Park, visitors can view replicas of types of prehistoric dwellings at Dankworth Pond.

The Arizona State Parks website provides more detailed information about the protected resources, history, facilities, and special events at each park.

For this report, the Public Policy Committee of the Commission decided to focus on a selection of diverse parks in different regions of the state: Homolovi State Park near Winslow, Fort Verde State Historic Park in Camp Verde, Tubac Presidio State Historic Park in the Santa Cruz Valley, and two linked parks near Yuma, the Yuma Quartermaster Depot and Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Parks. The following descriptions and recommendations are based on a review of published information and interviews with Arizona State Parks staff and managers, as well as others involved in partnerships. The Commission appreciates their
willingness to share information and insights, as well as relevant information from a recent analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities at state parks.

The report also relies on information from related presentations by park partners at the Arizona Historic Preservation Conference held in Rio Rico in June 2014. A report prepared in 2009 by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, “The Price of Stewardship: The Future of Arizona’s State Parks,” also provided useful information.

The report begins with a brief description of each selected park, how it was affected by the budget crisis, and the partnerships that provided critical support. Many partnerships already existed prior to the crisis, but stepped up their efforts in response to the crisis and the concerns of community and tribal leaders. The range of partner contributions included funding, volunteer labor, scientific expertise, in-kind services such as maintenance, and administrative services. Partners also provided assistance in organizing and staging special events.

HOMOLOVI STATE PARK

Description

Homolovi State Park is located near Winslow in northern Arizona. The park contains prehistoric archaeological sites, including two main pueblo ruins, dating to the 14th century when an ancient people found a home along the Little Colorado River. These people, ancestors of the Hopi Tribe, paused in their migrations to till the rich flood plain and sandy slopes before continuing north to join their kin on the Hopi mesas. The park now serves as a center of research for the late migration period of the Hopi from the 1200s to the late 1300s. Homolovi also contains a small cemetery from a group of 19th century pioneers who founded the settlement of Sunset.

The Hopi people consider Homolovi to be part of their homeland and regard it as a sacred place. They continue to make pilgrimages to these sites, renewing the ties of the people with the land. The park was established in 1986 and opened to the public in 1993, in response to public concern about the devastating effects of damage caused by illegal collectors of prehistoric artifacts. In some cases, severe damage was caused by bulldozers. In an effort to protect these places, the Hopi people supported the creation of Homolovi State Park.
Park facilities include a visitor center, museum, hiking and interpretive trails, picnic areas, and areas for camping and recreational vehicles. The park offers online campground reservations. Special activities and events include demonstrations on traditional Hopi pottery, guided tours of petroglyph sites, and “star party” astronomy events. In August, Suvo Muk Day starts with an open house that celebrates the partners who have helped to protect the archaeological sites from destruction. “Suvo Muk” in the Hopi language means to accomplish work through a joint effort. The event features traditional corn roasting, a morning run, presentations on archaeology, and artist demonstrations.

**Response of Park Partners to the Budget Crisis**

Homolovi State Park was one of the first parks closed as a result of the budget crisis. With fewer resources to monitor and protect the park, the closure placed its archaeological sites at great risk of damage.

Early in the crisis, the Arizona State Parks Board attempted to avert planned park closures by entering into agreements with partners to keep the parks open. By the end of 2010, 43 entities including counties, cities, towns, state and federal agencies, and friends groups stepped forward to provide financial aid and in-kind support to meet this goal. The Hopi Tribal Council unanimously passed a resolution to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the State Parks Board to assist with the operation and maintenance of Homolovi State Park. The Hopi Tribe provided $175,000 to subsidize park staffing and operations. In addition, tribal members would actively participate in educational activities to teach visitors about the tribe’s history and cultural traditions. To emphasize the existence of the Hopi as a living culture with ancient roots, the tribe requested that the word “Ruins” be omitted from the name of the park, as the Hopi consider its archaeological sites to be spiritually alive. The State Parks Board approved the request. The Hopi Tribe and other partners participated in a grand re-opening ceremony on March 18, 2011, which was attended by nearly 600 people.

The Hopi Tribe has provided additional funding and continues to actively participate as a partner in operations and programs. It recently contributed funding for a road maintenance project, and a tribal member works as a seasonal park ranger providing educational programs. The Tribe also participates in the annual Suvo Muk Day event.
In 2010, the City of Winslow discounted water services to the park. Community leaders consistently supported Homolovi State Park and testified against the closure. The city and the Winslow Chamber of Commerce are partners in promoting heritage tourism.

Research institutions and non-profit organizations have contributed to research, stabilization, and resource protection projects at Homolovi. The list of partners includes:

- University of Arizona
- Arizona State Museum
- Museum of Northern Arizona
- Northland Pioneer College
- Arizona Archaeological Society
- Archaeology Southwest
- Arizona Pioneer Cemeteries Association
- Arizona Site Steward Program.

Volunteers from many of these entities have been involved in park operations. Staff from the Hopi Tribe, University of Michigan, and Archaeology Southwest worked with Arizona State Parks to redesign the exhibits and the interactive computer terminal at the visitor center in advance of the grand reopening.

In 2011, volunteers from nine chapters of the Arizona Archaeological Society spent 633 hours in repairing and stabilizing exposed walls at two pueblos, Homolovi I and II. The preserved walls protect the sites and enhance the effectiveness of interpreting these ancient villages to visitors. The work was directed by Dr. Charles Adams of the University of Arizona, following a plan developed in consultation with Arizona State Parks, the Hopi Tribe, and the State Historic Preservation Office.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

State Parks managers commented that the partnership with the Hopi Tribe has made the park better than it was before the funding crisis, especially in regard to public education, cultural sensitivity, and resource protection. A recent review by Arizona State Parks cited the existing partnerships as one of the park’s greatest strengths. However, it defined the need to broaden and enhance partnerships to ensure future success. There is a perceived need to strengthen the partnership with the City of Winslow and to more actively engage the Chamber of Commerce and the local community. Partnerships could be expanded to include the National Park Service (which administers nearby Petrified Forest National Park), particularly in regard to enhancing interpretive programs. State Parks can continue to benefit from support of the Arizona Department of Transportation, which has provided assistance with road projects.

Arizona State Parks could pursue opportunities to work more effectively with the Arizona Office of Tourism to market and promote increased visitation. The region is full of scenic attractions that visitors can enjoy while learning about archaeological sites, pioneer history, and Native American cultures. A loop tour could highlight Petrified Forest National Park, Walnut Canyon and Wupatki National Monuments, Little Painted Desert County Park, La Posada historic hotel, Historic Hubbell Trading Post, and the Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation lands.
Description

Fort Verde State Historic Park is located in Camp Verde in central Arizona. Fort Verde was a base for General Crook’s U.S. Army soldiers and scouts in the 1870s and 1880s. Four of the original historic adobe buildings still stand and have been restored for tours, allowing the public to experience life through the eyes of a frontier soldier. From 1865 to 1891, Fort Verde and Camp Verde were home to army officers, enlisted men, Indian scouts, families, and doctors. The history of frontier medicine is particularly interesting, as 27 doctors served at the fort over the years. Among the more notable were Dr. Edward Palmer and Dr. Elliot Coues, who documented their experiences at the fort. The park is the best-preserved example of a military fort from this era in Arizona.

Park facilities include three historic homes along “Officer’s Row,” all furnished in the 1880s period, that are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The former administration building, also known as the “Museum,” houses artifacts on display, interpretive exhibits, and the visitor center/gift shop. The park offers picnic tables and parking areas for tour buses and recreational vehicles.

Fort Verde State Park hosts a diverse range of special events throughout the year, which include guided tours, living history presentations, and historical reenactments. In February, the park celebrates African American/Black History Month with living history presentations that commemorate the Buffalo Soldiers. The park participates in the Pecan and Wine Festival sponsored by the Town of Camp Verde during March. In April, the History of the Soldier event features reenactments of soldiers from the American Revolution through the war in Vietnam. July offers the Corn Fest with old-fashioned “vintage” baseball games, held on the parade grounds at the fort. The October celebration of Fort Verde Days features living history presentations, historical reenactments, cavalry drills, Dutch oven cooking demonstrations, a fashion show, and vintage baseball. December is celebrated with a Victorian Christmas theme.
and candlelight tours. Fort Verde has hosted the annual Arizona Archaeology Expo and has offered historical technology workshops, such as adobe brick-making, to celebrate Arizona Archaeology and Heritage Awareness Month. The park also has hosted a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event sponsored by Arizona State Parks, the Town of Camp Verde, and the American Legion.

**Response of Park Partners to the Budget Crisis**

Like other state parks in 2010, Fort Verde State Historic Park was threatened by the prospect of full or partial closure. It suffered a 75% staff reduction, along with furloughs, going from four full-time staff to a single full-time manager with some part-time and volunteer support. The park began operating on a schedule of five days per week, from Thursday through Monday. It still remains closed on Tuesday and Wednesday, which became the park manager’s days off. However, the manager is the only full-time staff person and frequently needs to go to the office during her days off to complete projects and keep up with the workload. It was during one of these times that approximately 80 visitors were turned away in a single day. Nevertheless, at the outset of the budget crisis, full closure remained a distinct possibility.

The Town of Camp Verde stepped up to express strong support from the community for keeping the park open. Early in the crisis, former Mayor Bob Burnside and Mike Scannell, former Town Manager, advised the Camp Verde Town Council that the park would close unless the town contributed funds to support it. At every meeting, they stated that “closure is not an option.” With the support of the Town Council, they initiated meetings with Arizona State Parks and Yavapai County. As a result, over a period of five years from 2009 through 2013, Yavapai County and the Town of Camp Verde provided almost $400,000 in funding to support the

**Visitors’ Center and Museum, Fort Verde**

**Scouts and Cavalry who served at Fort Verde awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor**
The county and town also contributed staff time to assist with marketing special events, as well as juvenile and adult probation assistance with maintenance, cleanup, and other projects. The town’s public works department provides technical assistance with facilities maintenance, on an as-needed basis for situations that require special expertise. Camp Verde also provides labor to assist with setting up large tents for special events. In appreciation to Camp Verde, the park waives entrance fees on three weekends during the year.

Hold the Fort is a 501.c.3 non-profit organization dedicated to keeping Fort Verde State Historic Park open to the public. The group has coordinated with the Town of Camp Verde to sponsor special events and programs. The park also maintains good relations with the Verde Valley Archaeology Center and coordinates with the Center on special events.

Community volunteers from Hold the Fort, the local historical society, and other organizations have been critical to sustaining the park’s operations and programs. Dedicated volunteers carry out many of the tasks formerly accomplished by parks staff.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

The Town of Camp Verde and the community are deeply committed to sustaining Fort Verde State Historic Park. Nevertheless, Arizona State Parks perceives opportunities to enhance community involvement, for example, by expanding outreach programs to schools. The park manager values the benefits of the partnership and works tirelessly to maintain and enhance communication with town officials and the community. However, efforts to develop a formal memorandum of understanding, or other agreement that would more clearly specify mutual goals, roles, and responsibilities, have as yet been unsuccessful. Such agreements typically consist of statements of mutual interest and benefits. A carefully crafted agreement could be mutually beneficial, facilitating the sharing of services and the consideration of community interests, without imposing potentially unreasonable obligations on either party.

Arizona State Parks would like to promote more involvement in the park by the local Yavapai-Apache Nation. Fort Verde has offered to provide space for an exhibit, and tribal staff and elders have given presentations at the park. Tribal history and cultural perspectives are an important and under-represented aspect of the history of Fort Verde. Tribal history could be expressed through the history of the fort in such aspects as the contributions of Native American military veterans and the role of Indian scouts who received the Medal of Honor. The park also provides an opportunity to commemorate the enduring legacy of native people who persisted and continue to exist as a vital community, after enduring the hardships of loss and conquest during the 19th century.

The Verde Valley area has many attractions offering opportunities to visit and learn about archaeological sites, Arizona history, and Native American cultures. Cooperative marketing and interpretive efforts with the National Park Service and other entities, focused on heritage tourism promotion and public education, could highlight Fort Verde, the Verde Valley Archaeology Center, Montezuma’s Castle and Montezuma’s Well National Monuments, Tuzigoot National Monument, and the historic mining town and state park at Jerome.
Adequate staffing remains the primary challenge for Fort Verde State Historic Park. The current manager believes that at least two full-time staff are needed to ensure public safety and reduce liability. The loss of staff has forced the park to remain closed two days a week. Loss of access to the park represents a loss of tens of thousands of dollars and approximately 25% of the park’s annual revenue in entrance fees.

Ultimately, adequate staffing would keep the park open seven days a week and is crucial to the future success of Fort Verde State Historic Park. Dedicated volunteers are a wonderful asset, but because they are volunteers, there may be issues with reliability and flexibility. Although the benefits are great, volunteer programs work best when park managers and staff are able to devote sufficient time to recruiting, training, overseeing, and rewarding volunteers. It would be difficult to sustain a volunteer-based model of park management indefinitely with only a single full-time employee on staff.

TUBAC PRESIDIO STATE HISTORIC PARK

Tubac Presidio State Historic Park, located in the Santa Cruz Valley south of Tucson, was dedicated and opened in 1958 as Arizona’s first state park. Tubac was one of the earliest non-Indian settlements in the state. The Jesuit priest, Eusebio Francisco Kino, established the nearby Tumacacori Mission in 1691. Tubac, at that time a small Piman Indian village, became a mission farm and ranch. By the 1730s, Spanish colonists settled the area and raised crops and livestock along the Santa Cruz River. It was the northern frontier of Spain’s empire in the New World. Following a Pima revolt, Spain established the Presidio San Ignacio de Tubac in 1752. The fifty soldiers stationed at the remote military post were to prevent further rebellion, protect colonists and the mission, and further explore the territory. Juan Bautista de Anza, the second commander of the presidio, led two overland expeditions to the Pacific, which resulted in the founding of San Francisco. Tubac languished after the military garrison was moved to Tucson in 1776 and the area became part of the territory of Mexico.

Otero Hall, Tubac Presidio State Historic Park

Description

Tubac Presidio State Historic Park, located in the Santa Cruz Valley south of Tucson, was dedicated and opened in 1958 as Arizona’s first state park. Tubac was one of the earliest non-Indian settlements in the state. The Jesuit priest, Eusebio Francisco Kino, established the nearby Tumacacori Mission in 1691. Tubac, at that time a small Piman Indian village, became a mission farm and ranch. By the 1730s, Spanish colonists settled the area and raised crops and livestock along the Santa Cruz River. It was the northern frontier of Spain’s empire in the New World. Following a Pima revolt, Spain established the Presidio San Ignacio de Tubac in 1752. The fifty soldiers stationed at the remote military post were to prevent further rebellion, protect colonists and the mission, and further explore the territory. Juan Bautista de Anza, the second commander of the presidio, led two overland expeditions to the Pacific, which resulted in the founding of San Francisco. Tubac languished after the military garrison was moved to Tucson in 1776 and the area became part of the territory of Mexico.
After the ratification of the Gadsden Treaty in 1854, the area became part of the territory of the United States. Tubac grew rapidly as entrepreneurs and developers, such as Charles D. Poston, moved to the area and formed the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company and other businesses. By 1860, Tubac had Arizona’s first printing press and was the largest town in the territory. However, during and after the Civil War, military and economic resources were diverted elsewhere, and Tubac never regained its earlier importance. Today the town supports a thriving arts community and, together with Tumacacori Mission National Historical Park, is a heritage tourism destination.

The facilities at Tubac Presidio State Historic Park feature historic buildings, with exhibits and artwork that highlight the history of the area from prehistoric times, through the Spanish colonial and Mexican periods, to the territorial era. In 1974, archaeologists from the University of Arizona excavated portions of the Spanish presidio. Visitors can now view portions of the original foundation, walls, and plaza floor of the 1752 Commandant’s quarters, preserved in a unique underground display.

Undeveloped areas within the park’s boundaries contain archaeological sites remaining from its long history of occupation and use.

Facilities also include a visitor center and a museum, which houses the printing press that produced the first newspaper in Arizona in 1859. There are three buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places: a restored 1885 schoolhouse; Otero Hall, which provides space for art exhibits and special events; and the Rojas House, a mid-20th century adobe dwelling that depicts the daily life of a long-time Tubac family. Otero Hall is available for meetings, receptions, weddings, and other special events. The park also offers picnic areas and trails. It is close to shops and restaurants in the town of Tubac.

Tubac Presidio offers a variety of special events, living history demonstrations, and school programs. In 2014, activities during the month of June included an exhibit of the “Cavalcade of Arizona History” paintings by the renowned Western artist William Ahrendt; an exhibit of photographs, Minas, Mineros y sus Comunidades (Mines, Miners, and Their Communities); living history demonstrations on food and medicinal plants of the Spanish Colonial Period; and demonstrations of the frontier printing press. The park also operates the Day in the 1885 Schoolhouse Program for grades 3 through 5. The program recreates a typical day in the classroom over 100 years ago, complete with clothing and school supplies from that era.
Response of Park Partners to the Budget Crisis

Tubac Presidio State Historic Park was scheduled for closure in March 2010. In 2009, park expenditures had totaled $193,000, while revenues were only $29,000. The Tubac Historical Society and other local organizations conducted community meetings and rallies to recruit volunteers and explore ways to keep the park open. As the town of Tubac is unincorporated, they turned to Santa Cruz County for advice and support. Santa Cruz County signed an agreement with Arizona State Parks to create a public-private partnership that allowed the park to remain open. The first priority was to seek funds to support a paid employee; the remainder of the work would be done by volunteers. The partners succeeded in raising $30,000 in two weeks.

The agreement remained in effect, and the initial partnership with the Tubac Historical Society evolved into a non-profit organization, the Friends of the Tubac Presidio Park and Museum, which currently operates the park on behalf of Arizona State Parks. Park volunteers revitalized the visitor center and its exhibits, upgraded the self-guided walking tour, and installed new signs and landscaping. The Friends of the Tubac Presidio collaborated with the local Center of the Arts and the Tubac Chamber of Commerce to host community events, such as lectures, book signings, and walking tours of old town Tubac. Special events have highlighted the themes of Spanish horses, weaving, and chocolate.

Park operations are financed largely by admission fees, gift shop revenues, grants, and donations. The park also rents Otero Hall for special events, such as receptions. In 2013, park expenditures had been reduced to $115,000 and were exceeded by revenues.

Challenges and Opportunities

Tubac Presidio State Historic Park represents an excellent model of a successful park managed largely by volunteers through a public-private partnership. Partnerships emphasized the park’s connections and benefits to the local community and integrated it into Tubac’s economy and identity. Its success owes much to its dedicated volunteers. However, its primary sources of funding tend to be unpredictable and may not be stable from year to year.

The Friends of the Tubac Presidio participates in the Santa Cruz Heritage Alliance, an organization that is advocating to establish the proposed Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area. Such areas celebrate distinctive landscapes that feature important historical, cultural, natural, and recreational resources. They employ a grass-roots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development through public-private partnerships. The historic state parks in the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area provide a good example of the benefits that can be achieved through designation as a National Heritage Area.
YUMA QUARTERMASTER DEPOT AND
YUMA TERRITORIAL PRISON STATE HISTORIC PARKS

Description

Yuma Quartermaster Depot and Yuma Territorial Prison are connected parks within the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, which seeks to conserve, enhance, and interpret the cultural and natural resources of the community. These historical parks are located near the Colorado River in the city of Yuma in southwestern Arizona.

Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park is located on grounds of the depot facility established by the U.S. Army in 1864. The depot was used to store and distribute supplies for all the military posts in Arizona, and some in Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Texas. A six-month supply of clothing, food, ammunition, and other goods was kept there at all times. Supplies were brought from California by ocean-going vessels traveling around the tip of the Baja Peninsula to the mouth of the Colorado River. From there, they were transferred to river steamboats and brought to the depot. Steamboats and mule teams further distributed the goods and supplies; the depot quartered up to 900 mules. After the railroad reached Yuma in 1877, there was less need for the depot, which was officially closed in 1883.

Five of the original depot buildings remain on the park grounds, and four buildings contain exhibits that cover both the military history of the site and the history of the Bureau of Reclamation’s construction of major irrigation works in the Yuma area during the early 1900s. The park offers a visitor center that serves as the site of the Yuma Visitors Bureau, as well as picnic areas and group use areas.

Special events include a community farmers’ market on Sundays between October and May, during which park entrance fees are waived. Yuma Crossing Day activities in February feature historical reenactments and coincide with events that celebrate the town’s history.

Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park is the site of Arizona Territory’s first prison. On July 1, 1876, the first seven inmates entered the prison and were locked into the new cells they had built themselves. At the park, visitors can walk through the actual strap iron cells. Now a museum, the building houses exhibits about the prisoners and prison life. More than 3,000 prisoners, including 29 women, lived within the walls during the prison’s 33 years of operation.
The park also offers a gift shop and picnic areas. Special events include Old West reenactment activities on weekends from October to April, such as the Gathering of the Gunfighters in January; Yuma Crossing Day in February; Haunted Tours in October; and “A Cowboy Thanksgiving, or Drop that Turkey Leg, Varmint!” during the second week in November. With the help of local law enforcement, the park revived a tradition of “Halloween at the Prison,” which recently attracted more than 1,800 children.

Response of Park Partners to the Budget Crisis

Yuma Quartermaster Depot and Yuma Territorial Prison were among the state parks scheduled for closure in 2010. Fortunately, long-standing partnerships came to the rescue and kept the parks operating. Community involvement began with the Yuma Crossing Partnership, which supported the establishment of the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park in 1986. In 1990, a non-profit corporation known as the Yuma Crossing Foundation became involved in managing the site as a living history museum. Beginning in 1997, the City of Yuma and its partners provided approximately $175,000 per year in operating assistance to Arizona State Parks for the Yuma Quartermaster Depot. The primary source of the funds was a two percent hospitality tax, which Yuma voters chose in May 2009 to extend for another 15 years.

The efforts of partners led to the designation of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (NHA). Its purpose is to identify and conserve Yuma’s cultural, historical, and natural resources as part of community revitalization. A non-profit organization, the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation, works closely with the City of Yuma. Its projects include downtown beautification and wetlands
The National Heritage Area Program is described on the related web page of the [National Park Service](https://www.nps.gov).

National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape…NHAs are lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs. Through public-private partnerships, NHA entities support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects…The heritage area concept offers an innovative method for citizens, in partnership with local, state, and Federal government, and nonprofit and private sector interests, to shape the long-term future of their communities.

National Heritage Areas are not national park units. Rather, the National Park Service provides technical, planning, and limited financial assistance. It serves in an advisory role. Land ownership and decision-making authority are handled locally through public-private partnerships.

The community responded promptly to the planned closure of the state parks in Yuma. In October 2009, the City of Yuma agreed to lease the Yuma Quartermaster Depot and asked the Yuma Crossing NHA to manage the park on the community’s behalf. In April 2010, Arizona State Parks also turned over operation of the Yuma Territorial Prison to the NHA on behalf of the Yuma community.

The NHA faced daunting challenges. Each park was operating at an annual deficit of more than $100,000. The parks suffered from years of deferred maintenance, and the Quartermaster Depot attracted few visitors. The community raised more than $70,000 for the Territorial Prison in just 60 days through the volunteer efforts of “Chain Gangs.” The NHA hired a small corps of staff, recruited volunteers, and developed a business plan focused on reducing operating costs; investing in repairs and maintenance; upgrading the museum exhibits; and aggressively marketing the parks to a broader regional market.

Since the start of the budget crisis, the Yuma Crossing NHA has essentially assumed the responsibility of day-to-day management of the state parks in Yuma. The Heritage Area can charge entry fees, which are invested back into the parks to support stabilization, public programs, and other needs. It employs both paid staff and volunteers. State Parks staff conduct periodic inspections, but the Heritage Area enjoys considerable autonomy, and Arizona State Parks has no staff on-site. The non-profit corporation essentially manages the parks on behalf of Arizona State Parks. The City of Yuma and the Yuma Visitors Bureau participate as active partners. The Yuma Visitors Bureau played a key role in managing the marketing and public relations campaign.
Since the Yuma Crossing NHA assumed management of the two parks, annual visitation at Yuma Quartermaster Depot has increased from 11,000 to 85,000, including people accessing the park for information at the Yuma Visitors Bureau. The NHA has reduced operating deficits, upgraded facilities and exhibits, completed restoration work on historic buildings, and rented space to the Yuma Visitors Bureau for its visitor information center. Entrance fees and merchandise sales at Yuma Territorial Prison grew from $279,000 in 2010 to $436,000 in 2012.

The Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation receives approximately 67 percent of its funding from federal, state, and local grants. During fiscal year 2012, historic preservation efforts were supported by grants from the National Park Service, Arizona State Parks, City of Yuma, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and other entities. Additional income sources included entrance fees, merchandise sales, special events, annual fundraiser events, rental income, and charitable donations.

The local economy has benefited from integrating heritage tourism efforts into economic development projects. Planned development of the waterfront area, which encompasses the state parks, includes a private hotel/conference center near the riverfront Gateway Park. The architectural design would be consistent with historic preservation goals.

Challenges and Opportunities

The partnerships that support the state parks at Yuma have been very successful. The parks have been effectively integrated into the life of the community and support its goals related to heritage tourism and community revitalization. Local management facilitates effective responses to local wants and needs. In this case, it appears to be a sustainable model of management for Yuma Quartermaster Depot and Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Parks, though dependent on continuing sources of funding that may be unpredictable or unreliable, such as the voter-approved hospitality tax and grants from the National Park Service.

In its 2012-2013 Annual Report, the Yuma Crossing NHA Corporation expresses its strong commitment to revitalize and sustain the two state parks: “the long-range plan is to bring to life the romance of the steamboat era as well as tell the story of the Colorado River – past, present, and future.” Its main priority is to work with Arizona State Parks and the City of Yuma to develop an agreement that formalizes a long-term partnership for local management and control of the parks. The NHA expresses concern about the effects of the federal budget deficit on the National Park Service, “one of the pillars of our funding.” Also, “the continued deep recession has put financial stress on all our partners, such as state and local governments, as well as private foundations.”

In the future, the parks in the Yuma Crossing NHA will benefit from wider-ranging partnerships. For example, the Arizona Historical Society is working with the City of Yuma, the Yuma Crossing NHA, and the Yuma County Historical Society in developing a Yuma Museum Campus to showcase the history and economic significance of the city and the Lower Colorado River region.
Given the autonomy of this management model, there remains the challenge of balancing local control with effective oversight and quality control from the distant headquarters of Arizona State Parks. The agency has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that local priorities don’t conflict with state priorities. Arizona State Parks also needs to ensure that park activities meet applicable professional standards and guidelines for historic preservation, collections management, and interpretation. It is critical to have an agreement that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all partners, including a process for resolving conflicts and determining how to proceed if Arizona State Parks resumes greater control of the parks in the future.

CONCLUSIONS: THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN PARKS MANAGEMENT

These cases demonstrate how partnerships, based in local communities, played a critical role in saving and sustaining five archaeological and historic state parks when they lost staff and funding and were threatened by closure during the Great Recession. The other four historic parks, such as Riordan Mansion in Flagstaff, also benefited greatly from community partnerships. It appears these parks have not only been saved, but have been improved by greater community and tribal involvement in operations and special events. Local contributions of funds, volunteer labor, and donations have enhanced the sense of community ownership, pride, and investment in the future success of these parks. Rural communities have also managed to sustain and enhance the economic benefits of heritage tourism, which supports many businesses and generates millions of dollars in revenue to local economies.

These examples show that public-private partnerships can take many forms and use diverse approaches, which underscores the benefits of flexibility and innovation. Some parks continue to be administered by Arizona State Parks in a manner similar to the situation before the Great Recession, except that volunteers have assumed more duties formerly carried out by parks staff. Other parks, such as Tubac Presidio, are essentially managed on a day-to-day basis by partners and volunteers. The historic state parks at Yuma, under the umbrella of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, have considerable autonomy and local control. All of these management models have aspects in common. All make substantial use of volunteers but also have at least one paid staff person, employed either by Arizona State Parks or by partners such as the Friends of the Tubac Presidio or the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation.

Partners include towns, counties, state and federal agencies, Indian tribes, friends groups and other non-profit organizations, historical societies, visitors’ bureaus, and chambers of commerce. In general, the more partners the better, as different partners can offer different skills, capabilities, and funding sources. Yet as partnerships grow, so do the challenges of efficient management and conflict resolution. It can be challenging to balance local control with effective oversight by Arizona State Parks, or local needs and wants with state priorities and professional standards. Partners may have conflicting opinions on management priorities or personnel issues, which become more complicated when there is a mix of staff employed by Arizona State Parks and partner organizations.

Long-term partnerships benefit from written agreements that clearly define shared objectives, roles and responsibilities of Arizona State Parks and its partners, applicable financial arrangements, and procedures for conflict resolution. Such agreements can be tailored to the
needs of individual parks. They can provide partners with a stable foundation for developing and implementing detailed management plans, as stated in the 2012-2013 Annual Report of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation:

“\textit{It is clear that the entire Yuma community wants to develop a long-term partnership with Arizona State Parks for local management and control of the parks. With a long-term agreement, we can then develop a five-year capital plan and continue making needed improvements to the parks.}”

Volunteers are contributing ever greater amounts of time, labor, and service to the state parks. Management strategies for public-private partnerships need to take into account the benefits and challenges associated with the use and management of volunteers. Maintaining a well-trained and productive force of volunteers requires considerable effort and oversight. There may be issues with reliability, flexibility, burnout, and turnover. It may also be more difficult to recruit new volunteers during times when there is not a perceived crisis.

The key to effective volunteer management is cultivating open and honest communication, mutual trust, and a sense of teamwork and shared mission. Although most volunteers are motivated by dedication to the mission, it is worth investing in awards and formal recognition that express the appreciation of Arizona State Parks, partners, and the local community.

Managers of the Arizona State Parks volunteer program noted that it can be a challenge to address the volunteer “styles” of different generations. Many older volunteers are content to do routine work involved in day-to-day park operations. Baby boomers and younger volunteers seem to be more interested in doing specific projects, based on their professional interests or hobbies. The challenge is providing a wide range of opportunities to cover both approaches, engaging volunteers in rewarding service, while keeping the parks operating and supporting useful projects that benefit resource protection and interpretation.

Volunteers are a wonderful asset, but they can’t do everything, and in many respects, they can’t replace professional staff. Parks need to be adequately staffed by employees of Arizona State Parks and/or partnership organizations, in order to avoid weekly or seasonal closures, maintain facilities, and ensure protection from liability. Employees also provide accountability and consistency in such matters as consistency in implementing contracts and ensuring that technical and professional services meet established standards and applicable regulations. Staff also provide the expertise and continuity to offer high-quality educational and interpretive programs, train and manage volunteers, and coordinate with multiple partners.
Sustaining Partnerships beyond the Crisis

Local communities and park partners were prompted by a sense of urgency when the Great Recession threatened the continued existence of the state parks. They acted quickly when parks were closed or planned for closure. As the sense of crisis wanes, so may the level of urgency and commitment, as well as the ability of partners to continue to provide direct funding. Arizona State Parks must face the challenge of sustaining partnerships in the long term, beyond the “crisis mentality.” The state should maintain a strong system of parks that offer cultural and economic benefits to local communities, as well as the economic benefits of heritage tourism on a regional basis.

Parks can sustain local pride and support by developing interpretive exhibits, activities, and events that actively engage the local youth, community members, and tribes, as well as tourists. In some cases, this might involve deferring to the wants and desires of the community, even if its interests focus on the more sensational aspects of history (for example, the purchase of a Gatling gun for a Yuma-area park and a gallows for the Tombstone Courthouse). At the five parks described in this report, partners sustained interest and increased visitation by investing in new and upgraded exhibits, relying on local contributions to reduce costs. School programs, living history presentations, and changing exhibits help to sustain local interest and commitment. Communities can realize benefits by linking park activities with special events and festivals, such as the farmers’ market at the Yuma Quartermaster Depot, arts festivals at Tubac, and the Halloween event for children at the Yuma Territorial Prison.

Park revenues, and the associated income to local businesses like motels and restaurants, depend on visits from tourists who live outside the local area. Arizona State Parks and park partners should emphasize cooperative efforts to more effectively market regional networks of heritage tourism sites to increase levels of visitation. For example, with the help of the Yuma Visitors Bureau and a locally-owned company, a marketing effort for the Yuma-area parks included three billboards along Interstate 8 and 130,000 brochures distributed throughout Arizona and southern California. Many of the rural state parks, such as the five parks described in this report, are located near major interstate highways, so that enhanced marketing efforts to further increase public awareness would likely help to increase visitation. Cooperative marketing programs could involve visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce, tribes, federal and state agencies, and the Arizona Office of Tourism.

Ultimately, the parks need to have adequate and reliable funding for operations and maintenance. Partners have their own priorities and can’t be relied upon to provide funds indefinitely. For example, the direct funds for the Homolovi and Fort Verde state parks, provided respectively
by the Hopi Tribe and Yavapai County/Town of Camp Verde, have declined or ceased and are not expected to be restored to prior levels. Funding for the Yuma parks may depend on voters’ renewal of a hospitality tax, as well as continued support from the National Heritage Areas Program. Arizona State Parks and the State Legislature need to address the issue of adequate funding and consider creative approaches to sustaining partnerships and parks in the long run.

**Conclusions: Funding Strategies**

Early in the Great Recession, the Morrison Institute for Public Policy, based at Arizona State University, reviewed the financial status of state parks in a report entitled “The Price of Stewardship: The Future of Arizona’s State Parks” (Morrison Institute 2009). Its main purpose was to examine options for sufficient and stable funding. The report stated that “the status of Arizona’s state parks is precarious. They are appreciated but under-supported, loved but left to deteriorate, precious but over-shadowed” (Morrison Institute 2009:27). Furthermore, “the historic and cultural resources have been underappreciated across the board,” partly due to relatively limited visitation and meager marketing resources.

Five years later, the Arizona Republic newspaper published a series of articles and editorials advocating for the restoration of funds to the parks, offering this assessment of the current situation: “Kept afloat by partnerships, fee increases, and volunteer labor, state parks are a bit like the tattered flag that flaps over a hard-fought battleground. They’re still there. But questions persist about how long the alliances that sustain them will last” (Arizona Republic, Feb. 23, 2014). An article by Kenneth Travous, a former director of Arizona State Parks, described the loss of support from the state’s General Fund, Parks Enhancement Fund, and Heritage Fund as factors contributing to a huge backlog in maintenance projects (Arizona Republic, March 3, 2014).

The Morrison Institute report described how state parks contribute substantially to local economies: “Based on direct, indirect, and induced expenditures—and excluding spending from local residents and those within a 50-mile radius—a study from Northern Arizona University shows that state parks offer economic value to the state that far outweighs their basic costs” (Morrison Institute 2009:12). In 2006, the parks system as a whole supported more than 3,000 jobs across the state, mostly in non-metropolitan areas, and sent $22.8 million in tax revenue to state and local governments. The historic parks alone generated approximately $35 million in economic activity.

According to the Morrison Institute (2009:29), “the state parks that interpret the past have struggled for resources and recognition and to keep up with the best practices in conservation, interpretation, and partnerships.” They also face the challenges of high maintenance costs, small size, low visitation, and lack of marketing statewide and nationally. In fiscal year 2008, the historical parks attracted about 267,000 visitors and generated more than $780,000 in revenue,
but cost more than $2 million to operate (Morrison Institute 2009:Table 5). Excluding Kartchner Caverns State Park, a unique resource that draws more than 150,000 visitors annually, among the other 30 state parks, the cultural and historic parks accounted for 12.2 percent of total visitors, 11.4 percent of revenues generated, and 22.6 percent of total operating costs.

The obvious solution is to reduce costs, while making investments to increase visitation and revenues. Park partners have already reduced costs through volunteer labor and other means. By making efforts to upgrade exhibits and create visitor opportunities that have broad appeal to the public, as well as investing in cooperative marketing efforts, Arizona State Parks and its partners have also succeeded in increasing visitation and income. For example, entrance fees and merchandise sales at Yuma Territorial Prison increased from $279,394 in 2010 to $436,143 in 2012. Yet the historic parks must still address the backlog of maintenance needs, which can pose special and costly requirements for historic buildings.

Both the Morrison Institute report and the series of articles in the Arizona Republic offered recommendations for more reliable, adequate funding of the Arizona State Parks system. The Commission supports their recommendations for future funding, which are summarized below.

The Morrison Institute report and Arizona Republic articles identify general approaches, one or all of which could be implemented to increase funding.

- Boost fees and revenues at the parks, preferably by increasing visitation (some fees have already been raised);
- Restore and increase existing sources of public funds;
- Locate someone else, a public or private partner, to pay some of the costs; and/or
- Find a new source of public funds, such as a dedicated tax levy or revenue stream.

They offer the following recommendations.

- Restore and maintain the State Parks share of the Arizona Heritage Fund. In 1990, voters approved $10 million a year from State Lottery revenues to support state parks. Several attempts to restore this fund have failed at the State Legislature. The Arizona Republic asserts that “it’s past time to give it back.”

- Return the State Parks Enhancement Fund to its original purpose of using gate fees, gift shop revenues to improve the park system. Restore the authority of State Parks to spend money raised from gate fees, gift shops, and other money-making enterprises. These “enhancement funds” were swept by the Legislature in 2003 and used to supplant General Fund appropriations.

- Especially for the smaller, less-visited sites, cultivate and continue to support partnerships. Alternatives include working with local governments, other public agencies, or appropriate nonprofit organizations to acquire support for funding, administration, operations, maintenance, and marketing.

- Increase private fundraising through nonprofit organizations, such as the Arizona State Parks Foundation and various park-specific support groups. As an example, “cooperating associations” for the National Park Service contribute over $60 million annually to various national parks.

- Improve tourism marketing and related partnerships to increase visitation levels and revenues.
• Improve contracting with concessionaires and encourage innovation. According to the Arizona Republic, “it could result in more investment in the parks if the private contractor serving big money-makers, such as Lake Havasu, also is required to develop resources in less-visited parks.”
• Develop and implement park-specific business plans that are designed to help increase and sustain revenues.

In addition to the above measures, new funding sources would put park finances on an even stronger footing and could support investments that would pay off in increased revenues. For example, state legislators in 2014 negotiated a $1 million appropriation that took a portion of the state’s “rainy-day fund” and split it evenly between State Parks and the Commission on the Arts. The funds enabled the agency to bring electricity to campgrounds at three state parks, which enhanced their accessibility to recreational vehicles and their attractiveness to campers. The Arizona Republic (February 23, 2014) quoted Bryan Martin, the Director of Arizona State Parks: “that $1 million will turn into $5 million over the next five years,” due to an increase in visitors using the improved facilities. Enhancements to campgrounds, picnic areas, and other family-friendly facilities at cultural and historical parks could likewise contribute to increases in visitation and revenues.

The “rainy day fund,” however, isn’t a suitable long-term source of funding. The Morrison Institute report offered the following recommendations for new funding sources, which are feasible and worthy of further consideration.

• Local capital bonds arranged by partners. Local jurisdictions wanting to invest in a state park could float bonds to make capital improvements, based on a partnership with Arizona State Parks to operate the facility. Capital bonds generally are subject to voter approval and thus would require considerable community support.

• A dedicated state sales tax (for example, a tenth of 1%) to support state parks. In 2009, the Morrison Institute estimated that such a tax could generate about $44 million a year. This could be part of a dedicated sales tax levy for a “quality of life” package targeting arts, cultural, recreational, and open space purposes.

• Tourism-oriented taxes dedicated to state parks and other visitor attractions, which could involve limited increases to existing taxes on lodging, restaurants, and retail. An example is the Yuma lodging tax that helps support the Yuma Quartermaster Depot and Yuma Territorial Prison historic parks.

• A surcharge on Arizona license plates. The concept is that Arizona residents would pay a surcharge that would provide revenue to the state parks. In exchange, they would get free admission to the parks, although other fees might apply. Out-of-state visitors would continue to pay regular entrance fees. The Morrison Institute estimated that an annual surcharge of $10 per registered vehicle would raise about $32 million if 75% of vehicle owners complied. As an example, Montana imposed a voluntary surcharge, from which citizens may opt out; about 25% choose to do so. Washington moved from a completely voluntary program to an automatic $5 charge, with no penalty for opting out. A license plate surcharge would provide a relatively stable source of funds for parks, which would continue to grow, and would provide a direct benefit to citizens by allowing them free entry to the parks.
Conclusion

The archaeological and historical parks within the Arizona State Parks system are valuable assets to the citizens of Arizona. They bring the rich pageant of Arizona history to life and offer educational, recreational, and economic benefits to local communities and citizens statewide. As commented by the manager of Fort Verde State Historic Park, “the cost of historic preservation can’t be measured financially, as the loss of a historic site is priceless.”

These archaeological and historical resources were placed at great risk when the state parks that protect and interpret them were threatened by funding cuts, staff reductions, and closures as a result of the budget crisis of the Great Recession. Existing and expanded partnerships were instrumental in saving, sustaining, and revitalizing these parks as Arizona citizens responded to the crisis. Communities and partners demonstrated considerable dedication and ingenuity as they devoted their time, talents, and funds to sustaining the parks and linking them to community values and priorities. There are encouraging prospects for continuing and improving these partnerships. However, temporary fixes do not last forever. Arizona State Parks will need to continually support and revitalize partnerships, and it cannot count on the contributed amounts of funding that were prompted by the urgency of the budget crisis. The public and Arizona State Parks partners will need to advocate for the restoration of lost funding sources and to secure additional, reliable sources of funding for the future of the parks. Although all 31 of the state parks remain open, many have unmet needs for maintenance and are operating on reduced schedules that restrict public access.

Archaeological and historical resources are not limited to the state parks that have a primary focus on those resources. Many of the recreational parks, and those that focus on conservation and environmental education, include important archaeological resources and historic sites. Some of these resources have been interpreted in conjunction with public education programs, for example, archaeological sites at Catalina State Park and Lyman Lake State Park. Some parks include resources that have significant scientific or cultural values and need to be protected and available for research, even though they are not currently interpreted or open to visitation, for example, at Alamo Lake State Park. Park management plans need to address the protection and long-term management of these resources, as well as their capacity to contribute to future educational and interpretive programs.

As a final note, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation to the citizens, governments, tribes, and organizations that have provided such critical support to the archaeological and historical state parks, as well as those partners who have supported other parks and preserves across Arizona in the wake of the Great Recession.

Sources

This report relied on published information and on interviews with Arizona State Parks managers, staff, and partners. Their websites also provided helpful information. Fortunately, the theme of the 2014 Arizona Historic Preservation Conference in Rio Rico, “Economic Engines of Preservation,” complemented the purpose of this report. The conference featured informative presentations on “Saving Tubac Presidio State Historic Park: A Volunteer Community Effort” and sessions on “Archaeology and Economic Revitalization” and “Economic Impacts of Heritage Tourism,” which included a presentation on the parks and partners in the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area.
The following published reports and articles provided useful information.


Arizona Republic:


“Arizona state parks plug away without tax funds.” Article by Mary Jo Pitzl, February 23, 2014.

“7 ways to pay for great state parks.” Editorial Board of The Republic, April 7, 2014.

Photographs courtesy of Arizona State Parks.