

Wild Wednesday, Mid-March in the Dells by Walt Anderson

Last year the Peavine Trail through Granite Dells received more than a million use days. The Peavine and Iron King Trails are a priceless lifestyle amenity for residents and an economic engine bringing thousands of visitors into the Prescott area. Most people don't realize that segments of the trails are flanked by private land beyond a mere 50-foot right-of-way that the City owns. A wake-up call came a few years ago when Arizona Eco Development (AED) announced plans for a major development that would have occurred along some of the most scenic reaches, completely compromising the beauty and peacefulness of the trails and threatening the wildlife that call this area home.

Fortunately, concerned citizens mobilized and created the Save the Dells committee that has helped energize and inform the community of what was at stake. Save the Dells was involved with the City and AED in negotiations that resulted in a Letter of Intent that set the basic parameters for annexation, including saving a critical 475 acres as Natural Open Space.

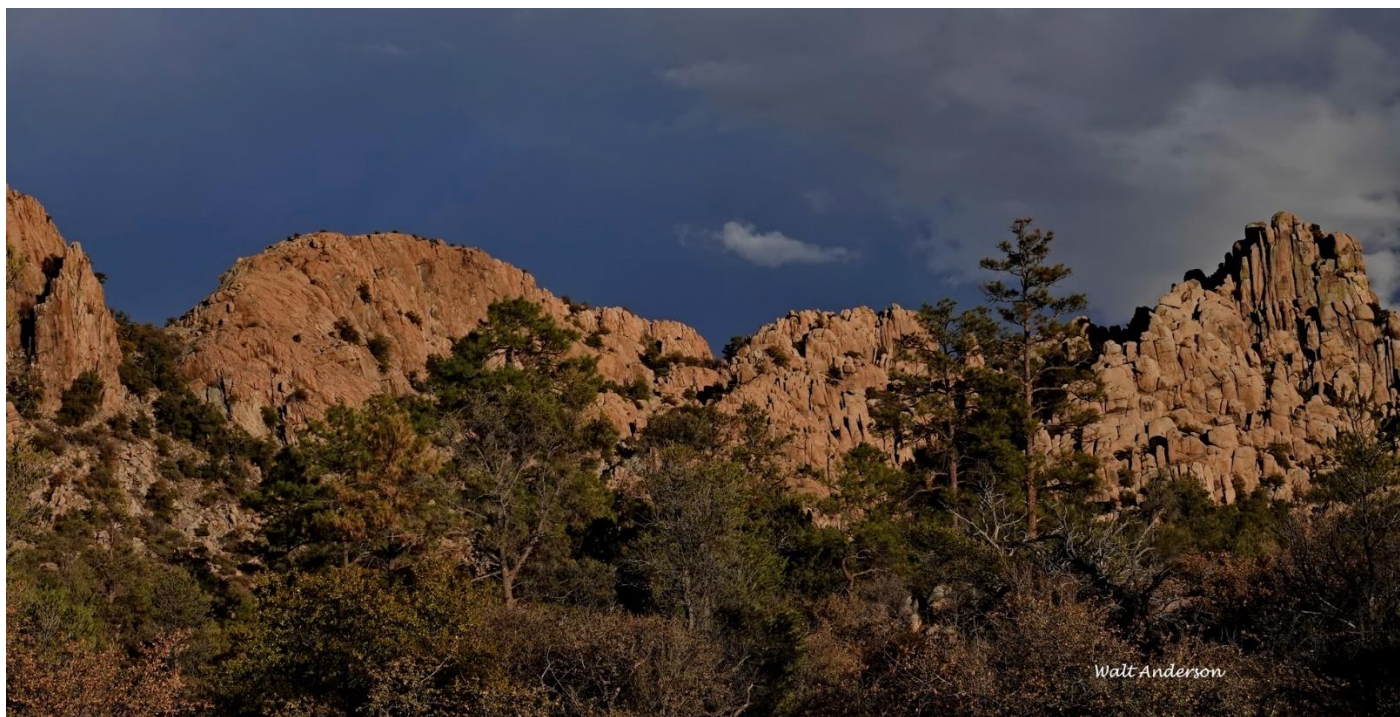
While final details will be hashed out soon as the Development Agreement is shared with the public, we can be extremely grateful that the citizens spoke loudly and clearly and that the City listened. The Covid pandemic has had one positive outcome in reminding us just how important connection with nature is. There remains a need to acquire more of this incredible ecosystem to create a world-class regional park and preserve. I hope these images help motivate and inspire our community to achieve this goal.



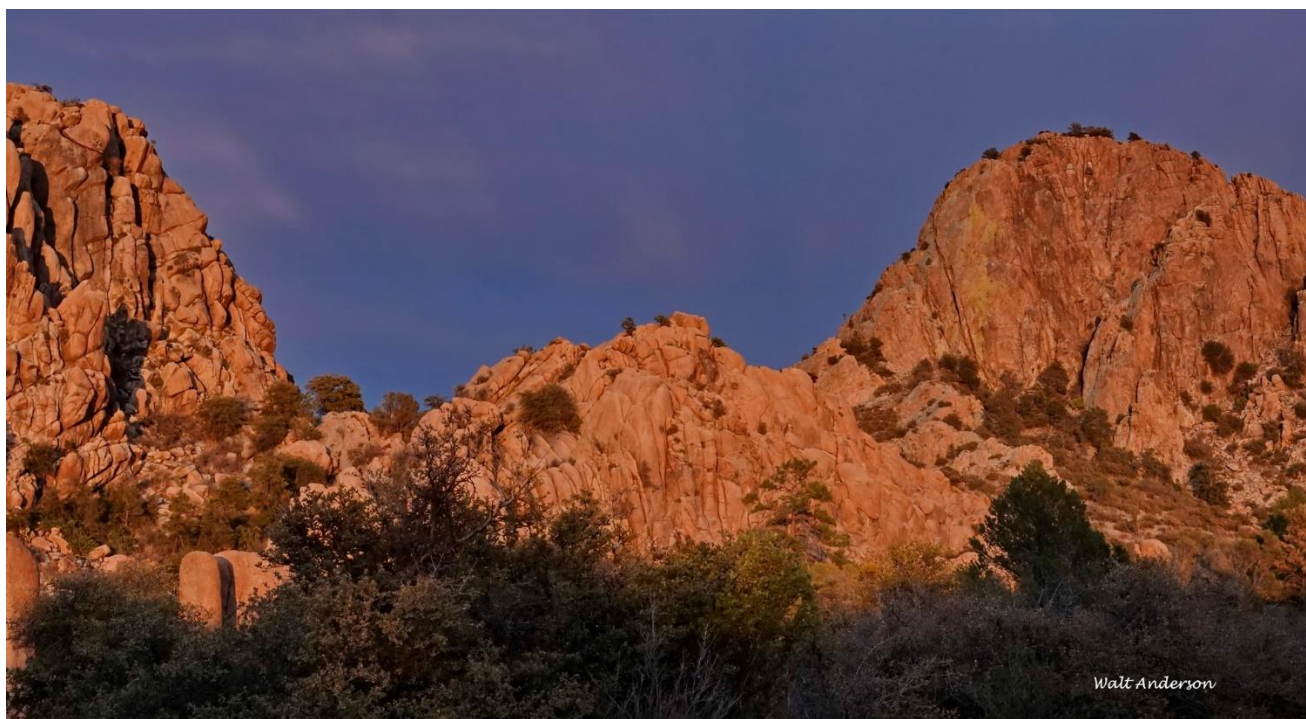
Hiking the Iron King Trail toward Prescott through one of the most beautiful stretches that will be saved for perpetuity as a result of the win-win-win negotiations about the proposed AED annexation.



A late-day scene taken from the Peavine Trail. In the original AED proposal, the foreground area would have been subdivided into one-acre lots. Now this view toward Granite Creek, High Rappel Dells, and Granite Mountain will be preserved.



One of the stunning views from the Peavine Trail. Some of the peaks in the background remain in private hands, and we hope that eventually they may become part of the Granite Dells Regional Park & Preserve that we envision.



The dramatic rock formations at Point of Rocks on the left and Easter Peak on the right. The early March storms created some beautiful sunsets to illuminate the peaks.



Sunrises on the stormy days also created wonderful photo opportunities. What a treasure this landscape is!



Another late-day view of Easter Peak from a different stretch of the Peavine Trail.



A raven soars over Point of Rocks. The skies above the Dells can give us breath-taking views of flying birds: eagles, hawks, falcons, swifts, and swallows. Accompanying these aerial sightings, we may hear the stirring songs of Canyon Wrens, Spotted Towhees, Crissal Thrashers, Mourning Doves, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, and so many more avian virtuosos. This landscape is alive!



A view of Granite Mountain from the Peavine Trail, with light illuminating Lizard Rock in the pines.



A passing shower brings out the vibrancy of wet rocks and plants. . . . More rain, please!



A solitary bird flies toward its evening roost as the post-storm clouds begin to disintegrate.