

Wild Wednesday 5 August 2020

Recreational use in the Granite Dells has expanded tremendously during these days of the pandemic. Our need for wild places complements our need for social connection. At least getting out into the trails and on the lakes provides both fun and physical distancing important to slowing the spread of the virus.

The monsoon season based on dew point levels (not merely calendar wishful thinking) was way later than usual this year, and so far, it has been a bust in that part of the Dells with most of our recreational trails. The Willow Lake and Constellation Trails, however, have seen some good showers, reminding us just how patchy monsoon storms can be.

Our local cities rely on ground water, and despite state directives urging us in the Prescott Active Management Area to achieve “Safe Yield” by 2025, the water table continues to drop. Paper water facilitates development, and future generations will have to cope with the results. Of course, we have a say when we elect our representatives in local and state government. The worst possible outcome is not preordained; we can make a difference.

John Wesley Powell recommended to the government that land use be based on watersheds used sustainably. He recognized limits when most officials thought resources were infinite, and, of course, his good advice went unheeded.

If we can achieve our dream of a greater Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve, we will have achieved many important benefits, including the protection of a watershed. No-name Creek, especially if we are able to manage it wisely after it is acquired as Natural Open Space in the AED Annexation agreement, is a natural sponge and filter, contributing water to Granite Creek and the Little Chino Aquifer. In addition, having a preserve large enough to be a functional ecosystem provides resilience for both wildlife and people. The fickle monsoon rains may miss part of the area while being generous in others, and that enables wildlife to survive and repopulate after local losses.

So size makes a difference, and achieving a large and functioning natural landscape should be our achievable goal, not just a dream. Please help us make that a reality.



Watson Lake is a wonderful recreational amenity, made much more attractive because of its photogenic setting in the Granite Dells. But lake levels and water quality depend on inflow, meaning that we must manage the watershed better than we have been.



A thunderhead that failed to provide rain. It got our hopes up, gave us a pretty picture, and then dissipated—the story of too many clouds in the Dells this monsoon season.



Massive thunderhead east of the Dells. No rain here.



Light rain during one of the few showers that reached this part of the Dells. Boulder Creek is nearly dry, with a few green, algae-filled pools instead of the tumbling flow that is possible at this time of year. I feel for the frogs.



Walt Anderson

But hope springs eternal. God-talking rays grace the western Dells and Granite Mountain. Like the hills themselves, we must be patient. This is a time when “resilience” really matters.