



ARIZONA

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

The Salt River is a perennial river that runs to the eastern edge of the metro Phoenix area where a dam then diverts water into canals. Downstream of the dam the river is mostly dry. The Rio Reimagined Project is shining a spotlight on this area using sustainable resource management. The project consists of eight community stakeholders, including an Indian River Community, a major utility, Arizona State University (ASU), and state and federal agencies. The project covers 55+ miles of river and 78,000 acres. The aim is to bring life back to the river and restore the communities' connection to it with ecosystem restoration, flood mitigation, and economic development. Each river community will be undertaking different projects under the Rio Reimagined umbrella. One of these projects is the West Mesa River Community (WMRC) Heat Impact project.



In the arid southwest, heat island effect is a major focus of urban forestry programming. The West Mesa River Community Heat Impact Project will make significant strides toward increasing shade and implementing vital solutions to combat extreme heat.

The project includes strategic public outreach and stakeholder engagement using the Nature's Cooling Systems process for heat action plans. Nature's Cooling System is a framework to develop

heat action plans at the neighborhood level to include local knowledge and needs. Broad goals of a Heat Action Plan include determining ways to reduce heat directly and ways to improve the ability of residents to deal with heat.

Expected outcomes from this project include community engagement through meetings and workshops, a tree inventory which will be used as a jumping off point to pilot a citizen science tree mapping app, social asset maps, the heat action plan

itself that will include design solutions, and the planting of a minimum of 100 trees.

ASU's City Exchange and Arizona Sustainability Alliance have partnered with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management to complete the WMRC Heat Impact project. Their combined experience, common sense, motivation, and ability to leverage resources make this project one to watch.



1. The Salt River is a perennial river that flows through several metropolitan areas in central Arizona and is the focus of the Rio Reimagined Project. Photo Credit: Arizona State University City Exchange. 2. Heat readings taken at a transit stop during an ASU research project highlight the significant cooling effect of tree cover. Photo Credit: © Paul Coseo. 3. Aerial over the Salt River of the Mesa Riverview Area looking SE across West Mesa River Community. Photo Credit: © Tim Roberts Photography.