

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) program at the University of Arizona FY 2008

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) program funds allocated to the University of Arizona supported programming on two RREA Strategic Issues during the last year: Invasive Species and Rangeland Stewardship and Health. Primary programs were developed for rangeland owners and managers focusing on riparian area ecology and the monitoring and management of rangeland watersheds. Each RREA dollar leveraged more than \$4 from private, state, and federal sources. Projects included workshops, field days, collection of rangeland monitoring data, and various publications.

RREA funding augmented a collaborative effort established in the spring of 2008, between the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension and the Bureau of Land Management office in Safford, AZ, to continue a channel/riparian monitoring program in the Gila Box National Riparian Area. During 2008, we repeated cross-sections, vegetation surveys, and photographs at 15 locations along the Gila River and 6 along Bonita Creek, one of the Gila River's major tributaries. The channel cross-sections and photos were first measured and taken in 1994, then again in 2001 and 2008. Educational workshops focusing on managing riparian areas were also held. "The Dynamic Nature and Natural Diversity of Riparian Areas" workshop was conducted in Camp Verde with more than 90 people attending and more than 30 people attended the "Understanding Arizona's Riparian Areas" workshop conducted in Tsaile, AZ and geared for the Navajo nation.

RREA funds again helped support the Annual Southwestern Noxious, Invasive Plants Short Course, which presented information about the impacts, biology, ecology, and management of noxious, invasive plants in the southwestern United States. This short course delivers research-based information to ranchers, natural resources agency employees, students, and other interested individuals about the importance of preventing and controlling invasive/noxious weeds.

Increased rangeland vegetation monitoring skills and acquired ecological knowledge by participants in RREA-sponsored workshops and field days were demonstrated in 2008. Rangeland vegetation monitoring continued on Arizona ranches and/or grazing allotments with participation of the landowner/lessee. These efforts formed the foundation for cooperative conservation efforts, as exemplified by the Canelo Hills Coalition (CHC). RREA funding helped facilitate monitoring and outreach efforts of this community conservation group on more than 150,000 acres. By the group's own account, the rangeland monitoring partnership has contributed to grants of more than \$650,000 for improved infrastructure.

Initiation of the quarterly magazine, *Backyards and Beyond*, and the publication of the first six issues were also augmented by RREA funding. This magazine is targeted to the small acreage landowners, new landowners or backyard enthusiasts. Approximately 7,000 copies have been distributed.

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