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70 volunteers brave cold to learn mapping, GPS skills

**By Bruce Colbert**

Reporter

Tuesday, February 12, 2008



BB/CCN Photo/Bruce Colbert Wet/dry mapping students, L-R, John Fortune, Mary Hoadley, Carol Brinks and Pam Jarnecke learn to GPS, record data and measure distance by pacing during training Feb. 5. Volunteers walk the Agua Fria River June 21 to record wet and dry sections of the river. Th

More than 70 volunteers braved cold air, muddy ground, and a partially frozen and rain-swollen Agua Fria River Feb. 5 to learn basic mapping and GPS tracking skills at Chauncey Ranch.

Come June 21, the same volunteers will map and track wet and dry segments of the Agua Fria River to establish the river's flow during its driest time of the year.

"We want to map each wet and dry location in as much of the river as we can to get an idea of how much water is in the river when it is at its lowest flow of the year," Lainie Levick, assistant project coordinator, said. "We want to get a snapshot of one day in the life of the river when it is at its driest, which is traditionally just before the monsoon storms arrive."

Levick is senior research specialist for the [University of Arizona](#). The wet/dry mapping study is a partnership between the university, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and Arizona NEMO - Non-point Education for Municipal Officials.

Individual and organizational volunteers play a crucial role to make the mapping possible. The Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership worked hand-in-hand with Levick and NEMO to bring the training and mapping idea to fruition.

Attendance at the half-day training class reflects a who's-who of county, city, state and federal water and land managers. Other groups represented include the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, 4-H, Arizona Riparian Council and friends of the Agua Fria National Monument.

Volunteers from government agencies include the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Department of Water Resources, Maricopa Water District and Arizona Game and Fish.

College students and faculty came from as far away as Tucson and as near as The Orme School. Private residents included county and out-of-county ranchers.

"This has been one of our early goals when we formed the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership in 1999," Mary Hoadley, UAFWP member, said during opening comments. "It is really exciting to finally get to walk and map the Agua Fria River and establish a baseline of its flow."

On June 21, volunteers team-up for their assigned section of river - from one mile to several miles in length. Teams map the riverbed on foot or horseback. One team member uses a GPS to get coordinates of wet and dry areas while another member records the information on data sheets.

"This is all about accurate data," Levick told volunteers during the class.

Data sheets include entries for start/stop points of water and whether the water is flowing or pooled. Observation remarks include wildlife sightings, trash piles, vehicle tracks in the riverbed and frog or fish sightings.

"The fish are for me," Jay Vacca, BLM wildlife biologist, said in response to a question. "As long as you're going to be out there, I can use all the help I can get."

Students Rachael Franks and Kayla Land said they are mapping the river on horseback. Franks is an eighth grader at The Orme School and Land attends Estrella Mountain Community College.

"We're not that interested in mapping the river, but we really want to go riding in it," Franks said. "Besides, I want to be there to help my mom so she doesn't lose herself with the modern technology."

Carol Uraine is Franks' mother and a project engineer for Maricopa Water District. MWD provided lunch during the training class.

"We have a big stake in the results of this mapping," Rem Hawes, Agua Fria National Monument manager, said. "About 20 miles of the Agua Fria River flows through the national monument."

Levick hopes to have enough trained volunteers June 21 to map from the north near Chauncey Ranch down through the national monument to Black Canyon City in the south.

"I won't be mapping but my wife will," Chuck Johnson said while resting on a collapsible chair during the hands-on training. "I'm just a camp

follower but I'll be cheering them on."

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