



Staff Report

Agenda Item: **STEWARDS OF PUBLIC LANDS** – A report relating to the Stewards of Public Lands recent receipt of a 2010 Conservation Organization of the Year Award from the Arizona Wildlife Federation.

Submitted By: Town Manager Gayle Mabery

Meeting Date: August 31, 2010

Background: The Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, inspiring, and assisting individuals and organizations to value, conserve, enhance, manage, and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat. The AWF was founded in 1923 to take politics out of fish and game management and to promote the management of Arizona's natural resources on a scientific basis. Each year, the AWF selects an Arizona organization to receive their Conservation Organization of the Year Award. Organizations are selected in recognition of their efforts towards conservation of Arizona's wildlife and natural resources for the preceding calendar year.

The Stewards of Public Lands is a group that organizes volunteers, government agencies and businesses to clean up and maintain the Verde Valley's beautiful public lands. Stewards work in creative ways to encourage collaboration of governmental entities at the federal, state and local level, working across jurisdictional lines and pooling resources.

This summer the Stewards of Public Lands were recognized by the Arizona Wildlife Federation with the 2010 Conservation Organization of the Year Award.

The Stewards of Public Lands "lead by doing." Stewards have provided more than 2000 hours of volunteer effort to clean 3300 acres of public lands in the Verde Valley since the organization formed. Stewards facilitated a process whereby towns, cities, counties, and state and federal governmental entities collaborated beyond jurisdictional boundaries, combining resources to remove more than 110 tons of trash and litter from upper Verde Valley public lands. Stewards have maintained the cleaned lands, as well as coordinated monitoring and law enforcement activities. The Stewards and their partners placed "No Dumping" signs covering more than 2200 acres, with plans in progress to place signage over the remaining 1100 acres. Additional dumping is greatly reduced and Stewards' maintenance efforts keep the minimal additional dumping cleaned up, thanks to the law enforcement and signage deterrents.

The Town of Clarkdale, through the leadership of Police Chief Patrick Haynie, has been involved with the Stewards of Public Lands since its beginning. Among the many Stewards volunteers, there are numerous Clarkdale citizens involved, and people like Debbie LaFrance (Clarkdale Utilities Department) who spends countless volunteer hours for this organization.

Because the Stewards of Public Lands especially appreciate their municipal and county partners, Cottonwood's Mayor Diane Joens, who has been tirelessly involved with the organization since its inception, will attend our Council meeting to show the Council the award.

Recommendation: This agenda item is a report only, and requires no formal action by the Town Council.