

Tucson Mountains Association

February 2024 Newsletter

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Letter from new President Ed Hendel

My name is Ed Hendel, and I was deeply honored to be elected President of the Tucson Mountains Association by our Board last month. I am so excited to work with you all to protect our precious Sonoran Desert. For those who don't know me, I fell in love with the Sonoran Desert when I moved from the Bay Area to Tucson for college at the University of Arizona in 2009 to study biophysics. I quickly realized I wanted to be here for the rest of my life and do everything I could to protect the desert. I moved to Boston in 2013 to get my Master's in Systems Biology from Harvard, but the whole time I was there I knew I wanted to come back to Tucson as soon as possible. I moved back in 2016 and began pursuing my career in healthcare data science while simultaneously volunteering as a ranger at Saguaro National Park on weekends. In 2019, I heard about the plan to build Interstate-11 within a few hundred feet of the National Park, and I knew I had to join the fight to stop it. I have been active in the I-11 resistance ever since, and those efforts led me to discover TMA. I became a TMA member in 2019 and joined the Board of Directors in 2022.



I have been very active in other local environmental matters as well, such as the efforts to preserve the desert at 36th St & La Cholla. In 2020, Mayor Romero named me to be her representative on the Citizens' Water Advisory Committee (CWAC), where I have led the charge for water conservation and assistance for low income families. I founded Our Water Tucson, a coalition that successfully advocated for the City of Tucson and the Tucson Water utility to change their rate structure to incentivize water conservation and reduce urban sprawl into the Sonoran Desert, and to use the additional revenue for climate resiliency and debt relief for low income families who were economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. (As a result of our organizing, \$2 million of water bill debt for low income families was forgiven!). I look forward to getting TMA more involved in water issues that affect the sustainability of the Tucson

Mountains in this era of climate change, drought, and sprawl, while continuing to focus on the desert preservation issues that TMA has prioritized throughout its long history.

I am so lucky to have this opportunity to work with our great Board of Directors and the wonderful membership of TMA to protect this beautiful desert that makes this place so unique and special. Please feel free to reach out to me at EdHendel@TucsonMountainsAssoc.org if you have any questions, comments, or ideas. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you all!

P.S. I'm also an avid hiker and photographer – here are a few of my favorite photos I've taken in the Tucson Mountains!



Gilded flicker in blooming saguaro
Tucson Mountain Park, May 2021



Lightning strike during a monsoon sunset
Tucson Mountain Park, July 2018



Snow Day at Gates Pass, February 2019



Bird watching the lightning storm
Tucson Mountain Park, July 2018

Letter from new Vice President Vivian Harte

I am Vivian Harte, Vice President of the Tucson Mountains Association. I've lived in the Tucson Mountains for the past 39 years, and I'm thrilled to be part of this important organization to protect the desert and provide stewardship of our natural and biological resources. I live near the Desert Museum and Old Tucson. When I heard that I-11 was being considered, I spoke against the proposal of building it through the Tucson Mountains at a public hearing. I learned there that it would be only 1/2-mile from my home. Yikes!

I served as past President and am currently the Chair of the Speakers Bureau of the League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson. I taught sociology and writing at Pima Community College and the University of Phoenix for 14 years. I currently teach online classes on assertiveness, self-confidence, and teamwork, and I coach people around the world on assertiveness and self-confidence. I am the co-author of *Self-Esteem for Dummies* in the *Dummies* series and the author of the soon-to-be-published book *The 80-Year Cycle of Transformation: Why Liberals Are Winning*. I have a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Indiana University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Arizona, with an emphasis in solar energy policy. In the 1990s, I was the Chair of the statewide group Concerned Arizonans for Renewable Energy (CARE) that was successful in having many pieces of solar legislation passed by the Arizona legislature. I was also a Commissioner on the Tucson-Pima County Metropolitan Energy Commission that advised the Tucson City Council and Pima County Board of Supervisors as well as the Chair of the Arizona Solar Energy Association, an organization that educates the public about solar energy. I was the Arizona Manager for the Southwest Public Recycling Association, assisting rural communities around the state to start recycling programs, hosting workshops for Arizona recycling coordinators, and writing the state's manual on recycling. In addition, I also hosted my own radio and television shows for many years, most recently on KXCI-FM.



I look forward to serving as the Vice President of TMA. I'm proud of our accomplishments in the past, and I'm excited to work with other community organizations to reach our goals.

Please continue to the next page for our Call to Action!

Call to Action: Christopher Columbus Park Survey

Recently, several TMA board members were made aware of and attended a Tucson Parks and Recreation public meeting at Christopher Columbus Park, where 20 people attended. The land near the corner of Silverbell and El Camino del Cerro was recently bladed as the site of soccer and baseball fields. This is Phase 1 of the Christopher Columbus Park upgrade.

The public meeting was to discuss the plan and design for Phase 2. The plan includes 12 pickleball courts, 4 tennis courts, expanded and relocated dog park facilities, 2 covered basketball courts, 2 new restrooms, 2 playgrounds, a new splash pad, expanded parking, walking paths, and landscape nodes. They are seeking public input through their online survey, which closes February 11th. We're encouraging people to go online (see the link below) and make their preferences known and look at drawings of the current plan.

Since the 2021 survey results were only available online, many of us were unaware of the results, progress, and timetable. Only 464 responses were recorded. Of these it appears that the majority favored walking paths, a natural environment, and the lake. Phase 1 doesn't reflect this, and we're concerned that the Phase 2 Plan also favors a more urban rather than rural park experience. We realize that sports activities are important to many people, but are incompatible with a more rural experience. While some walking paths and natural areas are identified, the location for the planned sports activities will be near the current lake where many people go to quietly fish, bird watch or meander/picnic. We are concerned that the planned sports facilities and activities will disrupt the quieter activities that the majority voted for.

Again, TMA understands the need for sports activities in a community, but an important part of our mission is to ensure that there is always viable habitat for the native plants and animals. We try to encourage more public input and a planning process that allows for adequate wildlife corridors between the Tucson Mountains and the Santa Cruz River.

There is a comment section at the bottom of the survey where you can let your voice be heard. To learn more about the project before taking the survey visit tucsondelivers.tucsonaz.gov/pages/columbuspark
To jump straight to the survey visit this link:

[Click to take the survey](#)

If you have questions, please contact us at TMA@TucsonMountainsAssoc.org. Thank you!

Will you volunteer with TMA?

Help protect the Tucson Mountains, habitat and biodiversity. TMA has the right program for you to make a lasting impact.

TMA Volunteer Programs: Land Use/Zoning - Citizen Science - Member Relations



Together, your Membership makes TMA stronger to respond to critical issues that threaten the biodiversity of the Tucson Mountains.

Join. Volunteer. Donate.

Join or Renew online today!

1 year \$30 2 years \$55
visit

TMACares.org to Join