

High School Volunteers Harvest Water at Rio Rico Anza Trailhead

On December 10, twenty hearty volunteers pitched in to help shape rainwater harvesting basins at the Guy Tobin Memorial Trailhead for the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail on Rio Rico Drive.

Members of the Rio Rico High School's Interact Club and Science Club helped several adults, including members of Friends of the Santa Cruz River (FOSCR) and the Anza Trail Coalition (ATC), ready areas around existing picnic ramadas for native plantings come spring.

FOSCR President Jen Parks explained, "Stormwater running off the area's parking lot and nearby Rio Rico Drive will be slowed, spread and sunk into the planting basins, which will not only water the plants but will also filter and clean these often-polluted flows. The Santa Cruz River [which flows just beyond the picnic tables] will be protected from that pollution, using simple water harvesting techniques."

FOSCR and the ATC are partnering with the Tucson-based Watershed Management Group (WVG) in this EPA grant-funded demonstration project. Project leader Joe Silins, of WVG, directed a backhoe operator who roughed out the water harvesting basins and berms before volunteers did the final shaping with shovels and rakes. He also helped the volunteer teams determine final basin elevations with the use of a state-of-the-art laser leveler. Silins commented, "These volunteers, especially the students, are not only enhancing this picnic area for their community and helping reduce road run-off pollution. They are also learning about rainwater harvesting principles and techniques, so they can spread the use of these tools throughout the county."

Upcoming workshops in the spring will include planting these basins and making catchment areas nearer to Rio Rico Drive. For more information or to help in future work, call Jen Parks at 520-425-4325.