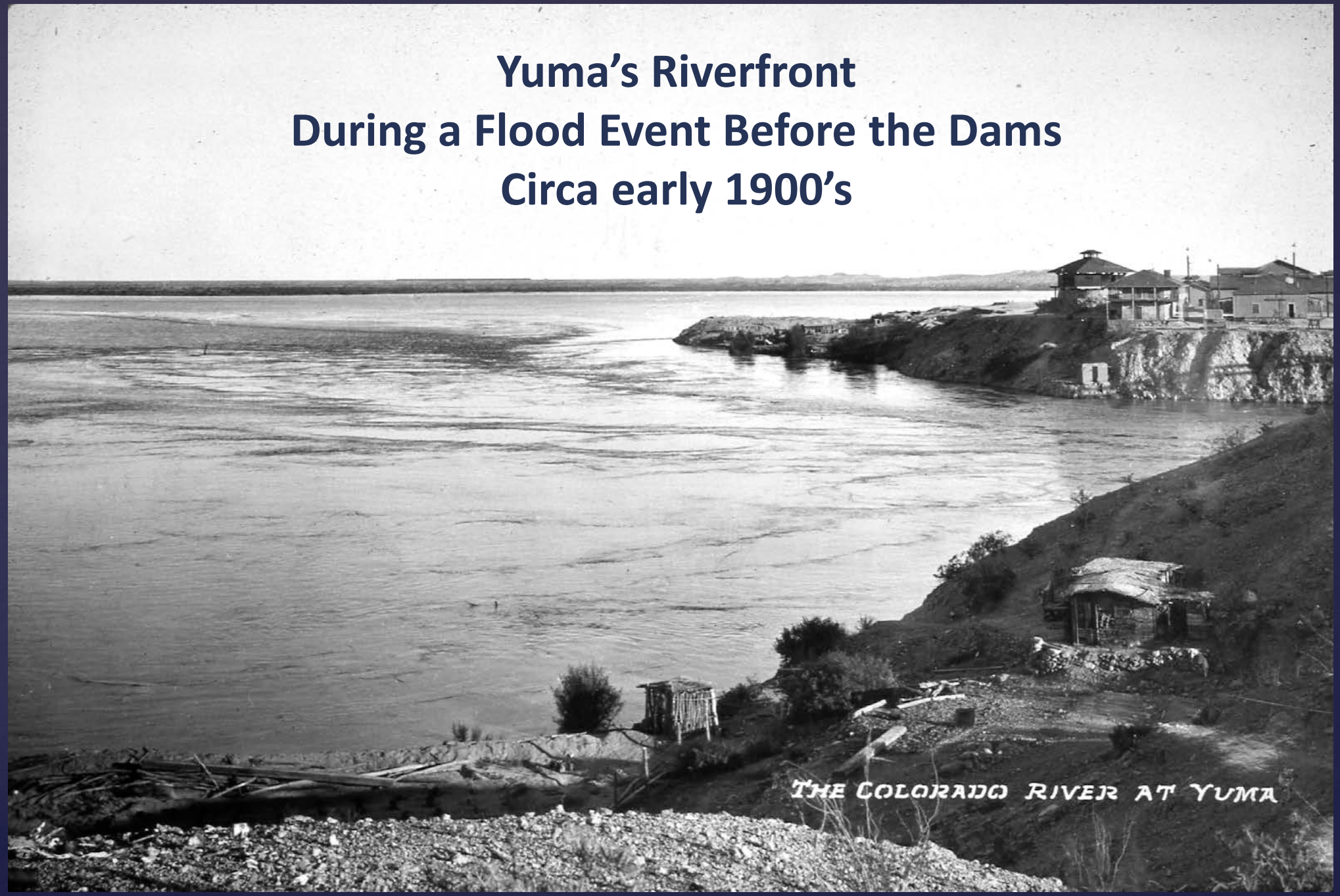
A Profile in Collaborative Partnership Along Yuma's Lower Colorado River

Presentation by Tee L Cervantes, Cathy Douglas, and Vianey Avila

Yuma's Riverfront
During a Flood Event Before the Dams
Circa early 1900's



Yuma's Riverfront After the Dams
Circa 1990's

20 years ago…
Yuma's Riverfront

Littered with trash, invasive vegetation, meth labs, and hobo camps

About $40 million later…Yuma's Riverfront Today

3 Contiguous miles of riverfront parks, trails, habitat conservation areas, private development, and a National Historic Landmark nestled between two state historic parks

CHALLENGES

- Reversing a century of environmental degradation on the Lower Colorado River
- Reconnecting a desert southwest community cut off from the river… recreationally and commercially
- Bridging historic divides among diverse stakeholders
- Weaving new commercial development into a National Historic Landmark

HOW DID WE GET THERE

- **Collaboration…**and a lot of
- Community Commitment
- $$$ Money $$$
- Private/Public Partnership
- $$$ Money $$$
- Perseverance
- $$$ Money $$$
- Hard Work
- $$$ Money $$$

COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP

1990's: The City of Yuma wanted to reclaim Yuma's riverfront and preserve the Yuma Crossing National Historic Landmark which was in a threatened status.

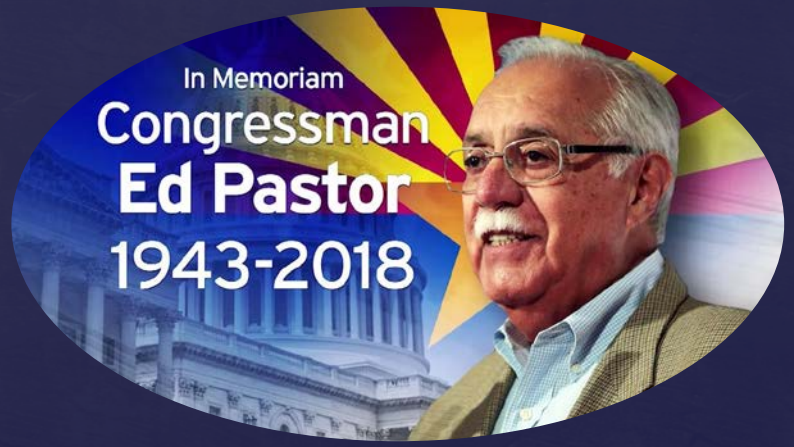
2000: The Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, (a 501(c)3 non-profit organization), was authorized by Congress with City of Yuma committing staff and financial support.

2000- Present: The City and YCNHA have been working side by side to develop Yuma's riverfront.

DID WE DO IT ALONE? NO!!

We had a lot of help along the way from local, state, tribal and federally elected and appointed officials, governmental agencies, private & public entities, and thousands of community volunteers.

Yuma Mayor Nelson, Quechan Tribal President, Senator Jon Kyl



Ron Hamm, President, Hamm Consulting Group

DEVELOPING PARTNERS & ADVOCATES

FEDERAL

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation & LCR MSCP
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Environmental Protection Agency

STATE

- Arizona State Parks and Trails
- Arizona Water Protection Fund
- Arizona Department of Game and Fish
- Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
- Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

TRIBAL

- Quechan Indian Tribe

SEEK PRIVATE INVESTMENT, LOCAL PUBLIC SUPPORT, AND KNOWLEDGEABLE CONSULTANTS

- Yuma County
- Hundreds of community volunteers and donors
- Fred Phillips Consulting
- PG&E, LLC
- Gowan Company
- Boy Scouts of America
- Girl Scouts of America
- Pecan Grove Garden Club
- One Tree Planted
- Yuma County Chamber of Commerce
- Yuma Visitor's Bureau
- Dave Fackler Planning & Development
- Howard Deardorff & Associates
- Clark Lankford, Inc.
- Walton Family Foundation
- Union Pacific Foundation
- APS Foundation
- …and multiple others

GATEWAY PARK: Riverfront park, trails & beach

2002: A sad riverfront with no river access

2007: A riverfront reclaimed with beach access

PRIVATE INVESTMENT WAS KEY

Historic water settling tanks

2009: Hilton Garden Inn & Pivot Point Conference Center

Yuma East Wetlands: 380-Acre MSCP Conservation Area

A Partner Project: City of Yuma, Quechan Indian Tribe, Arizona Game & Fish Dept., YCNHA

2003: Before restoration

2012: After restoration

Yuma East Wetlands: Restored Wetland Marsh

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: 150-Acre riverfront park and habitat area

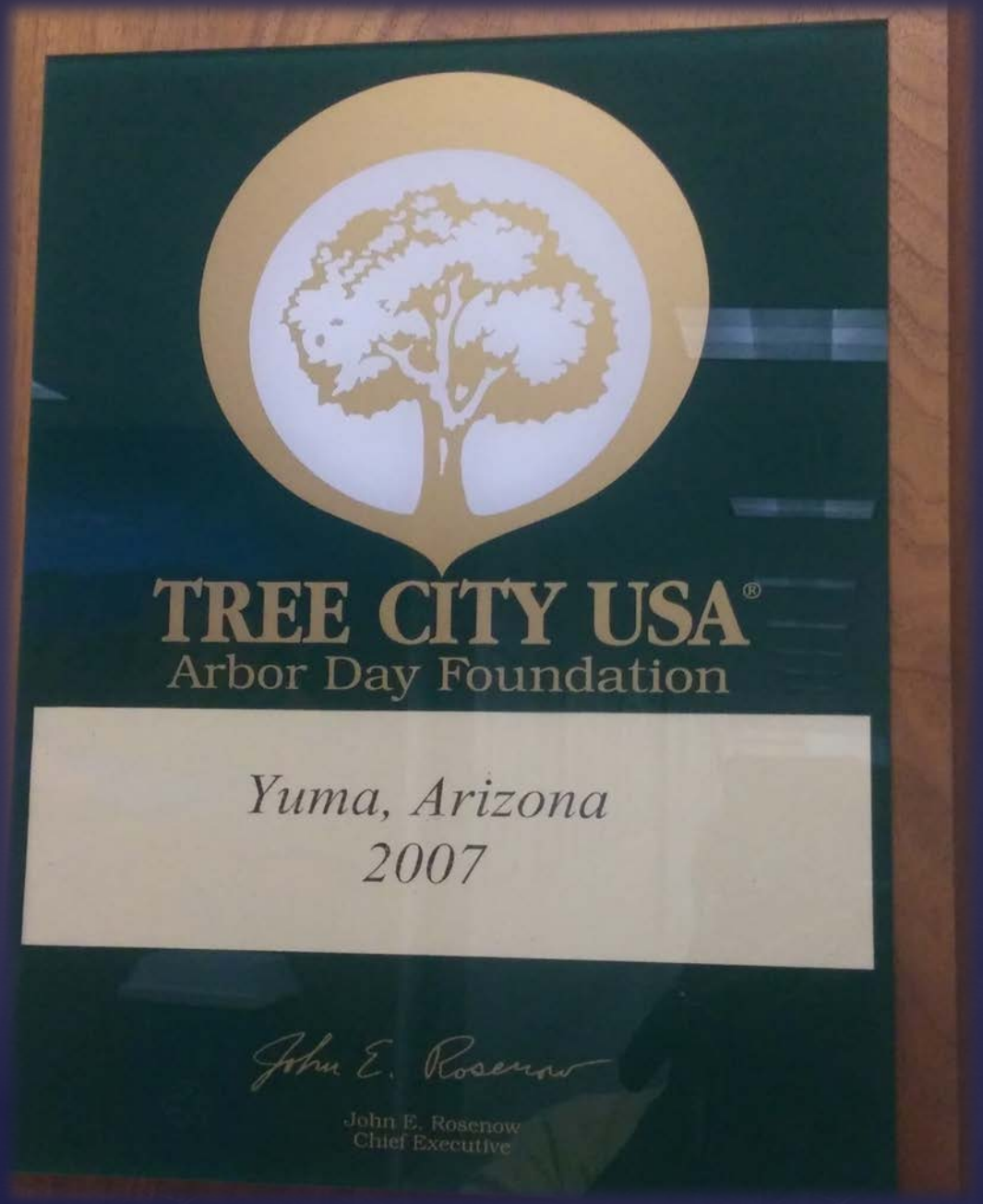
Former City Dump

Today

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: Beaches & Riverfront Trails

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: Fishing Pond, Open Space, Disk Golf & Playgrounds

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: Boat Ramp, Restored Wetland & Riparian Habitat



FUNDERS WANT TO SEE COMMITMENT TO BEST PRACTICES…

TREE CITY USA Designation
&
Municipal Tree Ordinance

Since 2007

POTENTIAL FUNDERS WANT TO SEE PARTNERSHIPS

In 2017, the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (AZ DFFM) submitted the AZ/Yuma West Wetlands application for the Landscape Scale Restoration (*LSR*) Competitive Grant Program (*funded through the USDA Forest Service*) and was successfully awarded $300,000 for a $600,000 project.

AZ DFFM partnered with the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, the City of Yuma's Parks and Recreation and Police Departments, Yuma's Visitors Bureau, Fred Phillips Consulting, to meet all three of the Forest Service's National Themes:

- Conserve Working Forest Landscapes;
- Protect Forests from Harm; and
- Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests.

AWARDS STRENGTHEN GRANT APPLICATIONS…

2019 Recipient of the Ponderosa Pine Arbor Day Award for Exceptional Community Collaboration Project

The Yuma West Wetlands Restoration Project received recognition for collaboration with local, state, and federal partners engaged in:

- Riparian and wetlands restoration and preservation;
- Urban and community forestry/re-forestation efforts;
- Wildfire prevention activities;
- Wildlife habitat protection and preservation;
- Outdoor recreation creation;
- ADA accessibility;
- Park infrastructure development;
- Ecological and wildlife education, and
- Opportunities for social responsibility and engagement.

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: DFFM Project (2017-Current)

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: DFFM Project (After Planting)

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: DFFM Project (After Planting)

YUMA WEST WETLANDS: DFFM Project (Gowan Company Donation)

While so much has been accomplished, there always remains more to be done.

- Fully develop West Wetlands Park per the Master Plan
- Ongoing maintenance and upgrades to park facilities
- Ongoing invasive species removal and maintenance of our river bank, wetland and riparian conservation areas
- Riverfront trail improvements at East Wetlands and West Wetlands
- Create new and useful educational offerings: outdoor educational programming, brochures, interpretive educational signage, environmental education video series accessed by scanning a QR code
- Partner with Quechan to assist in development of the Quechan Riverfront Park & Conservation Area on the north side of the river adjacent to Gateway Park

What's the value of PARTNERSHIPS?

While money is very important to our success….

We also receive from each other:

- Experienced, educated, technical and scientific experts and administrators;
- Brain-storming and creative ideas for new projects;
- On-site, technical assistance visits and grant guidance from funding agencies and expert consultants;
- Confidence in each other's abilities, respect for individual and group outcomes, and specific and meaningful recognition; and
- Creating future environmental stewards through meaningful volunteer and educational opportunities.

Partnerships Are Priceless!