

## The WRAN Report

### By Darnell Kirksey

WESTERN RIVERS DAY at the state legislature was on March 11, 2015. As your Sonoran Audubon Society (SAS) representative to the Western Rivers Action Network (WRAN), I attended along with leaders from other Audubon Society groups, Trout Unlimited, Arizona Wildlife Federation, and Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation.

Representative Eric Meyer (LD 28), House Minority Leader, welcomed us. Sarah Luna, Arizona Coordinator of the Audubon WRAN, gave us our marching orders.

Before heading out for meetings with legislators, Hunter Moore, Natural Resources Policy Advisor to Governor Doug Ducey, welcomed us. He talked generally about conservation. He seemed especially concerned about the possible federal listing, as Threatened, of the Morafka's (Sonoran) desert tortoise.



Hassayampa River, by Vera Markham

We trekked over to the Legislature for meetings with lawmakers. At both of our meetings, a spokesperson introduced us, explained WRAN's mission, and asked the representative or senator to keep our group in mind when seeking information on water issues. Each legislator received a packet of information about WRAN.

My group met with Senator Katie Hobbs (LD24), the Senate Minority Leader. She seemed very interested in our message. She asked good questions and was knowledgeable. She wondered why WRAN doesn't have a lobbyist at the Legislature like the Sierra Club. We also mentioned our concern over HB 2570, a bill that would prevent municipalities from ensuring sustainable development practices by prohibiting them from requiring native plant salvage and the planting of native vegetation in developed areas. She said she would find out and that the bill would eventually reach her desk.

Back at the conference room, we had lunch and met with Tom Buschatze, chair of the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR). He gave a short, data-intensive talk on the future of the Colorado River.

My group's last meeting was with Representative Rusty Bowers (LD25), Vice Chairman of the House Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee. He seemed to support our mission.

We ended the day in the Senate Gallery where we were introduced by Senate President, Andy Biggs. We stood and received a round of applause. It was a good day. This year's emphasis was on leadership, WRAN leaders talking with legislative conservation leaders. I learned a lot, and hopefully so did the people we talked with. I also enjoyed meeting with other Arizona WRAN representatives.

Please join WRAN and get involved in the struggle to keep our rivers freely flowing. WRAN provides many opportunities for educating yourself about water issues. You can join a series of mid-day webinars about many issues of interest to Audubon members. There are also training and workshop sessions held around the state where you can learn more about WRAN's many activities. Learn more at <http://az.audubon.org/western-rivers-action-network-O> . WRAN can also be found on Facebook.

For more information please contact me, Karen La France, or any other SAS officer.

**NOTE: HB 2570 has been pulled which may mean that it will not come up for a vote; thank you to everyone who contacted legislators!**