



news from yuma visitors bureau

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EVERGREEN: FOR USE ANY TIME

Last link in river restoration under way

Clearing efforts will allow miles of hiking along Yuma shoreline

YUMA, ARIZONA – In this desert city that once turned its back on the river that shaped its history, work is currently under way **to clear a mile-long stretch of overgrown riverbank** between Gateway and West Wetlands parks.



The project, which will take two to three years to complete, presents the last link in an effort to restore access to Colorado River that began back in 2002.

“When we clear this last section, **folks will actually be able to hike right on the river all the way from the West Wetlands to the East Wetlands,**” said Charles Flynn, executive director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, which has also led commercial redevelopment in historic Yuma.

“That’s pretty amazing, considering that when we started, you couldn’t even touch the water because the non-native vegetation was so

thick,” Flynn said. **“Our goal was to reconnect Yuma to the river that gives it life.** Now everyone has come to enjoy and expect easy access to the Colorado.”

“We live in the desert, so people can’t get enough of the water, in every season,” Flynn added. “This is not just for birds and animals but for people as well.”

Over the past two decades, the Yuma community, in partnership with the Quechan Indian Tribe, has restored 400 acres of wetlands, built three riverfront parks, and developed a network of multi-use and hiking trails. For those who want to explore on two wheels, bikes can be rented at the Visitor Information Center at Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park, 201 N. 4th Ave.

These efforts have been no small undertaking: workers have planted more than 200,000 trees, plant and shrubs and moved more than 330,000 cubic yards of dirt to create two miles of channel and lakes in the once water-starved East Wetlands.

As the tangle of invasive vegetation has been replaced with native trees and water quality has improved, wildlife has voted with its wings: The bird population has doubled and species diversity has increased by 75 percent. In addition, endangered Yuma clapper rails are now mating and nesting in the East Wetlands. Eventually, the various restoration areas are expected to provide top-quality habitat for more than 330 species of birds and wildlife.

Ready to learn more? Exhibits at the Quartermaster Depot explain more about Yuma’s environmental restoration efforts, as well as the past, present and future of the Colorado River.

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Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area is an independent nonprofit corporation governed by a local board of directors. It was among the first national heritage areas in the West to be officially designated by the U.S. Congress. For more information, call 928-373-5198 or visit www.yumaheritage.com.

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