



The restored Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund Need to be fully-funded by the Legislature this 2023 session

For many of us, our most treasured childhood memories are romping in a neighborhood park or taking a hike in Arizona's wide-open spaces. Every community in our state, regardless of size, has a place where parents and their children picnic; throw, kick, hit, and dunk a ball; or stare in wonderment at Arizona's unique flora and fauna. These special places provide wholesome outdoor recreation.

Historic downtowns and neighborhoods, where previous generations grew up, went to school, and conducted business, have been restored to their original beauty enabling Arizonans to continue to live near their jobs, schools, and local services.

Urban sprawl and destructive fires have impacted our open spaces, and historic buildings and cultural sites have faced destruction as time, the elements, or neglect have taken their toll.

What is the Arizona Heritage Fund? The Heritage Fund was created in 1990 as a voter-Initiative which passed with **over 62% majority of voters**. It directed \$10 million annually from Arizona State Lottery to the State Parks Heritage Fund to be used for local, regional, and state parks; trails and open spaces; and cultural heritage sites.

It also created a separate Arizona Game & Fish Heritage Fund, with its own \$10 million annually from state lottery revenues. The Game & Fish Heritage Fund uses its money to protect and manage habitat for Arizona's wildlife.

"The Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund grants, from 1990 to the Great Recession in 2009, provided key funding through a competitive, matching grant process, for communities, tribes, and agencies to enhance and create parks and trails, and restore, repair, and reuse historic properties." says former Senator Steve Farley (D-Tucson) and current Board Member of the Arizona Heritage Alliance.

Why is the Arizona Heritage Fund Important? Since the creation of the State Parks Heritage Fund 33 years ago, over \$89 million in grants have been reinvested in parks, trails, open spaces, and cultural sites in communities across Arizona. With local matching funds added in, \$207 million has been spent in projects statewide.

"The Heritage Fund is important because it helps municipalities, especially small ones, build amenities for their communities." states John Kavanagh (R-Fountain Hills), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. He adds, *"When I was on the Fountain Hills Town Council in the late 1990s, we received over \$9 million in grants from the SPHF to build our local parks."*

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In 2010, the state legislative majority decided — as part of their plan to address severe budget shortfalls during the Great Recession — to repeal the State Parks Heritage Fund and directed that any money remaining in the fund revert to the general fund. Over the thirteen years since the State Parks Heritage Fund was eliminated, the Fund has lost \$130 million that should have been used for parks, trails, and cultural sites in accordance with the wishes of the voters. (The Game & Fish Heritage Fund was not impacted by this legislative action and continues to receive \$10 million annually.)

In the 2019 legislative session, Senate Bill 1241, sponsored by then Senator Kate Brophy McGee (R-Phoenix), was passed by the state legislature with bipartisan support, and signed into law by Governor Doug Ducey. While SB1241 put the State Parks Heritage Fund back into statute, it did not restore the annual \$10 million from Lottery revenues.

“I was struck by the diversity of the interests that weighed in on this issue.” declares Brophy-McGee. *“While they might not agree on other issues, they all agreed that we needed to reinstate the State Parks Heritage Fund.”*

In the 2021 session, former Representative Joanne Osborne (R-Goodyear) introduced a Bill to finance the Fund. Osborne’s Bill received strong public support as well as bipartisan legislative support. Through the final budget negotiation process between the House, Senate, and Governor in June of 2021, the outcome was a one-time appropriation of \$5 million for Fiscal Year 2022. In last year’s session, the SPHF received only a one-time appropriation of \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2023.

Russ Jones, President of the Arizona Heritage Alliance and former Republican Representative from Yuma, says *“As the 2023 Legislative Session commences, with large Budget surpluses and the Arizona Lottery encumbrances have been repaid and removed, the Board of the Arizona Heritage Alliance, other heritage and environmental stakeholder groups, and hundreds of Arizonans who have communicated their views to the Legislature believe it is time to reinstate the funding to the State Parks portion of the Heritage Fund.”*

It is time to make Arizona’s precious heritage whole again - now and into the future.

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Formed in 1992, the Arizona Heritage Alliance is a bi-partisan/non-partisan, non-profit 501-c-3 organization that is funded solely with private donations, grants, and memberships. The mission is ***To protect, preserve, and enhance Arizona’s historic, cultural, and natural heritage by protecting the integrity and voter intent of Arizona Heritage Fund.*** The Alliance’s long-standing commitment is to remain at the center of conversations with stakeholders and the Legislature to fully-fund and implement the restored State Parks Heritage Fund has not changed. If you are interested in learning more about Heritage Fund grants in your District, please contact Ms. Lani Lott, Executive Director, AHA at 602-528-7500 or [mail@azheritage.org](mailto:mail@azheritage.org).

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