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Subject: 2026 New Year Update from the AZ Heritage Alliance
Date: January 6, 2026 at 8:34 AM
To: lani@l-consulting.com

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Quarterly updates, news, and events from the Arizona Heritage Alliance

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ARIZONA HERITAGE ALLIANCE
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2026 Legislative and Budget Updates: Positive News for the State Parks Heritage Fund

Dear Arizona Heritage Alliance Members, Partners, and Friends

On behalf of the [Arizona Heritage Alliance](#) Board of Directors, Dear Arizona Heritage Alliance Members, Partners, and Friends, because of the sustained efforts of thousands of community allies and bipartisan legislative champions, the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund was restored to statute in 2019. Since that

time, \$25.7 million has been allocated – including \$1 million approved by the Legislature and Governor for FY 2026–2027 – to support projects that benefit communities across Arizona:

- 50% – Local, regional, and state parks
- 30% – Historic preservation
- 10% – Non-motorized trails
- 10% – Outdoor and environmental education

These investments – together with the original projects funded between 1992 and 2008 – have left an enduring legacy, strengthening Arizona’s outdoor spaces, historic places, and cultural resources. Detailed project descriptions, photographs, and an interactive map are available on our website at <https://azheritage.org>

Planning Ahead: Advocacy and Legislative Strategy

As we look toward the next budget cycle and beyond, the Arizona Heritage Alliance remains fully committed to protecting and strengthening the Heritage Fund. Our Legislative Task Force, chaired by Board Vice President Russ Jones, is actively developing a comprehensive legislative game plan to benefit both the State Parks Heritage Fund and the Game and Fish Heritage Fund.

This work is especially urgent. A significant backlog of deferred maintenance and repair still exists across Arizona’s parks, historic sites, and cultural resources – much of it stemming from the Great Recession, when the State Parks Heritage Fund was removed from statute and its revenues swept into the General Fund. At the same time, the need for housing that can be created through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and districts – across communities large and small – has never been greater. Thoughtful rehabilitation can help meet housing needs while preserving community character.

Recent flooding in historic downtowns such as Globe and Miami further underscores the vulnerability of these places and the importance of reinvestment. Strategic use of Heritage Fund resources can not only stabilize and restore historic and cultural assets, but also serve as a catalyst for economic development, downtown revitalization, and heritage tourism – outcomes that benefit entire regions.

Looking Toward 2026: A Once-in-a-Generation Moment

Our advocacy takes on added significance as we approach several major milestones in 2026, including the 100th anniversary of Route 66 and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Arizona will play a prominent role in commemorating these events through statewide observances that highlight our unique history, landscapes, and communities. Ensuring that our parks, historic sites, and cultural institutions are ready to meet this moment is

both a responsibility and an opportunity. Details here: <https://www.america250az.org>

Grant Opportunities: Now Open

Applications are now being accepted for the FY 2026 State Parks Heritage Fund. We encourage eligible organizations and communities to apply and to share this opportunity broadly. Comprehensive information about all available Arizona State Parks grant programs can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_AfkJTyV22zRPGLdtOuGv7ecKwGsYtp_/view

Program Spotlight: Arizona Game and Fish Heritage Fund

The Game and Fish Heritage Fund continues to deliver remarkable conservation outcomes, supporting more than 800 wildlife species statewide. One standout initiative is Focus Wild Arizona, an award-winning wildlife education program offering:

- Free lesson plans, books, posters, and online resources
- Professional development workshops for educators
- Standards-based curriculum aligned with science, social studies, math, and language arts
- Grants of up to \$3,000 for wildlife education projects and student field trips

These resources are available at little or no cost, helping educators bring Arizona's natural heritage directly into the classroom. Details here: <https://www.azgfd.com/education/focus-wild-2/>

Gratitude for Our Board and Partners

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Arizona Heritage Alliance Board of Directors for their leadership, dedication, and continued support of the many organizations and initiatives that strengthen communities throughout Arizona. Their commitment makes our collective work possible.

A Critical Moment: How You Can Help

Our progress has always been driven by strong partnerships – with elected officials of both parties, community organizations, and engaged citizens across the state. Yet ongoing state budget pressures make the coming year particularly challenging.

We must continue working together to secure funding for FY 2026 and to advance the long-term goal of restoring the original Arizona Lottery funding formula for the State Parks Heritage Fund. Your involvement – through membership, contributions, and advocacy – remains essential.

Contribute Today

Online: azheritage.org

By mail: Arizona Heritage Alliance, P.O. Box 16292, Phoenix, AZ 85011

Start the New Year in Arizona's State Parks

As a special way to kick off 2026, we invite you to take part in a Free First Day Hike at Arizona's State Parks. Arizona State Parks and Trails is offering all First Day Hikes with no entry fee in celebration of America's 250th anniversary. It's a great way to begin the year outdoors and reconnect with the landscapes and places that make Arizona unique. Details here: <https://azstateparks.com/first-day-hikes>

Together, we can ensure that Arizona's natural, cultural, and historic resources are protected, celebrated, and preserved for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Jim McPherson, Board President

Russ Jones, Board Vice President & Chair, Legislative Task Force

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The Arizona Heritage Alliance is a 501(c)3 non-profit with the mission to preserve and enhance Arizona's historic, cultural, and natural heritage. To accomplish our mission we actively:

- Protect the integrity and voter intent of the Arizona Game & Fish Heritage Fund
- Pursue sustainable and dedicated funding sources for Arizona's historic, cultural, and natural initiatives, programs, and activities
- Educate Arizonans on the benefits of our state's wildlife, open space, parks, and historic and cultural resources
- Monitor state legislative and agency activity



Donate

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Preserve and Enhance Arizona's Historic, Cultural, and Natural Heritage.*

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