

Engaging Urban Communities with Local Riparian Areas through the Maricopa County Master Watershed Steward Program



COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE
& LIFE SCIENCES

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Maricopa County
Water Resources Program

Summer Waters, CFM, CIG
Water Resources Extension Agent
University of Arizona Cooperative
Extension, Maricopa County

Maricopa County Cooperative Extension



Mission: Enhance the lives of people and communities through education research, engagement, and creativity

- Cooperative Extension was established in 1914 - connected to Land Grant University
- Non-formal education programs
- Extension brings the university to the people through collaboration, partnerships, and dissemination of non-biased information.

Water Resources Programs In Maricopa County



Major Program Areas



Water Conservation (Outdoor)-

Target audiences with a well-developed knowledge base related to outdoor water use. Develops skills in irrigation efficiency and xeriscaping. Results in water-efficient urban landscapes.

Water and Climate-

Informs decision-makers and water managers about relationships between climate and water (i.e.: , drought, water shortage, climate extremes, and flooding). Provides tools to assist with interpretation of data and implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies. Result in more resilient water supplies.

Urban Riparian Areas-

Introduces adults and young adults to riparian areas. Teach key concepts such as non-point source pollution, groundwater/surface water interactions, beneficial functions of riparian areas, and watershed-scale planning. Promotes healthy, sustainable riparian ecosystems.

**'In the end, we will protect only what we love.
We will love only what we understand.
We will understand only what we are taught.'**

Senegalese poet and naturalist Baba Dioum






PURPOSE: Protect and Restore Riparian Areas

- **Create a strong network of community partners and knowledgeable volunteers develop and apply innovative strategies to build and maintain healthy urban riparian areas.**
- Increase the use and visibility of urban riparian areas
- Provide educational experiences related to water quality, watersheds, and the beneficial functions of riparian ecosystems.
- Educational activities improve neighborhood vitality and have a positive economic impact on local businesses.

Master Watershed Steward Program (MWS)



-  **40** classroom and field hours
-  **40** hours of volunteer service
-  Active, relevant learning about local watershed issues
- Statewide program began in 2001 Yavapai & Cochise Counties
- Citizens became concerned about polarizing issues related to watershed health and wanted to “take action!”
- **UA Cooperative Extension** applied to **ADEQ** for Water Quality Improvement Grant funds in 2003
- Maricopa County Program began in 2005
- Participated in grand opening of Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area and Audubon Center



Results

- 10-week Master Watershed Steward (MWS) classes consistently showed 20% average increase in water-related knowledge
- Over 100 volunteers have been trained
- Over 2000 hours of volunteer time dedicated to local waterways (\$40,000 value)
- 5 photopoint monitoring sites established
- An estimated 23,000 people were educated at outreach events 2009-2013
- Maricopa County MWS program Won Valley Forward Awards
- First ever Dragonfly Day 2013 event at Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area hosted 500 people.



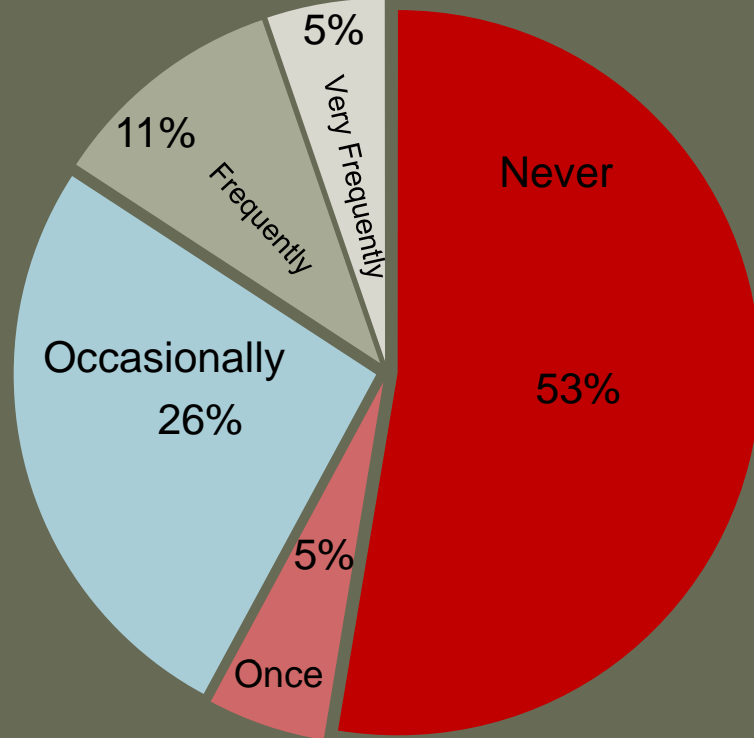
What Really Happened...



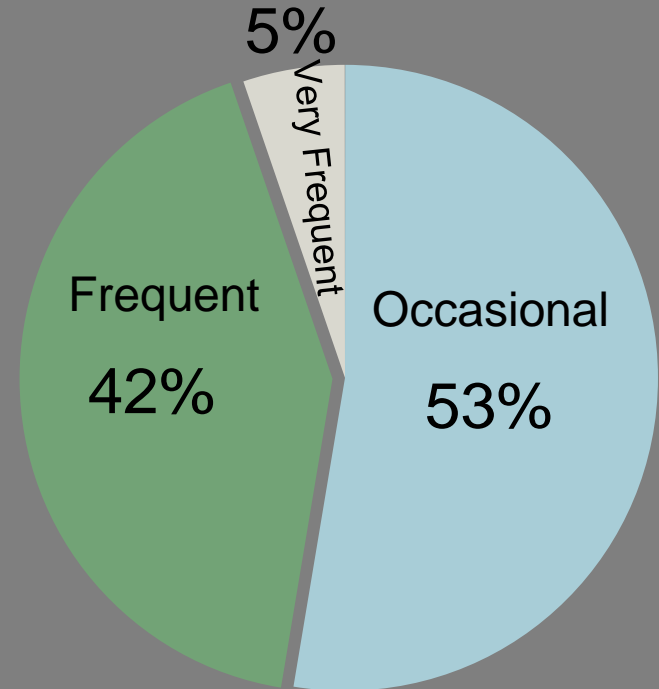
Increasing the value of the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area to the public



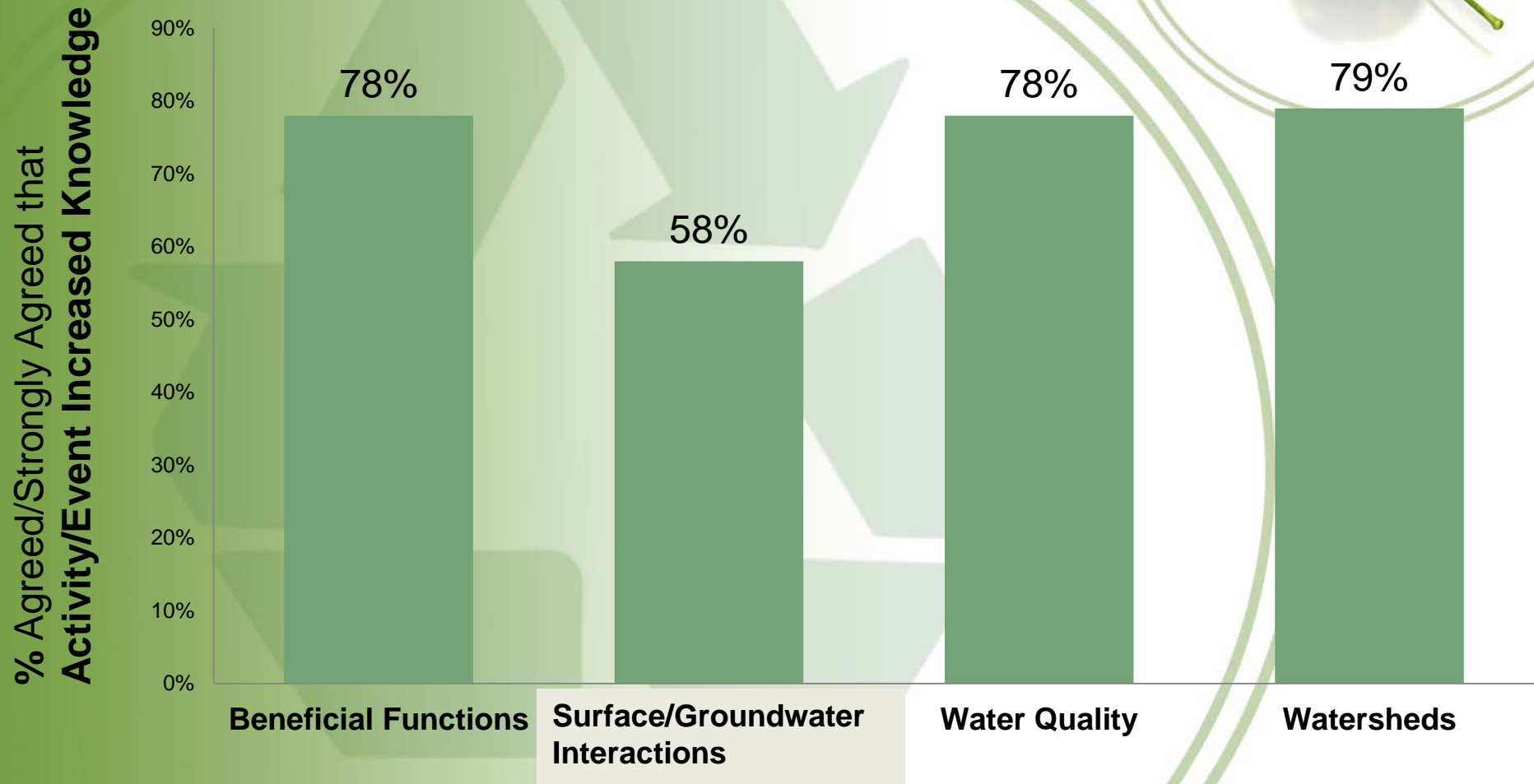
Visitation Frequency Before Event



Likelihood of Return to Rio Salado



Event Effectiveness at Increasing Knowledge about Key Concepts



Conclusions



- Growing number of people willing to serve as dedicated volunteers to improve urban riparian areas
- Volunteer training programs can increase level of in-depth knowledge about riparian ecosystems and related water issues
- Public outreach events can increase visibility and use of riparian areas as well as understanding of key concepts



MWS
Master Watershed Steward



www.facebook.com/masterwatershedsteward



Blue-ringed Dancer, male

