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Film festival focuses on water issues

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PRESCOTT - Joel and Frances Thomas set out to learn about the beautiful landscape around them after they moved to Prescott from Phoenix this past December.

Joining a group of eight volunteers to screen films about local water issues for the third annual CreeksFest film festival really helped them learn a lot in a short time.

"We were inspired by the movies that had to do with the Verde River, because it's close and something we can visualize," Frances Thomas said. "We're enthused about learning about what's here."

The film festival takes place at the historic Elks Opera House on Saturday, Oct. 11.

This is the first time Prescott Creeks has gathered some of its volunteers to view the films and choose the ones they want in the festival, said Anne-Marie Benz, Prescott Creeks watershed program manager.

"It's nice to have outside opinions," Benz said. "They help broaden the perspective."

A film called "Swim for the River" about a man's quest to swim the entire length of the Hudson River was among the favorites for Jay Crocker, another volunteer in the screening group.

"I think the guy might have been crazy," Crocker said. "Man, he was in some really nasty water. That was the point, I think, by showing how abused our rivers are. He made the point very well."

This year's festival focuses completely on films about water, and it features more films than ever about local water issues, with six short features focusing on the Verde.

"We have learned what works," Prescott Creeks Director Michael Byrd said. "And the films speak directly to the issues."

This also is the first time that Prescott Creeks has grouped the films by themes: fly fishing and wildlife (1 to 3

p.m.), the Verde River (3:30 to 5 p.m.), and full-river float and swim films (6:30 to 9 p.m.).

"We knew we wanted to do themes, and as we reviewed the films it became pretty obvious there were trends," Benz said.

The 10 movies range in length from seven minutes to 58 minutes, Benz said. People involved in creating the films will sometimes introduce them to the audience. Some also will include lobby displays.

Tickets to see all the movies are just \$10, or \$5 for students. They are available at the door or online at prescottcreeks.org.

Prescott Creeks works to preserve and restore free-flowing streams in this region, and manages Watson Woods for the [City of Prescott](http://CityofPrescott).

The ultimate goal of the film festival is to encourage everyone to help keep the rivers flowing.

Films showing at the third annual CreeksFest film festival

1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

"Trout Grass"

For many anglers, a fly rod is more than a fishing instrument. It's an antenna, capturing signals of the natural world. But what of the process that turns ordinary materials into extraordinary tools? And why do people around the world continue to spend their days happily wading in rivers if they do not keep what they capture?

"Trout Grass" tracks the 10,000-mile journey of bamboo around the world. From a lush forest in China's Guangdong Province to a rustic workshop in Montana, this film follows the transition of bamboo from a living plant to a finished fly rod.

The documentary features Hoagy Carmichael, legendary split-cane fly rod craftsman and author of the art's seminal study, and fly fishing legend Thomas McGuane.

"Ride of the Mergansers"

The hooded merganser is a rare and reclusive duck found only in North America. Every spring, in the Great Lakes region, the wary hen lays and incubates her eggs in a nest high in the trees.

Just 24 hours after hatching, the tiny ducklings must make the perilous leap to the ground below to begin life in the wild.

Humans rarely get to observe this age-old rite. The audience leaves with a newfound appreciation of the phrase "leap of faith."

"Bugs of the Underworld"

Extraordinary award-winning underwater video footage follows the life cycles of mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies, and other amazing bugs. Expertly narrated with original sound track.

Flyfishers will gain valuable insights as they see how aquatic insects behave and what they really look like to trout.

3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

The Verde River Basin Partnership

In November 2005, President Bush signed the Verde River Basin Partnership Act into law. This short film shows the formation of that partnership and the enthusiasm of the community for the Verde River.

"The Verde River"

The Verde, a key component of the Colorado River Basin watershed, is a fragile ecosystem and nationally recognized. A 65-mile stretch of the river is Arizona's only federally designated Wild and Scenic River. The upper Verde is also one of the last best places for Arizona's endangered native fish.

"The Water's Edge"

Center for Biological Diversity's Joanne Oellers tours the Verde River ecosystem at high water.

"Drop by Drop"

Tom Slaback, of the Sierra Club's Yavapai Chapter, runner Thomas Arnold, and Verde River-area farmer Brenda Houser demonstrate different ways to preserve our desert jewel.

"The Sacred Earth Endurance Run"

This film documents Earth Day 2008 and the Sacred Earth Endurance Coop's 24-hour/100-mile run to the Verde headwaters.

"The Verde River: Beautiful and Beleaguered"

For years Gary Beverly had the feeling that the Upper Verde River was special, that it was a secret paradise known only to a few. This spring, he took a solo backpack exploring the Upper Verde River.

Starting at Perkinsville Bridge, he walked up river to Highway 89, nearly 30 miles, taking photographs along the way. For three days, he walked through a riparian garden, meeting not one soul.

"Beautiful and Beleaguered" is his attempt to alert people to the beauty of, and the threats to, the Upper Verde River.

6:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

"Inflatable Journey - A Brothers' Adventure on the Escalante River"

Timing is everything when it comes to taking a boat down southern Utah's Escalante River. If the winter brings enough snow to the mountains, the spring runoff that follows can make it possible to run the 80 spectacular miles through Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Using small inflatable boats, brothers Bill and Brian Cass embark on a memorable 12-day journey that weaves together the incredible beauty of an obscure Southwest river with the unknown challenges and surprises they encounter along the way.

"Inflatable Journey" is as much about the connection between two brothers and their sharing of a wilderness experience as it is about the exhilarating adventure they undertake.

"Swim for the River"

Chris Swain braved whitewater, sewage, snapping turtles, hydroelectric dams, homeland security patrols, factory outfalls, and PCB contamination to become the first person to swim the entire length of the Hudson River from the Adirondack Mountains to New York City.

Swain's experience links together stories of the river, which begins in wilderness and ends in one of the nation's densest population centers.

The audience meets famous people, like folk singer Pete Seeger, but people also see how ordinary citizens can and

do make a difference through choices they make affecting the environment, and by joining together around a common cause.

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