Re revitalizing the Gila River is critical to establishing a vibrant future for the West Valley. As with any major public/private undertaking, the interest and concerns of the community must be reflected. Your voice is needed and can make a difference with the El Rio project. To find out how you can become involved, call the Gila Control District of Maricopa County at 602-506-4501.

Project Partners:
City of Avondale
City of Buckeye
City of Goodyear
Gila Control District of Maricopa County
Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
Maricopa County Planning and Development
Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
Mary Rose Wilcox, Clint Hickman, Andy Kunasek,
Steve Chucul and Danny Barney

Gracing the edges of Estrella Mountain Regional Park, periodically strengthened by the confluence of both the Salt and the Agua Fria rivers, the Gila River has helped define the agricultural basin of the West Valley and at times given life to an entire nation, the Pima Indians.

The Gila River is now a trickle of the mighty life-giving river it once was. During the cooler season, heavy rains and releases upstream allow it to regain a semblance of its past majestic flow. The formerly navigable sections of cottonwood, willow and alder are now diminished to thin, isolated strips, and in many places, are thwarted by invasive salt cedar. Native fish remain banished from the natural streams and dangerous, illegal activities flourish in bends and banks where a healthy river once flowed.

Today the Gila River rests as an irreplaceable natural resource in need of a voice. That voice is the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan (WRMP).

Flooding swells imperial community gardens
Tanque Verde Park, Vail, Arizona (Photo by Steve Chucul)
Pollicasts and possible chemical waste threaten communities during times of flood. Unchecked debris poisons health and safety issues

The vision of a restored Gila River serving as a catalyst for economic development in the Southwest Valley was born in 1995. Since that time the vision has formed through the cooperative efforts of Maricopa County and the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, and Goodyear. The overarching goal of the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan (WRMP) is to serve as a catalyst for regional growth, economic development, conservation and recreation for the community.

Since the El Rio Watercourse was adopted in 1995, several projects have been completed. Salt cedar has been reduced with native vegetation in areas of the river. A rainforest has been established near Vistancia and Vail Trails parks. Air and water quality education exhibits have been installed at Tanque Verde park.

But these projects are just the beginning.

To learn more:
Gila Control District of Maricopa County
2901 West Belview Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85039
602-506-4501
Focus on multi-use facilities and functions
Coordinate planning with transportation corridors
Link up with Estrella Regional Park

Link functional compatibility outside the riparian habitat limits
Link canals and washes with developments
Link Estrella Parkway with Gila River corridor

Maintain, enhance or mitigate flood control elements
Increase flow capacity
Enhance (measure) and also providing flood protection and riparian restoration

Restore and maintain the natural functions within the river corridors: a riparian habitat
Provide open, flow throughout the reach
Create diversity of habitat and wildlife

The Gila River
They refer to the river people
You have lived by this river for 8,000 years
I don’t know what it was
Just sit and watch
I think it is a strange place I think river was a title and stuck on it
I am an Indian
The river, and I have never been a river

Wanda Lewis, a
Anishinaabe Gila Crossing Community School