

# Youth as Leaders

In ten sessions during the summer, twelve participants between the ages of 14-19 travel to local public lands to learn how to effectively make restoration decisions and implement long term sustainable changes on the land. The sessions include: orientations on the land, assessing site conditions, training in leadership and team building, and project planning. Participants form a youth board and make budget decisions in order to carry out a stewardship project that they design and implement.

## Program Goals:

- Develop and enhance youth leadership skills
- Engage youth on public lands in a student driven field experience
- Facilitate youth in planning, implementing and managing a watershed improvement project



2012



Students focused their efforts at improving Cottonwood pond for future leopard frog reintroduction. They grew deer grass, purchased rocks for bank stabilization, mapped out fencing placement and designed educational signage.

2013



Cieneguita habitat ponds were the focus of the youths' efforts - they transplanted Huachuca water umbel and native grasses, and redistributed soil. Invasive plant species were also removed. Students planned and ran a successful volunteer event. YES! logo was designed by Luca Valente, youth board member.

## Five Years of Meaningful Youth-led Accomplishments on Public Land

2014



Students completed a sacaton vegetation community restoration project to reduce erosion and increase moisture retention for seeds. The youth led 22 volunteers in removing invasive species in native habitat ponds and replanting native grasses. Youth designed educational signage, purchased rocks (to improve a frog habitat) and tools for future YES!

2015



Students continued work at the Gardner sacaton site, setting up 2 study plots to research different soil treatments to mitigate erosion. Youth led # volunteers in planting salt tolerant sacaton, placing rock structures, and scarifying soil.. Educational signage was completed for the site and data collection protocol was established.

2016



Students furthered their work efforts at the sacaton site by planting salt tolerant sacaton in clusters and transplanting crypto-biotic crust into the enclosed study plot. French drains were dug to aid with water retention and run-off in an area of heavy erosion. Educational signage was designed for pronghorn conservation.

## YES! Internships and Sustainability

In the summer of 2015 we established an internship program for past YES! participants. Interns have aided with summer programming, educational outreach through the school year and acted as mentors for new YES! youth. Intern projects on the horizon:

- Youth Outdoor Summit
- Volunteer Days at Las Cienegas