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ADEQ Director Owens Announces \$53,490 Grant to Begin Student Ambassador Program to Help Protect Oak Creek Canyon

PHOENIX (July 15, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Director Steve Owens announced today that ADEQ has awarded a \$53,490 grant to launch a Trailhead Ambassador program for high school students in Oak Creek Canyon near Sedona.

The grant, which was awarded to Pender Engineering of Cottonwood, will be used to train students to educate visitors to the popular canyon about the various environmental problems caused by human and pet activity in the fragile ecosystem and to take precautions to prevent them.

“We are pleased to support this important effort to protect Oak Creek in one of the most beautiful and fragile places in the world,” Director Owens said. “Water quality has been a long-time problem in Oak Creek, and this innovative project will help provide another way to help protect the creek and the ecosystem there. It’s a great idea.”

The student “ambassadors” will explain to canyon visitors the risks of fecal contamination, the importance of proper disposal of trash and human and pet wastes and where to find toilets, trash and recycling receptacles.

The Oak Creek Canyon Task Force, a partner with the grant, will install and maintain eight dog waste disposal stations at trailheads in the canyon which will educate the public about the importance of preventing pollution from human and dog waste.

The project will provide one high school credit toward graduation for completion of 120 hours of volunteer service. The student ambassadors will work 35 weekends and holidays from March through October.

The grants are funded with federal dollars provided to ADEQ under the federal Clean Water Act.