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ADEQ Announces \$253,326 Water Quality Improvement Grant to Address Polluted Runoff into Oak Creek Canyon

PHOENIX (April 24, 2013) – The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality announced today that a \$253,326 grant has been awarded to the Oak Creek Watershed Council for construction of a restroom near Slide Rock, installing 20 pet waste stations and conducting recreation outreach in Oak Creek Canyon.

The grant is one of four in Arizona this year administered by ADEQ's water quality improvement grant program to address polluted runoff from many different sources. Oak Creek, from its headwaters to its confluence with Spring Creek in Oak Creek Canyon, is listed as impaired for *E. coli* bacteria, a bacterium that is an indicator of fecal pollution.

“These funds will help restore water quality in one of the most beautiful and heavily visited tourist areas in the state,” ADEQ Director Henry Darwin said. “Our program has funded more than 100 projects throughout the state and has had a significant impact on improving the health of our waterways.”

The restroom facility will be constructed in the Midgley Bridge area north of Sedona on Highway 89A. More than 400,000 tourists a year access three popular hiking trails from that parking area.

The pet waste stations will be installed throughout the Oak Creek corridor and will accompany an education program designed for middle-school students about protecting the environment from animal waste. The grant money also will fund an Oak Creek ambassadors program, which will be two-person teams trained by the U.S. Forest Service to provide outreach during the most popular tourist months about pollution control.

In addition, the funding will help develop an Oak Creek watershed video and guidebook to explain nonpoint source pollution in the area.

In 2009, ADEQ awarded a \$311,603 grant to the Oak Creek Canyon Task Force to identify and clean up sources of *E. coli* in the Oak Creek watershed.

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