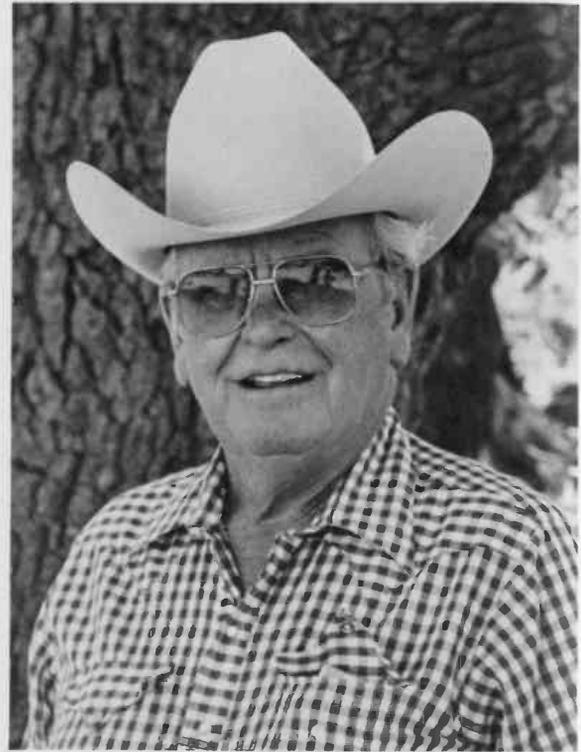


Riparian Education Via Video

"The Desert Oasis with Rex Allen"



"Rex Allen is the dean of western narrators."

When Rex Allen says "c-o-o-l water", the relaxed baritone conjures up a feeling...a mood...and in a way an understanding of just how important water, and in turn riparian habitats are to our desert survival.

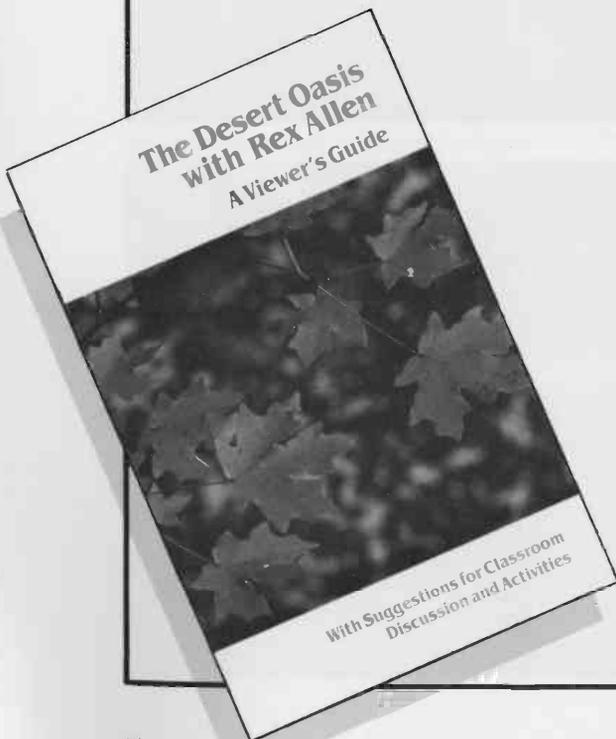
Allen, the voice of Walt Disney nature films, is one of several who worked to create a better "understanding" of these desert waterways in the half-hour television documentary "The Desert Oasis". The program was produced by the UA School of Renewable Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences Communications.

"Rex Allen is the dean of western narrators," says Don Floyd, executive producer of the program. "He is a voice often associated with the West and western issues."

That fact was an important consideration to the program's producers. In addition to developing a documentary that would trace the history and the varied roles of desert riparian habitats, the producers also hoped to show the conflicts of multiple demands on this precious resource. After all riparian habitats provide watershed, wildlife and livestock habitat and, of course, recreation.

Watch this program and you'll soon learn that in the booming desert Southwest, the question of how to manage these increasingly rare areas is a complex and often controversial issue.

For producer Don Floyd of the UA School of Renewable Natural Resources, writer-director Lynn Ketchum and videographer Joe Chitwood



of Agricultural Sciences Communications and SRNR graduate student David Jickling, telling the riparian story was a challenge. "Riparian" is hardly a household word. So, in hopes of visually defining the term, the producers set out to show the distinctive elements of riparian habitats and at the same time explain why the dwindling networks of green belts are critical to all who call the desert home.

During the fall and winter of 1986-87 the production crew criss-

"The Desert Oasis" is an extraordinary look at what a desert riparian zone really means to desert life.

crossed southern Arizona visiting the often picturesque riparian areas, and talking to the people who share an interest in the future of these special places...ranchers, conservationists, and biologists to name a few.

Pieced together, the thirty minute program offers more than a simple definition. "**The Desert Oasis**" is an extraordinary look at what a desert riparian zone really means to desert life. Viewers explore the lush, tree lined creek bottoms of Aravaipa Canyon—home to birds and native fish, the grasslands of Sonoita—where year-round grasses provide feed for cattle and antelope, and Ramsey Canyon in the Huachuca mountains—where its shady banks offer summer relief to both hummingbirds and hikers.

And there are other riparian zones, in surprising locations. In the urban corridors of Tucson, the producers found development threatening historic riparian areas along the Santa Cruz and Rillito Rivers and in the pop-

ular urban oasis—Sabino Canyon.

All are desert riparian habitats. Some provide water for cities and farms; others support livestock grazing and, in all cases, habitat for wildlife.

The television documentary makes clear the story of competition, in a day and age when growing demands and an unprecedented development threaten the very existence of a resource as precious as the desert riparian habitat.

Produced in cooperation with the Tucson PBS television station KUAT, "**The Desert Oasis**" has been broadcast in Tucson (where it was featured on the cover of the Arizona Daily Star's "TV Week"), in Phoenix on their local PBS station and this fall "**The Desert Oasis with Rex Allen**" will be made available to PBS stations nationally via satellite by the Pacific Mountain Network.

Although originally produced for the general television audience, the educational program also appeals to the classroom audience.

Surveyed environmental education teachers found the program to be a useful teaching tool. That same survey provided feedback that was incorporated into the design of a viewer's guide that accompanies VHS copies of the program.

The guide provides suggestions for classroom discussion and activities. The video and viewer's guide are an excellent supplement to general science, social studies, Arizona history and conservation classes.

A VHS copy of "**The Desert Oasis with Rex Allen**" and the complementary viewer's guide can be ordered by sending \$15.00 to:

The Extension Range Specialist
School of Renewable Natural
Resources
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721

—Lynn Ketchum

people's desires. When you start thinking about how intense that use might be ten or 15 years from now, that's pretty frightening," Gregg says.

Riparian Recreational Use

Steve Moore, a graduate student in the UA School of Renewable Natural Resources often finds himself up to his knees in the cold, clear water of Aravaipa Creek. Tucked between the steep walls of the Galiuro Mountains in Pinal and Graham counties, Aravaipa Canyon is a 6,000 acre wilderness managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The permanent creek is bordered by rows of cottonwood and walnut trees that turn a brilliant yellow in October.

"Balancing the demands of visitor use and visitor impact is an important part of wilderness management," Moore says. In fact, the graduate student adds, recreation is sometimes the most intensive use in a wilderness riparian area. With that in mind, Moore is working to find the best ways to protect the riparian resource from too much human use.

The scientist is involved in a comprehensive study of Aravaipa recreational users. By surveying individual hikers, Moore hopes to pinpoint what visitors want from their recreational experience. At the same time he hopes to learn more about how and to what extent recreational use impacts this sensitive riparian habitat. Once completed, Moore's findings will be made available to agencies concerned with managing the recreational use of riparian resources like Aravaipa Canyon.

Urban Habitats Important Too

As earthmovers and graders prepare a building site along the Rillito River, a cloud of dust rolls off the back tire of a dirt bike. Within Southwestern cities like Tucson, Phoenix and Albuquerque, the loss of riparian vegetation has become a serious problem.

Bill Shaw, a professor of wildlife and fisheries science in the UA School of Renewable Natural Resources has been researching the effects of habitat loss on wildlife in urban areas. Shaw says that as houses and commercial developments have increased in the



L.G. KETCHUM

During the last 100 years we have lost 90 percent of the remaining riparian habitat.

flood plains, local governments have been forced to protect property by altering the drainage systems. The concrete and soil cement have turned what was formerly important wildlife habitat into sterile pavement. Shaw and his graduate students are examining the effects of these riparian corridors on wildlife and working with local governments and developers to increase their sensitivity to the important remaining riparian habitat.

“There is a great deal of research on the biological system, but social science research on riparian zones is lacking,” says Professor Ervin Zube of the UA School of Renewable Natural Resources. Zube has been concentrating much of his recent research efforts on how urban and rural Arizonans perceive riparian zones like the San Pedro River and their many uses. In a study of southern Arizona’s San Pedro River conducted by Zube and David Simcox, the researchers found significant differences among local decision makers, real estate agents and resource management officials in attitudes towards appropriate and inappropriate land uses in and surrounding riparian zones. Since then Zube and graduate students Mike Hoffman and Steve Friedman have been doing more detailed research on how the upper San Pedro has changed and what it means to the people of the region.

The management of riparian areas to meet multiple use land management objectives will remain controversial in the coming years as our population increases and more users place additional demands on our limited river systems. Respect and cooperation among the various user groups will be essential.

For the researchers and Extension personnel at the UA School of Renewable Natural Resources, the challenge lies with finding ways to increase that cooperation among all riparian resource users. 

The afternoon sun backlights maple leaves along Cave Creek.