

The Quivira Coalition is proud to announce its
3rd Annual Burch Award Banquet

Saturday, January 17, 2004

Albuquerque, NM

The Hilton Hotel, Southwest Ballroom

Special guest speaker, **Ed Marston**, former editor of High Country News

**“Why Quivira Coalition Members Are the
Salt of the Earth and the Hope of the West.”**



Empire Ranch
Las Cienegas National Conservation Area
© Josh Schachter

AWARD RECIPIENTS:

***Sonoita Valley Planning
Partnership***

With special appreciation to those who have
made this partnership possible:

Karen Simms – BLM, Jesse Juen – BLM, Jeff
Williamson – Phoenix Zoo, AZ,
John & Mac Donaldson – Empire Ranch, AZ, Doug
Duncan – USFWS, AZ, and
Dan Robbinet – NRCS, AZ

The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP) is a voluntary ad hoc association of agencies, organized groups, and individuals who work together to achieve community-oriented solutions to local and national issues affecting public lands within the Sonoita Valley. In addition to federal, state, and local agencies, participants include representatives from organized groups like hiking clubs, conservation organizations, off-highway vehicle clubs, and mountain bike clubs, bird-dog clubs, and grazing and mining interests, as well as individuals from a variety of communities in southeastern Arizona.

The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership's mission is to work together to perpetuate naturally functioning ecosystems while preserving the rural, grassland character of the Sonoita Valley for future generations.

Cost: \$40 per person. For more information contact The Quivira Coalition at 505-820-2544.

Ed Marston is new to the Interior West, having come here with his family in the 1960s as a tourist and in 1974 to settle in Paonia, Colorado, a coal mining and agricultural town in western Colorado.

The former New York area physics professor and his wife, Betsy, a TV journalist and Emmy winner, founded a weekly newspaper in Paonia, pop. 1,400, which they ran from 1975 to 1980. They then founded a regional biweekly, *Western Colorado Report*, which they merged into *High Country News*, a regional environmental newspaper, in 1983.

With Ed as Publisher and Betsy as Editor, the Marstons ran HCN until 2002, raising circulation from 3,300 to 22,000 and revenue from \$100,000/year to \$1.5 million/year. Along the way, HCN launched a weekly radio program and an op-ed syndicate, *Writers on the Range*, which Betsy edits and which appears in 65 western newspapers with over 2 million readers.

Ed says the key to HCN's success during their two decades was curiosity: "HCN's staff and freelancers cared more about what was happening in the West than in following a specific ideology. Curiosity is supposed to kill the cat, but in our case it attracted a diverse and extremely supportive community of readers, for which we are everlastingly grateful." In addition to numerous physics papers, which he says he can no longer understand, he is the author or editor of several books, including *The Dynamic Environment*, *Western Water Made Simple*, *Reopening the Western Frontier*, and *Ranching West of the 100th Meridian*. His 35,000-word memoir of life in Paonia appears in *Colorado: 1870-2000*, by William Henry Jackson and John Fielder.

Overview

A unique, scenic area of open, rolling grasslands, the Sonoita Valley is a high desert basin located in the uppermost watersheds of three streams in southeast Arizona: the Babocomari River, Cienega Creek, and Sonoita Creek.

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Mission

The Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership will work together to perpetuate naturally functioning ecosystems while preserving the rural, grassland character of the Sonoita Valley for future generations.

Background

In 1995, Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Tucson Field Office decided to take a new, collaborative approach to completing the long-term land use planning needed to guide management of BLM-administered lands within what was then the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area (now Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and Sonoita Valley Acquisition Planning District). The intent was to do so with full public participation, an approach that resulted in formation of the SVPP.

Beginning in 1995, the SVPP held monthly meetings that were open to all interested participants. Discussions focused on issues relating to recreation, livestock grazing, mining, wildlife, vegetation, water quality and quantity, and cultural resources. The SVPP developed a shared vision, goals, and desired future conditions including specific objectives for the Sonoita Valley. They also reached consensus on a preferred series of alternative management strategies.

When a National Conservation Area designation was proposed for the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area in 1999, the legislation stated that the management plan for the National Conservation Area must be consistent with the desired conditions for the area developed through the SVPP process. Many SVPP participants subsequently joined the ranks of active supporters of the National Conservation Area, and worked with Congressman Jim Kolbe to draft and pass the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area Establishment Act, which was signed into law on December 6, 2000 ([See Las Cienegas National Conservation Area Legislation](#)).

Since then, SVPP, while continuing to support the completion of Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan, has also focused on development of a monitoring program for Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and Sonoita Valley Acquisition Planning District, and remains involved with complementary land use planning and conservation efforts. The Record of Decision for Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan was signed by the BLM Arizona State Director on July 25, 2003 ([See Bureau of Land Management Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision](#)).

What's Ahead

- The Sonoran Institute and the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership are researching a potential partnership with other groups in the region to help with funding the many implementation steps in Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan, including monitoring and education/outreach programs.
- The SVPP is working with BLM on prioritizing action items in the Resource Management Plan. Subgroups developed for future Resource Management Plan implementation include: recreation sites, transportation, education, vegetation, and monitoring. SVPP participants will be assisting BLM with developing a Funding and Implementation Strategy for the Resource Management Plan. The Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan implementation strategy has been chosen as a national pilot project for BLM plans nationwide.

Contact

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