

Open Space tax failure leads to new foundation By [Cindy Barks](#) at [Courier](#)

• Originally Published: October 15, 2016



One of the projects the City of Prescott is considering, with the open space money, is construction of a one-mile section of trail that would connect the Prescott Gateway Mall (south of Panera Bread) to the existing Prescott Circle Trail, located off Highway 69 in the Badger “P” Mountain area.

PRESCOTT — When Prescott voters rejected an open-space sales tax proposal in August 2015, local outdoors organizations were left to wonder where the money would come from for a variety of recreation-related improvements.

Their solution: A foundation dedicated solely to the area's outdoors.

The Greater Prescott Outdoor Fund recently got underway, bringing together interests such as open space, natural parklands, bicycle and pedestrian, trails, and education.

George Sheats, president of the foundation, said the effort has its roots in the City of Prescott's 0.08-percent open-space-acquisition-and-improvements measure, which went to voters in August 2015 and was rejected by a 56-to-44-percent margin.

"A lot of it (the outdoors foundation) was related to the fact that the sales tax didn't pass," Sheats said. "That would have paid for a lot of amenities like (trail) bridges and construction projects."

The foundation effort got underway in November 2015, Sheats said – just months after the August city primary.

The Prescott Recreation Service's fall 2016 newsletter states: "Through the years, Prescott Recreation Services Department has benefited from grants and volunteers to provide many of the amenities in the parks. Some of those groups have recently joined forces to combine fundraising efforts for larger projects that are beyond the ability of any one organization to accomplish."

Noting that the Greater Prescott Outdoors Fund is being administered through the Arizona Community Foundation/Yavapai County, Sheats said involvement of larger foundation allows for contributions through wills and endowments – something the smaller, individual organizations probably could not accommodate.

Currently, the foundation has a balance of about \$29,000 – accumulated largely through the contributions of involved non-profits such as Prescott Alternative Transportation, the Open Space Alliance of Central Yavapai County, and the Prescott Mountain Bike Alliance, as well as four individual donors.

While some open space money is still available through the City of Prescott's streets/open space sales tax (which expired this past year), Sheats noted that the sales tax money is limited to open space acquisition, and cannot go toward other related expenses.

The Recreation Services newsletter lists a number of those other costs, such as legal expenses, surveys, consultant studies, drainage, site modifications, dredging, tools and materials, parking lots, restrooms, bridges, walls, signs, kiosks, tables, bike racks, and maintenance.

"Providing great outdoors experiences is an expensive endeavor," the recreation newsletter states.

"With limited city budgets, these groups will provide the funds and volunteers that help make Prescott's parks and natural parklands a destination enjoyed by residents and the many outdoor enthusiasts who visit the city."

Tax-deductible contributions to the Greater Prescott Outdoors Fund can be mailed to: ACF of Yavapai County; 300 E. Willis St., #B; Prescott, AZ 86301. More information is available online at: www.azfoundation.org/Yavapai, and www.prescotttrails.com.