

Gila County



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NEWSLETTER



Gila County Observes “National County Government Month”

On **Tuesday, April 1**, the Gila County Board of Supervisors proclaimed April 2014 as National County Government Month (NCGM). The proclamation is in conjunction with various activities planned by Gila County to promote citizen awareness of services and programs available to them and to share educational displays and information.

Citizens are encouraged to attend the county-wide Open House at each of the Gila County complexes in Globe and Payson on **Monday, April 14**, to get information about each department, to take tours and to see various demonstrations.

Gila County will also have a booth at the Cobre Valley Regional Medical Center Health Fair on **Saturday, April 12** at 9:00 am. Information will be presented on Injury Prevention and representatives from WIC will also be present.

On **Tuesday, April 22**, winners for the Art Contest to Celebrate Earth Day will be announced. Students from all Gila County Schools must submit their art work with the theme “Recycling & the Environment” no later than April 18th to be eligible for a prize. The art work will be displayed in the Courthouse main lobby throughout the month of April.

Citizens are encouraged to visit the Globe Courthouse main lobby and the Payson Board of Supervisors office throughout April to obtain facts and information about County government at work.

CONSTRUCTION FOR ENHANCED SECURITY BEGINS AT COURTHOUSE

Construction began on February 24, 2014 on the Security Entrance to the Globe Courthouse and is expected to last for six weeks. This construction is the first phase of implementation of Controlled Public Access to the entire Courthouse building. Visitors to the Courthouse will encounter work in progress on the US 60/Ash Street-level front entrance, but will still be able to enter the building. However, the ramp providing handicapped accessibility to the front of the Courthouse will be temporarily unavailable. The alternate public handicapped entrance will be at the back of the Courthouse (south side) at the first floor entrance next to the Globe Regional Justice Court. While the Gila County Facilities Management Division and the Contractor will attempt to minimize any construction noise and interruptions in access, the public's patience is greatly appreciated during the project.

**COUNTY
HOLIDAY
CLOSURES**

Memorial Day:
Monday
May 26, 2014

**Independence
Day:**
Friday
July 4, 2014

Fire Season is Fast Approaching

Gila County is preparing for fire season as temperatures climb — and it's still only (officially) Spring. Winter precipitation was less than hoped for and the forests and deserts surrounding and encompassing our communities is dry. Citizens are encouraged to take early measures in the areas nearest their homes and businesses to clear out materials which could potentially provide fuel for a fast moving wildfire.

Gila County Public Works continues to maintain an impressive network of water sites placed in strategic and remote areas of the Tonto National Forest which are accessible to firefighters on the ground and in the air in the event of a fire.



DIP SITE PROGRAM

Steve Stratton, Gila County Public Works Director, recently discussed the County's water sites positioned in remote areas for use in fighting wild fires that his employees have worked so hard to establish and maintain:

"After reviewing the devastation and near bankruptcy the Rodeo-Chediski fire had on Navajo County, Gila County decided to take a proactive stance to prevent such an occurrence here.

When we reached out to the Forest Service, State Wild Land Fire and local Fire Districts for input, the following items surfaced as problems:

- *Lack of radio communication between agencies using different frequencies*
- *Equipment, such as hoses, that were not interchangeable between the agencies*
- *Lack of air support*
- *Lack of water for air support*

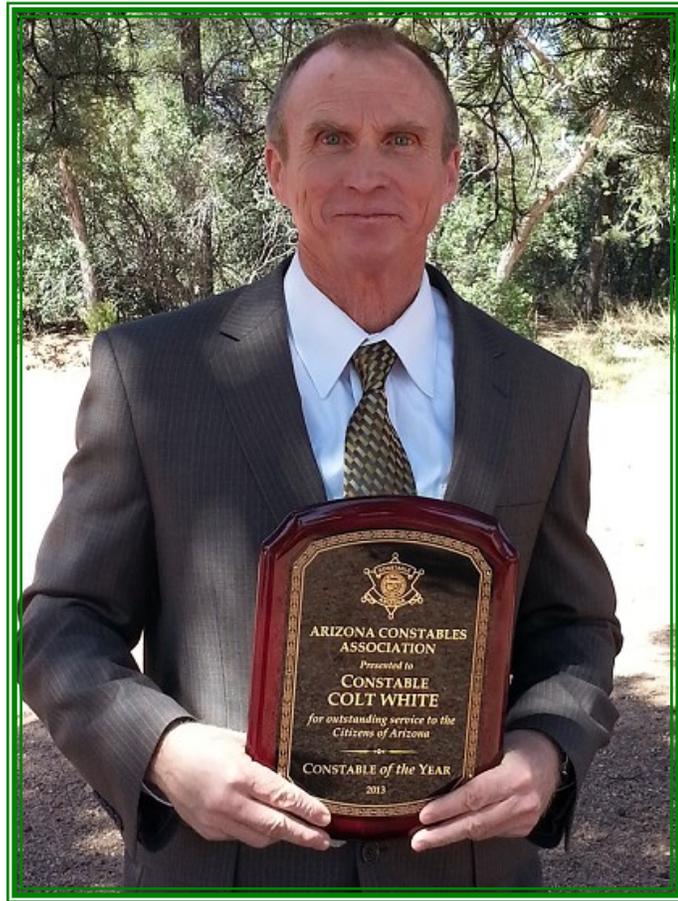
While these were not the only obstacles, they were the primary problems. Recognizing that 70% of the assessed valuation in Gila County lies in danger of devastation by fire, Gila County became the lead agency among the group. The solutions to the problems identified are as follows:

- *Gila County obligated \$75,000.00 for the purchase of radios with multiple and a common frequency for all of the entities.*
- *Gila County obligated funds for adapters for each agency or district to be able to adapt to any other districts' equipment.*
- *The Forest Service agreed to assign a helicopter to the Payson area if we could supply adequate water sites to reduce response time.*
- *Gila County agreed to supply "dip" sites for the helicopter.*

The "dip" sites were the most difficult and expensive to solve. What began as "Redneck" engineering has evolved into an intricate system of strategically placed dip sites which allow the helicopters to be effective. Gila County found and purchased some unused 10,000 gallon fuel bladders in a Pennsylvania surplus store that were left over from Operation Desert Storm. Gila County also had 2 lengths of 10' diameter metal culvert which were cut into even lengths and had a steel base welded to them making them a dip tank. The bladders are filled with water and inline pumps are used to transfer water from the bladders to the tanks. The helicopters can then "dip" from the tanks to replenish their water supply during a fire. In the first year we set up 6 dip sites but the project has grown to 23 sites with bladders and 8 additional unmanaged dip locations (such as ponds). We have now begun using 20,000 and 50,000 gallon bladders in order to supply multiple helicopters in the event of a large fire -- such as the Poco fire in 2013. The bladders are constantly being refilled during an event by responders from Gila County, 15 Fire Districts and Forest Service water tenders. The supply of water for the tenders comes from multiple pre-designated sites, some of which some are wells and others are Klein tanks set up near creeks or other water ways where pumps draft water to fill the Klein tanks.

Since the introduction of this unique system in 2006, Gila County has not had a catastrophic fire event, due in no small part to the ability of emergency responders to react quickly and efficiently using the water sites and averting a crisis."





COLT WHITE

“Constable of the Year—2013”

Colt White, in just his first term as Payson Regional Constable, has been chosen **Constable of the Year for 2013**, by the Arizona Constables Association. The Association has 86 member Constables from all across the state of Arizona. This honor not only reflects well on Colt, but also on the residents of Gila County who elected him.

Colt has lived in the Payson area for over 38 years and has had family in the Mogollon Rim area for over 50 years. He enjoys hunting, fishing, horseback riding and other outdoor activities with his family.

Colt has served his community in various ways over the years. He became a certified Police Officer and served as a reserve Police Officer for the Payson Police Department. Later he joined the Gila County Sheriff’s Office, also as a reserve Deputy, and then became a full time Deputy serving for more than 20 years in law enforcement.

What is *PILT*? Why is it important to Gila County?

The Payment in Lieu of Taxes program provides payments directly to counties and other local governments to offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of tax-exempt federal lands in their jurisdictions. The PILT Act was passed by the 94th Congress in October of 1976 and codified in Chapter 69 of Title 31 of the United States Code. The Act was amended in 1994 to compensate for the disparity between property values and the then-current PILT payments by using the consumer price index to adjust the population limitation and the per-acre dollar amounts. PILT reform occurred in 2008 modifying the program from a discretionary program (subject to annual appropriations) to a fully funded mandatory program — but only for a period of 5 years: FY2008—FY2012.

The uncertainty of PILT funding for FY 2013 had leaders from counties such as ours — with only 3% of private land upon which to generate tax revenue and fund essential county services — scrambling to communicate to lawmakers in Washington the dire consequences which could result from the loss of PILT. The impact to Gila County alone would have been \$3.2M for FY2013. Fortunately an 11th hour amendment to the 5-year farm bill restored funding for 2013/2014, but the fight begins anew for FY2014/2015 and beyond.

Counties are subject to a variety of negative impacts when large tracts of federal lands are unavailable for economic development and taxation. In addition, counties must provide services on these federal lands, such as law enforcement, search and rescue, emergency medical response, fire management and solid waste disposal. When all of these additional responsibilities are added to the traditional services provided by counties to their residents, the financial burden created by these federal lands is readily apparent.