

## 2023 Western Snow Conference Technical Tour

This year's Western Snow Conference Technical Tour will feature Sedona, Oak Creek Canyon, and Arizona's Red Rock country. Starting at 900am on Thursday, the tour will take us from Flagstaff, through Oak Creek Canyon, to Sedona. There will be more than one large capacity van. So, participants will be able to choose from two different tour options.

**Tour Option 1:** A light walk in the West Fork of Oak Creek, ADA accessible for the first mile, before spending the remainder of the day strolling around Sedona -gallery hopping, shopping and dining. This group will depart Sedona around 200pm and be back in Flagstaff by 300pm.

Oak Creek is a high value scenic asset and a pristine perennial stream supporting both a hatchery and a Blue Ribbon trout fishery. It is the setting for Zane Grey's popular western novel, Call of the Canyon. The creek and adjacent roadway, Scenic Highway 89A, are impacted during the summer months by high density recreational use. As a consequence, it suffers degradation to its riparian zones and water quality, primarily fecal coliform that often includes enough E. Coli provoke warnings and occasionally closures by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. Oak Creek is a headwater tributary to the Salt River. Its watershed and the Oak Creek Canyon channel are almost entirely within USDA Forest Service jurisdiction. Its surface and shallow aquifer waters are managed by the Salt River Project. The Arizona Department of Transportation manages the roadway for contaminants from snow and ice control operations and pedestrian-vehicle congestion in the summer. Coconino County provides (numerous) first response and rescue services throughout the year, especially in the summer. The Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Highway Patrol, provides enforcement on and adjacent the road and in the creek. On top of all that, a regional citizen's Oak Creek Watershed Council keeps it all in the news and swarming with volunteers. It's an intergovernmental, interagency, NGO and water utility planning challenge that high value domestic water resources tend to get focused on themselves these days.

**Tour Option 2:** A vigorous hike in Long Canyon, just outside Sedona, filled with Anasazi ruins and art. This sporty hike is about six (6) miles, roundtrip. After which we'll return to Sedona by about 300 pm, for a quick look around, a beverage and a snack, returning to Flagstaff by 500 pm.

The area around Sedona was once the home of the Anasazi, a pre-contact Native American culture, known to the modern Hopi as 'the Ancient Ones'. A severe drought in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century resulted in their forced and rapid out-migration. Prior to that, the Anasazi enjoyed a large sustainable population, food security, architecture, water management, art, mythology, religion, little pressure from warring tribes, and a highly evolved guild system for the division of labor and transmission of accumulated wisdom. We will hike about two miles up Long Canyon, where a variety of ruins and art panels can be scrambled to and seen. Amongst other ruins in Long Canyon is the Well of People. The heart of the Anasazi creation myth. Adjacent it is the Gate House and the crack that leads from it to the mysterious and isolated White World, above. Literally, a different and much lighter colored geologic unit (Kaibab Limestone) than the prevailing red (Navajo) sandstone, below, and purportedly the Anasazi's gateway to other worlds beyond our own. It's hard to miss that both the Ancient Ones, and modern shamans and spiritual channelers from all over this world find these powerful gateways and 'vortexes' (not vortices...) in such large numbers in and around Sedona. It just might leave you wondering.

**Transportation Considerations:** If you want to attend the tour and also want to try and make a late flight from Phoenix on Thursday evening, the Groome shuttle service that you may have used to get to Flagstaff also serves Phoenix (PHX) from Sedona. Those visiting and walking about Sedona could make a shuttle as early as 1200 noon and still enjoy the ride down Oak Creek Canyon and a walk in the West Fork. The Anasazi hiking tour could make a 400 pm or later shuttle in Sedona. Bring your luggage.