



Learning From Legos

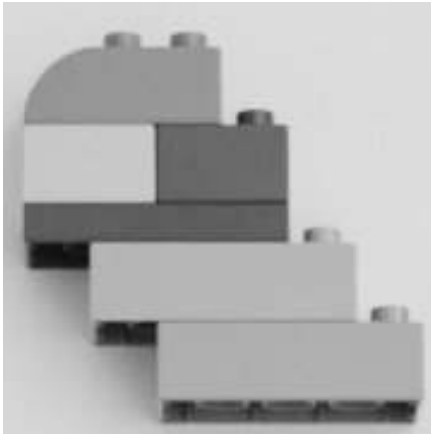
By Molly McCormick

Collaboration is key to increasing the resiliency and health of our watershed. I remember learning about collaboration around the Legos set as a kid. My brother Mike knew how to create the perfect stairs in the castle walls that I built. Created together, our structures had both style and function. Well, Borderlands Restoration has been playing with the Legos of landscape restoration with a group called the Sky Island Restoration Cooperative (SIRC). SIRC is a coalition of restoration practitioners, land managers, scientists, and private citizens, whose work spans the Borderlands region. We are like a family that shares skills, expensive tools, and even shovels to achieve a common goal of restoring ecological processes and systems.

The really awesome part is that, because we work together, we are more attractive to funders: not only do we share our Legos, but we increase our power to obtain more! Borderlands Restoration was directly involved in seven of this year's SIRC projects. I'll highlight some of these projects and talk a little about how we collaborate.

Borderlands headed up two watershed restoration projects by restoring physical processes and also created the walls of our Legos castle. These projects are Babocomari Ranch Restoration and Recharge and Harshaw Creek Restoration. After the monsoon rains at the Harshaw site, we observed a spring return to life and saw water running in the creek for an extended period, things that hadn't happened in recent memory. If we pair these observations with soil moisture and precipitation data taken by scientists with the US Geologic Survey, over time we should have a pic-

ture of how our structures are performing and whether these structures actually did bring a spring and the creek back to



life. This data can then be used to influence future watershed restoration efforts, in the hope of bringing back more springs and creeks with fewer resources.

SIRC has several projects focused on restoring food chains through habitat improvement, which are like the stairs that connect our Lego walls. We can work within watersheds, but linking these watershed projects across landscapes to actually improve habitat takes collaboration. Borderlands is involved with these SIRC habitat improvement projects: Monarch Waystations in National Parks, Sonoita Creek Wildlife Corridor Protection and Management, Chiricahua Leopard Frog Conservation, and Seed Collection in the Madrean Archipelago. These projects aim to increase forage and habitat for more critters, no matter where they roam.

Finally, I want to mention the power of community-based restoration. This is the amazing work coming from all of you, and that drives the work of SIRC. This is the whole reason we play Legos in the first place. It is impossible to overestimate the value of contributions made by our collective volunteers. In every project reported on, volunteers are swinging picks, dig-

ging holes, planting plants, building or geolocating check dams, and contributing good energy in a myriad of ways. Volunteers help us to understand what is possible through concerted, engaged action. So here's to a big family-sized group hug. Come play Legos with us!

To find out more and read SIRC's first annual report, visit www.BorderlandsRestoration.org, scroll over the Projects tab, and locate the Sky Island Restoration Cooperative (SIRC) page.

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What Are Today's Buyers Looking For In A Home?

Modest Floor Plans - Goodbye haciendas! Hello casitas! Statistic show that Americans are considering smaller homes. 32% are looking for homes between 1,400 to 2,000 square feet, 27% 2,000 to 2,600 square feet and 41% 2600 and above.

Organization and Comfort - The top amenities buyers are looking for are: Great Rooms, 9-foot-plus High Ceilings, Energy Efficient Appliances, Low E Windows Separate Shower and Tub in the Master Bathroom, Walk-in Closets in the Master Bedroom, Laundry Room, Linen Closet and Programmable Thermostats.

Smaller Price Tag - Nationwide home buyers have curbed their spending on homes. Today 45% are looking for homes below \$200,000, 31% are looking at between \$200,000-\$300,000, and 24% are spending \$300,000 and above.

Improved Energy Efficiency - Buyers want to create a smaller footprint and save on energy bills. They want homes with greener features like: Energy Efficient Heating/Cooling Systems, Energy Star Appliances, Efficient Design, More Natural Light, Extra Insulation, Double Pane Windows.



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