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MEDIA RELEASE

COTTONWOOD, Arizona (July 23, 2013) – Cottonwood is the first city or town in the State of Arizona to sponsor, support and participate in a water conservation program for all grades in the elementary and middle school divisions. On July 16, 2013 the City Council approved the implementation of a kindergarten through eighth grade conservation program for Verde Valley school children.

Working in cooperation with the Verde Natural Resource Conservation District (VNRCD) Education Center, a comprehensive water conservation program has been developed that will be implemented beginning in the fall of 2013. The kindergarten through fourth grade program entitled *Cottonwood Kids Conserve* is a classroom program designed for grades kindergarten through fourth grade in the Cottonwood Oak Creek School District (COCSD) that emphasizes the importance of conserving water. A total of 1650 students in the kindergarten through fourth grade will receive a conservation lesson four times each year. This program will emphasize four essential questions:

- 1) Where is water found on earth?
- 2) How does water get into and out of houses?
- 3) Why is it important to save and not waste water?
- 4) How can we conserve water?

The fifth through eighth grade water conservation education program is estimated to introduce about 1100 students in the COCSD to a different topic each year that is related to water and the importance of conserving water. The fifth grade program entitled *Connections* is designed to help students understand the physical properties of water and its connection to nature, the environment and humans. The sixth grade program entitled *Ground Water* is designed to teach students the link between groundwater and surface water by introducing them to the concept of a watershed and allowing them to interact with a groundwater model. The seventh grade program entitled *Top Ten Wanted Dead & Alive Species* teaches students about the economic, social and ecological impacts of native and invasive species in the Verde River watershed. The eighth grade program entitled *Properties of Water* teaches students how the health and quality of a river affects all water users including humans, agriculture, wildlife, and industry. The fifth through eighth grade classes are three day programs. The K through eighth grade water conservation program also includes a field trip each year for the second and seventh grade classes to Dead Horse Ranch State Park and Montezuma Well.

The VNRCD education center headed up by Lynda Zanolli will teach the water conservation classes in all nine grades. The COCSD is fully supportive of this program.

Superintendent Barbara U'Ren states, "We are very excited about this partnership between COCSD, VNRCD and the City of Cottonwood. This partnership demonstrates the value that our VNRCD and the City of Cottonwood places in educating students for solving issues of the

future. These learning experiences will last a lifetime and may open up new avenues for career exploration and will assist COCSD as we prepare students for the 21st century.”

The City of Cottonwood also sponsors an annual program called *Water Literacy for Kindergarteners*, a partnership with geologist and community volunteer Linda Heidenreich and COCSD. Kindergarteners spend several days touring the Cottonwood water and reclamation plants and visit the Verde River. The city also is a co-sponsor of the Verde Valley fourth grade Project WET program, held annually at Dead Horse Ranch State Park, and worked last year with the VNRCD and Zanolli on a second graders' conservation program.

Mayor Diane Joens states, "The Cottonwood City Council is pleased to collaborate with many partners who care about our children and the important topic of conservation. Conservation is one of the keys to our future water supply. Cottonwood's Natural Resources Director Tom Whitmer did a great job in creating this first-ever program with Ms. Zanolli. It will be a great model for other teachers and schools to use in the future."

For further information on this program contact Lynda Zanolli at 602-616-8557 or Tom Whitmer 928-340-2737.

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