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THE SMITHSONIAN'S *WATER/WAYS* IS COMING TO ARIZONA
*Rural Communities Invited to Apply and Host Traveling Exhibition Exploring Water's
Environmental And Cultural Impact*

From above, the earth appears as a water planet with more than 71 percent of its surface covered with this vital resource for life. Water impacts climate, agriculture, transportation, industry and more. It inspires art and music. Arizona Humanities and the Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives and School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University are pleased to bring to Arizona an exclusive tour of *Water/Ways*, a traveling Smithsonian exhibition. Twelve venues will host the *Water/Ways* exhibition beginning in 2018.

Host sites are invited to [apply](#) by March 1, 2017 to bring the *Water/Ways* exhibit to their community. *Water/Ways* is part of the Museum on Main Street program—a national/state/local partnership to bring exhibitions and programs to cultural organizations in rural areas of less than 20,000 residents. The exhibition will tour 12 communities in Arizona beginning in June 2018.

Water/Ways explores the endless motion of the water cycle, water's effect on landscape, settlement and migration, and its impact on culture and spirituality. It looks at political and economic efforts to ensure access to water, and explores how human creativity and resourcefulness provide new ways to protect water resources and renew our relationship with the natural environment

Brenda Thomson, Executive Director of Arizona Humanities shared, "We are proud and delighted to collaborate with ASU on *Water/Ways* because water holds special significance in Arizona. Living in a desert gives profound appreciation for the impact of the abundance and scarcity of water on living things. If I may quote W. H. Auden, 'Thousands have lived without love, not one without water.' It is more important now

than ever that we take the time to examine and learn about this vital natural resource, and the ways that our lives, our state and the world are shaped by water.”

Water/Ways is designed for small-town museums, libraries and cultural organizations; the exhibit will serve as a place to convene community conversations about water’s impact on American culture. With the support and guidance of staff at Arizona Humanities and scholars at Arizona State University, towns will develop complementary exhibits, host public programs and facilitate educational initiatives to raise people’s understanding about what water means culturally, socially and spiritually in their own community.

“All communities in Arizona are biologically and economically dependent upon precious and limited water supplies, yet only rarely do we take time to reflect on what water has meant to us culturally,” said Paul Hirt, *Water/Ways* State Scholar and History Professor at the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies. “When we do create interpretive exhibits about water, they are mainly available to urban dwellers with access to museums. Consequently, the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street program was designed to make world class exhibits available to smaller communities allowing them explore the relationship between nature and culture with the same richness offered by our urban cultural institutions.”

Water/Ways is part of the Smithsonian’s *Think Water* Initiative to raise awareness of water as a critical resource for life through exhibitions, educational resources and public programs. The public can participate in the conversation on social media at #thinkWater and #waterwaysAZ. *Water/Ways* is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress.

To learn more about *Water/Ways* in Arizona, please visit <http://www.azhumanities.org/water-ways/> or call Arizona Humanities staff at 602-257-0335. For questions regarding water history and local water story ideas, contact Dr. Paul Hirt at Paul.Hirt@asu.edu or 480-727-9084.

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Arizona Humanities

<http://www.azhumanities.org>

Mission: Arizona Humanities builds a just and civil society by creating opportunities to explore our shared human experiences through discussion, learning and reflection.

Arizona Humanities is a statewide 501(c)3 non-profit organization and the Arizona affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Since 1973, Arizona Humanities has supported public programs that promote understanding of the human experience with cultural, education, and non-profit organizations across Arizona.

Arizona State University

<http://www.asu.edu/>

Arizona State University, ranked No. 1 “Most Innovative School” in the nation by U.S. News & World Report for an unprecedented two years in succession, has forged the model for a New American University. ASU is a comprehensive public research institution measured, not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed, advancing research and discovery of public value and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves. ASU operates on the principle that learning is a personal and original journey for each student; that they thrive on experience, and the process of discovery cannot be bound by traditional academic disciplines. Through innovation and a commitment to accessibility, ASU has drawn pioneering researchers to its faculty even as it expands opportunities for qualified students, attracting some of the highest caliber students from all 50 states and 130 nations.