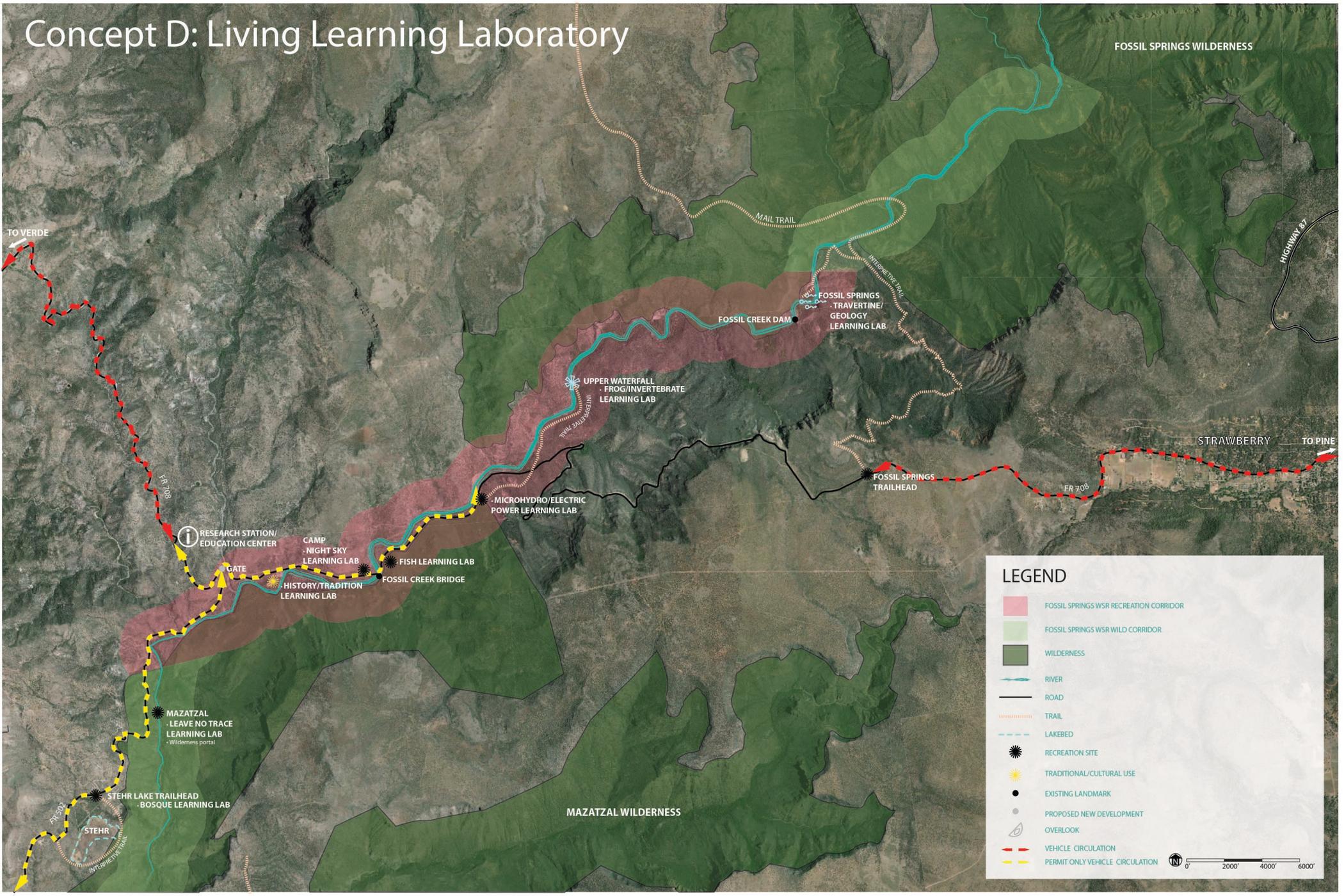


# Concept D: Living Learning Laboratory



### LEGEND

- FOSSIL SPRINGS WSR RECREATION CORRIDOR
- FOSSIL SPRINGS WSR WILD CORRIDOR
- WILDERNESS
- RIVER
- ROAD
- TRAIL
- LAKEBED
- \* RECREATION SITE
- \* TRADITIONAL/CULTURAL USE
- EXISTING LANDMARK
- PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENT
- ◐ OVERLOOK
- VEHICLE CIRCULATION
- PERMIT ONLY VEHICLE CIRCULATION

0' 2000' 4000' 6000'

## **Concept D: Fossil Creek Living Learning Laboratory**

Students of all ages and visitors would discover and learn first-hand about the natural processes and cultural features that make Fossil Creek special.

Fossil Creek would become a location for a premier environmental education learning experience. A variety of learning labs would be offered to students of all ages and visitors, and curriculum would include the history of the area, the natural processes that occur within Fossil Creek, the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of this federally designated Wild and Scenic River (WSR), and information about the federally designated Wilderness areas that surround parts of the river corridor. The objective would be that students and visitors would learn to value our natural resources, thus developing a stewardship ethic, and understanding the importance to ensure natural areas for present and future generations. This concept would protect both the free-flowing condition of the river, and the ORVs (wildlife, fish and aquatics, geology, recreation, water, and history and traditional uses) it possesses.

### **Vehicle Circulation and Trails**

Vehicles would approach the river corridor via FR 708 from Camp Verde. They would park at the Research Station/Education Center (located about a mile northwest of the FR 502 junction), where student groups, researchers, and guided tours would check in for their visit. Backpackers would also stop here to register for or confirm their backcountry permit. There would be a gate at the junction of FR 708 and FR 502, so access to FR 502 would be by permit only, and primarily for river trips. Reservations, permits and associated fees for all activities would be required in advance. Transportation between the different learning labs in the middle Fossil Creek corridor (FR 708 east of FR 502 junction) would be by bicycle, bus and/or electric van. Only administrative access for the learning lab groups would be allowed along FR 708 west from Pine and Strawberry, and only up to Fossil Springs trailhead (access point for one of the learning labs). Visitors could access surrounding wilderness areas via the Mail Trail (no permit required because the trailhead is at SR 260) and the Mazatzal Recreation Site (permit required because it is within the Fossil Creek corridor). There would also be three interpretive trails: Fossil Springs trail, Upper Waterfall trail, and Stehr Lake interpretive loop trail.

**Program**

The geology/travertine learning lab would take place near Fossil Springs, and be accessed via FR 708 west from Pine and Strawberry. The frog/invertebrates learning lab would take place near the upper waterfall, and accessed via an interpretive trail that starts near Irving Waterfall. The micro-hydropower/water processes learning lab would occur near the low water crossing, and the aquatic species (fish) learning lab would occur near the Fossil Creek Bridge. The night sky and nocturnal species learning lab would take place at the Camp, and the history and traditional uses learning lab would occur at Homestead. The Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers and Leave No Trace learning lab would take place at the Mazatzal Recreation Site, and the bosque habitat, birds and wildlife learning lab would occur at Stehr Lake.

**Facilities and Activities**

The Research Station/Education Center would be a permanent facility, and would have toilets and parking available. The Camp would provide student groups (and researchers) an option to stay overnight (or multiple nights) in order to take full advantage of all the educational programs offered. It would be a low development canvas tent camp site, with moveable facilities (including portable toilets) and limited parking. Available activities may include environmental education related snorkeling, wading, fishing, viewing scenery, hiking, wildlife viewing and bird watching, plant identification, kayaking, limited camping and wilderness self-reliance.