

Comments from Lisa: Friends of the River Verde

Before Version:

- Good address block, allows enough room for corporate donations
- Good personalization
- Good to say where gift will be used
- Good, healthy 1” margins all around
- Good ‘none of this would be possible without you’, but it comes at the end of a fairly complex and we-heavy sentence. You want to keep the focus on the donor when possible, and keep sentences simpler.
- Format and page architecture:
 - Suggest using serif font for print
 - Suggest setting font set to between 12-14 point type size (not less than 12)
 - Suggest tabbing your paragraphs:
 - Block format suggests business relationship and also makes it harder for the eye to distinguish between one thought and the next. Tabbing your paragraphs also creates more air in the letter, making it more inviting
 - Suggest eliminating bulleted points, which make the letter less personal/conversational
 - Suggest eliminating the big statistics - the brain boggles at this and also makes it seem as if my \$25 isn’t as urgently needed. Good to put big statistics in context or bring them down to size in a newsletter - infographics, for example, are perfect for this (again in a newsletter).
 - The only time I might include acres preserved, for example, was if it was for a specific appeal - say, you had a goal to purchase 2,000 acres of riparian habitat in a specific location. This would be good to say something like, “We did it! All 2,000 acres preserved forever thanks to you.”
- Readability:
 - Suggest running your communications through the Hemingway App (www.hemingwayapp.com). I do, for all of my work. Your before letter read at a Grade 12. We always suggest Grade 8 or below, most of my thank you letters read between a grade 4 and a grade 6. Lower grade level keeps people reading longer and remembering more. Grade 12 means there are a lot of complex sentences - in this case Hemingway felt that most of the sentences were very hard to read.
 - Suggest weighting the letter more towards “you/your” (aka you the donor) vs “we/our” (aka we, the charity). Thank-yous, and donor communications in general, are always about what the donor makes possible
 - Beware jargon. Words like “collaborative,” “innovative,” it’s not that these are bad words but every nonprofit under the sun uses them. 😊 Sentences like “We are excited to continually broaden our communities’

connection...” - you want to bring these down to a personal, emotional level.

- Contact:
 - Make sure you tell them what’s coming next, how to reach you, and include an invitation to engage further if you can. I did this in the P.S. (It’s a bit tight on space but I think you’ll be okay.)

After Version:

- My after version reads at a Grade 6 level. Note simpler sentences.
- Lead sentence - I almost always suggest starting with something engaging and beautiful, to draw the reader into your thank-you; something other than “Thank you” (and never “On behalf of”).
 - Note: much of this was copy was adapted from that glorious storymap on your website “Oasis in the Desert.” SO wonderful!!!
- Tabbed paras, serif 12 point font. Short paragraphs overall.
- Uses a unique, passionate closing (“Long may the river run,” vs “Sincerely”)
- Bullets and jargon eliminated, but still clear what the gift is doing: you spark brave new ventures, keep river flows sustainable, keep millions of gallons in the river (this is my only ‘big number’), etc.
- You vs we weighting:
 - 23 instances of you/your
 - 2 instances of we/our
- Makes clear when donor will hear back next and how to contact Friends if they need to, also invites them to explore the website and volunteer.
- Tax footer: warmed this up just a tiny bit.



Sue Smith
Business
P. O. Box 12345
Cornville, AZ 86325

Dear Sue,

Thank you for your contribution in support of the work of Friends of the Verde River.

Your gift of \$ XXX will be used to support our programs to restore habitat, sustain flow and promote community stewardship across the Verde Watershed. As one of Arizona last perennial rivers, the Verde River supplies habitat for wildlife, adds to the quality of life throughout the Verde Valley, and provides drinking water to millions in the metro Phoenix area. It is an environmental treasure for us all.

This year, we continue our collaborative efforts to restore riparian habitat through the Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition, find new and innovative ways to preserve river and stream flow through the Verde River Exchange and the Land and Water Management Toolbox, and involve our whole community in conservation efforts through One for the Verde and volunteering. Without you, none of this would be possible. Here are some facts and figures from last year:

- **One for the Verde** granted \$13,500 to four community-based conservation projects across the Verde Watershed.
- The **Verde River Exchange** implemented four additional water offset credit partnerships, keeping roughly 2,998,000 gallons of water in the Verde River.
- **Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition** restored 8,261 acres of riparian habitat over the last five years.

We are excited to continually broaden our communities' connection with the Verde River, and are appreciative that we can count you as one of our partners.

Sincerely,



Nancy L. C. Steele
Executive Director

Friends of Verde River Greenway is a registered 501 (c) 3. Your gift to Friends is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please retain this letter for your files as a record of your gift. No goods or services were provided in exchanged for this gift.





Sue Smith
Business
P. O. Box 12345
Cornville, AZ 86325

Dear Sue,

<< Date >>

It bubbles out of the ground in the Big Chino Wash near Paulden... meanders past the timeless gaze of piñon-juniper, the whisper of willows, and majestic, nesting bald eagles...

... Wild and free for more than one hundred miles, the Verde River will flow to the Sonoran Desert as a direct result of your recent and generous support.

Thank you for your kind donation of <<\$XXX.00>> to support the work of the Friends of the Verde River. This quest to protect and restore the Verde — one of Arizona's last flowing river systems — continues today because of you.

And it is a big job you do, in defending the Verde.

You are restoring thousands of acres of river habitat, year by year. You touch the sad reaches where mining, agriculture, and ranching have left the river crying out for help.

In places like Clarkdale, Cottonwood, and the Yavapai-Apache Nation, you are fighting to keep river flows sustainable. You spark brave ventures like the Verde River Exchange's water offset credits that now keep millions of gallons in the river. You bring people together, too, rallying volunteers through One for the Verde's community-based conservation projects.

Yes, the river still needs you. But on this day, as it bubbles out of the ground from its very source, the grateful heart of the Verde belongs to you. **Thank you so much for giving.**

Long may the river run,

Nancy L. C. Steele
Executive Director

P.S. To update you on all you make possible, you will receive the Friends' supporter newsletter, *Currents & Flow*. I also hope you'll visit our website for resources like paddle guides and ways you can volunteer. Last but not least, we're a phone call away if you have questions — you'll find contact information listed below. Thank you again for protecting the Verde.

PHONE (928) 641-6013 P. O. Box 2535, Cottonwood, AZ 86326 www.VerdeRiver.org





Please help keep Arizona beautiful by saving this letter as your gift receipt.
It confirms no goods or services were provided in exchange for your kind donation.
Friends of Verde River Greenway is a registered 501(c)3, so your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you!

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