



Aglow in the Sun, Granite Dells at Left, Glassford Hill in Center

**SAVE THE DELLS’  
Position in Favor of the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve  
and Opposed to the Proposed Sundog Connector  
March 2023**

Save the Dells started as the grassroots effort of Prescott-area residents committed to preserving the iconic Granite Dells landscape as permanently protected public open space to benefit our quality of life, our community, wildlife, and our economy.

One of Save the Dells’ original goals was the creation of the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve, which would include the land on and around Glassford Hill.

The Sundog Connector would be a 100-foot-wide highway on the southern shoulder of Glassford Hill, proposed to connect Prescott Lakes Parkway near State Route (SR) 89 in Prescott to SR 69 in Prescott Valley. It would pass through part of the expanding Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve, compromising the natural experience and negatively impacting ecosystems and wildlife, including our greatly diminished local Pronghorn population. This new road would bypass important local Prescott and Tribal businesses and open more adjacent land to development.

Despite past and current strong public opposition and lack of funding, planning for this project is still moving forward.

The Central Yavapai Metropolitan Planning Organization (CYMPO) acknowledged in the 2013 Sundog Connector Corridor Study Report that responses from the public “suggested strong support for a ‘no-build’ alternative,” and there is mounting current opposition. Why is this project still moving forward in the face of past and current public resistance?

We are FOR the Park and Preserve and AGAINST the proposed Sundog Connector.

**THIS IS NO PLACE FOR A ROAD. The land proposed for building the Connector should be nothing but a part of the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve.**

**Save the Dells opposes the building of the Sundog Connector for the following reasons.**

**1. We are FOR the park. The impact of building and the presence of the Sundog Connector would negatively affect the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve.**

- Glassford Hill is a prominent volcanic landmark located between Prescott and Prescott Valley. It includes important ecosystems and habitat for a variety of wildlife including the endangered local group of Pronghorns. Its history includes serving as a site for communication, which continues today.
- Since 1997, the City of Prescott and the Town of Prescott Valley have been moving toward protection of Glassford Hill, including the exact areas proposed as routes for the Sundog Connector.
- In 2022, Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Yavapai County signed an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to purchase Arizona State Trust Lands located on and around Glassford Hill that will add to the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve.
- This proposed highway would make these lands more desirable to developers. We are concerned that potential developers might outbid the IGA entities for the purchase of this land.
- State House Bill 2518 is moving through the Arizona State Legislature, which would provide \$3.5 million in matching funds to help purchase Arizona State Trust Land on and around Glassford Hill.
- Grading, scarring, destruction of habitat, disruption of wildlife movements, and negative visual and noise effects are unacceptable in this area which is planned for a park and preserve.
- Ecotourism is a growth industry that brings economic benefit to the area. The proposed Connector would be in conflict with ecotourism in the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve.
- Any aspect of the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve, such as trailhead access, should not be used as a pretext for building a 100-foot-wide highway.

**2. The Sundog Connector would be a major barrier to safe wildlife movement and negatively impact ecosystems in the region.**

- History suggests that the Sundog Connector would not be constructed any more wisely with respect to wildlife corridors than previous projects. For example, SR 69 has absolutely zero intentional wildlife corridor crossings; this has led to many serious wildlife-motor vehicle collisions. It is unacceptable to continue to endanger our wildlife and motorists. We think potential funding for protecting wildlife should be channeled to SR 69 widening and improvement instead of building yet another barrier to safe wildlife passage.
- Grassland bird, mammal, reptile, and plant species already under stress from other mass-grading and road building in the region will decline if the Sundog Connector is constructed.

**3. Businesses on the SR 69 corridor will experience reduced traffic.**

- The Sundog Connector would bypass an important City of Prescott and Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe economic corridor on SR 69.
- Thirty percent of the City of Prescott's tax revenue is generated in this corridor.

#### **4. Funding and taxation will fall upon the citizens of Prescott.**

- The proposed 1.5 miles of two-lane road through the planned South Storm subdivision addressed in the Development Agreement with the City of Prescott, is the responsibility of the developer and is outside of CYMPO's responsibility. However, if the Sundog Connector were approved, this section would be expanded to four lanes plus a median and turning lanes, and Prescott taxpayers would be responsible for paying for the widening and maintenance. The cost of construction and maintenance of the remaining two miles of the Sundog Connector Highway on the State Trust Lands would also fall on the tax
- We support fiscal responsibility and think that seeking government grants for ill- advised, unpopular projects is a bad idea.
- If funding became available, these monies should be funneled to SR69 improvements and never to build the Connector.

#### **5. The 2013 Sundog Connector Corridor Study benchmarks have not been met.**

- The 2013 study recommended (1) a population increase in the Quad City area to 232,700, and (2) SR 69 widening, traffic studies, and other improvements, before the next steps toward the Sundog Connector would advance. These benchmarks have not been met.
- From that study, the recommended projected year to re-examine the Sundog Connector option is 2033.

#### **6. The building of the Sundog Connector would exacerbate the already serious situation of growth and development endangering our water security.**

##### *Water*

- Building the Connector would introduce the potential for the construction of an estimated 4,000 homes with associated water needs.
- As outlined in the 2022 Prescott Water Resources Policy, water usage must be carefully managed for the future with respect to declining water levels in our aquifers and to protect the flow of the Upper Verde River.
- Due to the massive amounts of excavation and grading, water drainage cannot be managed without significant negative impact on the adjacent landscape.

##### *Growth and development*

- Communities of all sizes across the country are using creative strategies, such as Smart Growth, to develop in ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas and protect water resources. The resulting high quality of life makes these communities economically competitive, creates business opportunities, and strengthens the local tax base.
- We oppose the use of taxpayer funds (local, state, and/or federal) to promote private development made possible through building the Sundog Connector.
- We oppose the damage to ecosystems and viewsapes resulting from scarring and mass-grading, which would be an ugly consequence of building the Connector and any related potential development.

- The identified area of population expansion is in North Prescott. That's where transportation enhancements should be prioritized, as it would benefit Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Chino Valley.

**7. The benefits of the Connector related to reduced traffic congestion are inflated.**

- Any projected improvement in travel time between Prescott and Prescott Valley would be temporary, soon negated by higher traffic on the Connector because of the potential development of lands on Glassford Hill.
- Building the Connector would do nothing to relieve traffic on the most congested part of SR 69, which is farther toward Prescott Valley.
- Studies have estimated that only about 7% of traffic would be diverted from SR 69.
- SR 69 problems cited as justification for the Connector can be addressed by improved signal-management, lane expansion, creative traffic management, frontage road crossings, and, of course, safe and well-designed wildlife corridors.

**8. The Sundog Connector would negatively impact our quality of life and economic development we seek through ecotourism.**

- The Connector and its associated excavations would further blemish our attractive area and give yet another unfavorable impression to visitors.
- We support healing of hillside and hilltop construction scars, not the creation of more.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

The benefits of the creation of the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve and protecting Glassford Hill as part of the park are clear. The negative impacts of the Sundog Connector on this regional park are also clear.

Protecting and expanding the Granite Dells Regional Park and Preserve is the undeniable choice.

**THIS IS NO PLACE FOR A ROAD**  
**Not everything that *can* be built *should* be built.**