

2005

COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST

Report to the Stakeholders



Dear Coconino National Forest Friends, Visitors, and Neighbors:

This past year marked the 100 year anniversary of the Forest Service. National Forest management has certainly changed since 1905. A hundred years ago, rangers were required to obtain horses, pack animals and equipment at their own expense and be self-sufficient under trying conditions for several days. Their primary duties included mapping the national forests, administering sheep and cattle permits, and protecting the forests from wildfire. Today on the Coconino National Forest, though forest rangers still protect natural resources, their duties also include everything from managing recreation areas to eradicating marijuana plots. It is important that we continue to work with our forest users to make the next 100 years of forest management as successful as it is today.

This year's Report to the Stakeholders highlights endeavors that commemorated the Forest Service's 100 years. Centennial Service Projects included the Anderson Mesa Restoration, the Lime Kiln Trail, and the Mogollon Rim Trail projects. In addition, you will find articles about fuels reduction and forest achievements on each of our four districts. These include projects focused on restoring the natural beauty of the Coconino National Forest for future generations to enjoy.

National Forests were created in 1905 not to protect the land from the people but to manage it for the people. Continuing with tradition, in 2006 we will encourage public comment and participation in the development of several management plans that will affect our forest for years to come. These include the Forest Plan Revision, implementation of the National Travel Management Policy, Arizona's Five-Forest Off-Highway Vehicles project, and Recreation Sites Facilities Master Planning.

This past year was exceptionally challenging and it is with great pride that I acknowledge the employees on the Coconino National Forest. Their dedication and hard work surpassed expectation, as is evident in the numerous successful accomplishments of the year. The efforts put forth by the forest employees and the well-appreciated support and involvement of the Northern Arizona community exemplify the type of cooperation necessary to efficiently manage our public resources—a cooperation that should be commended. I look forward to another year of working with you to care for the land and serve people.



Nora Rasure

Nora Rasure
Forest Supervisor





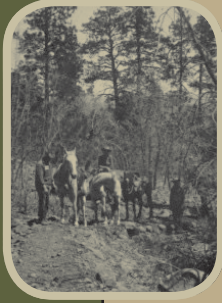
CELEBRATING OUR CENTENNIAL YEAR

This year the Coconino National Forest made great strides in maintaining the beautiful land of Northern Arizona. In honor of the 100-year anniversary of the Forest Service, Centennial Service Projects were implemented on the Mogollon Rim, Mormon Lake, and the Red Rock Ranger Districts. Though each project was a unique challenge, they all shared the same mission: to sustain healthy, diverse, and productive forests and grasslands for present and future generations.

Anderson Mesa Grassland Restoration Project

Located on the Mormon Lake Ranger District, this project targeted the removal of invasive juniper trees to restore proper function of the Anderson Mesa Grassland. Removing this invasive species will help to return the area to a native grassland habitat. The existing watershed on the mesa as well as the soil and watershed function within Canyon Diablo and Jacks Canyon will improve because of the reduced competition between trees and grasses. Restoring this area will also improve habitat conditions for the pronghorn antelope, a focal species on the mesa.

Treatments this year were the products of a long-term partnership between the Forest



FUELS REDUCTION

For many years the Southwestern Region has experienced extreme drought, tree fatality from bark beetle infestation, and the accumulation of forest fuels. If precautions are not taken, these conditions could cause catastrophic wildfire. The most effective methods of forest restoration are thinning and prescribed burns. Thinning is the process of mechanically removing trees from dense forest areas. Prescribed burning usually follows by thinning and involves trained crews who apply fire to an area in order to mimic the natural fire regime which occurred before human settlement. When these methods are used together, fire managers are able to reduce the accumulation of forest fuels and safely introduce fire to the ecosystem. This process helps regenerate soils, trees and new habitats for existing wildlife. The life cycle of a forest greatly depends on fire to maintain the population of plants and trees and create a healthy environment rich in soil and minerals.

On the Coconino National Forest, fire managers have been actively reducing fuels. Fuels reduction not only creates a healthier forest, but also protects our communities from a devastating wildfire. Our fuels reduction continues to take place within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), the area where the forest meets the community, and we will continue to focus our efforts throughout the upcoming year.

This year alone, fire managers have



STAY INFORMED
Visit our website for updates and information about current and upcoming prescribed fires.
www.coconinoforest.us

Service and other groups whose aims were to treat over 60,000 acres across Anderson Mesa. Organizations involved in this project include Arizona Antelope Foundation, the Diablo Trust, and the Coconino Rural Environmental Corp (CREC).

In addition, funding from the Arizona Game and Fish Department made it possible to use volunteer labor and partnership agreements to accomplish on-the-ground projects and ultimately increase the number of acres that were treated.

The Lime Kiln Trail Project

Restoring the historic Lime Kiln Trail on the Red Rock Ranger District was the focus of this project. Stretching from the Dead Horse Ranch State Park to Sedona, the trail passes its namesake, the historic lime kiln, which was used by early residents to build brick houses. Today, those houses are part of Old Town Cottonwood.

This project included finding remnants of the old abandoned wagon road, about 14 miles in length. It was used by pioneers from the red rock country to trade fruit, wood, and agricultural items in the bustling community of Jerome.

To make this trail accessible to all recreationists, the Red Rock Ranger District along with Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) installed a large culvert along Highway

89 to create a safe passageway under the busy highway. Organizations that participated in this project: Yavapi County, Arizona State Parks, CREC, Adventure Discovery Crew, Dead Horse Ranch Trail Coalition, and the Town of Clarkdale. Currently there are two miles of the trail yet to be completed, and although this section is the toughest due to the steep, rocky terrain, it is expected to be finished by April 2006. Two more trailheads also need to be added, therefore the project is expected to be finalized within the next four years.

Mogollon Rim Trail Project

The project on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District involved re-routing and rehabilitating the 16.25 miles of the Mogollon Rim Trail, a very popular route for hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers. Improving this trail system will benefit existing watersheds by reducing the amount of soil movement, off-trail hiking, and water channeling. By maintaining and properly routing this popular trail, we were able to create safe and enjoyable conditions for future recreationists.

Organizations involved in this project include the Arizona Trail Association, Boy Scouts of America, a church youth group and CREC. This project was completed at the end of 2005.

Supervisor Nora Rasure's decision in May 2005.

It went to trial October 2005 in Federal District Court in Prescott, AZ. District Court Judge Paul G. Rosenblatt announced his ruling January 11, 2006 that the Forest Service met all procedural requirements for the approval of the project, upholding Rasure's decision to authorize upgrades at the Arizona Snowbowl.

Priest Draw Aspen Protection Project

Aspen trees have declined steadily on the Coconino National Forest over the past 50 years. This can be attributed to increasing drought, fire suppression and the large population of elk. The Priest Draw project involves thinning ponderosa pine from aspen stands and fencing existing aspen trees within a given area. The major decline of aspen in lower elevations can also be linked to defoliation by a severe frost which occurred in early June 1999. The current conditions of the Priest Draw area include reduced crown canopies, high tree mortality, encroachment of ponderosa pine, and browsing damage from elk and other species. This project was complete during the winter of 2005.

Anderson Mesa Landscape Scale Assessment

This assessment was a collaborative effort between the Forest Service and local agencies to review the current and desired conditions of Anderson Mesa. A group of citizens examined and documented issues concerning wildlife, vegetation, riparian and wetland areas, and recreation and transportation in the Hay Lake area. Suggestions from the final document have been carried forward in several projects on the mesa. These projects include restoring grasslands around Cow Lake and proposed wetland exclosures on the Bar-T-Bar and Anderson Springs Allotments.



ADOPT AN ASPEN FENCE!
For information on this program, contact
Patty Ringle for the Peaks Ranger District
(928) 527-8285

completed 4,514 acres of WUI thinning and burning to protect these vulnerable neighborhoods, and although we will take all possible measures to reduce smoke impacts, we also appreciate the patience and understanding of the residents who may be affected.

DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Arizona Snowbowl Improvement Project

Coconino National Forest Supervisor Nora Rasure has approved snowmaking using reclaimed water as well as other improvements at the Arizona Snowbowl located north of Flagstaff, Arizona. The ski area is located entirely on National Forest land and is operated under a special use permit on 777 acres (approximately one percent of the San Francisco Peaks). The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was released March 8, 2005. The project was appealed and Regional Forester Harv Forsgren upheld Forest

Munds Park Roads and Trails

This project focused on the development of road and trail systems for uses of the forest area surrounding the Munds Park community. During the summer of 2005, the district worked with the Munds Park Trail Stewards to implement the project. Work included the construction of a new motorized trail off Janice Place that routes motorized traffic away from adjacent homes. In addition, Forest Service employees and Munds Park volunteers reconstructed the trailhead fence at Forest Road 240 to ensure public compliance with seasonal road closures.

To continue construction in 2006, the Forest Service will utilize a \$50,000 grant from the Arizona State Parks and Federal Highway Administration Recreational Trails Program Motorized Grant fund.

Thinning and Burning in the Wildland-Urban Interface around Flagstaff

One of Coconino National Forest's priorities is to plan and implement forest restoration projects around Greater Flagstaff. In nearly every case, thinning densely forested areas is necessary in maintaining forest health, and reducing the risk of catastrophic fire. The various thinning projects in the WUI were planned and are being conducted in cooperation with the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP). These include the Fort Valley, Kachina Village, Mountainair, Woody Ridge, Mount Elden, The Arboretum, and the Eastside projects.

After Phase One of the Fort Valley Forest Restoration Project, Phase Two will be offered as a stewardship contract this year.

The Kachina Village Forest Health Restoration Project is in progress and is expected to be completed within the next year.



The Eastside project is being planned through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This planning process is also expected to be completed within the next year.

Red Rock/ Verde Valley Administration Site

The Coconino and Prescott National Forests are coordinating a project to develop two new administrative sites in the Verde Valley. The Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000 gave the Forest Service legislative authority to sell the existing Sedona and Camp Verde administrative sites. The proceeds from these sales will be used to develop new administrative facilities. The new Red Rock Ranger Station will be located one mile south of the Village of Oak Creek and the Verde Valley Ranger Station will remain in the town of Camp Verde either on the existing site or at a new

WHERE DO I GO NOW?

After leaving their current location, while the new facility is under construction, employees of the Red Rock Ranger District Office will be working out of the old Beaver Creek office—1.5 miles SE of I-17 on SR 179. Stay tuned for dates and details.

site on Middle Verde Road.

Groundbreaking for the new Red Rock Station should take place in the summer of 2006. The sale of the Verde Valley property and plans for its replacement are expected to occur that same season.

Bar T Bar/ Anderson Springs Allotment Management Plan

Incorporating recommendations from the Diablo Trust, the Coconino National Forest developed a comprehensive plan that permits livestock grazing on the Bar T Bar and Anderson Springs Allotments for a 10-year period. It will also address vegetation management and wildlife habitat needs.

Following the review of this proposed action, an alternative that will incorporate site-specific details is now being implemented. Fences were already constructed at Cow and Yeager Lakes, and funding is being provided to build three stock tanks to replace water for wetland fences in the spring and summer of 2006.

Lowell Observatory's Discovery Channel Telescope

A special-use permit has been approved for Lowell Observatory to build a new facility and telescope to expand research capacity. The new observatory will be built north of Happy Jack along Forest Highway 3 to accommodate the fifth largest telescope in the Continental U.S. This site offers unique conditions necessary for astronomical research with dark skies and obstruction-free views. In fact, very few sites within the continental U.S. possess the characteristics that would justify the cost of building and operating this telescope. The NEPA process of this project is complete and construction is underway.

Smashed Cars Used to Renovate

Campgrounds

The Mogollon Rim has two newly renovated facilities: The Blue Ridge and Rock Crossing Campgrounds. New tent pads, grills and picnic tables were constructed with Impact Post, a Canadian based product. This unique and environmentally safe product is formed from whole vehicles, smashed and condensed into a powder form. The Coconino National Forest and Inter Mountain West Civil Constructors, Inc. worked together to fully refurbish both campgrounds. Work schedules were timed to avoid disturbing the Mexican Spotted Owl (an endangered species) during breeding season.

Fossil Creek Fish Restoration

Native Arizona fish are among the most endangered aquatic species in the country. In addition to living in a region with little water, Arizona's native fish have withstood significant impacts to their habitat for decades. More recently, native species are increasingly

threatened by the presence and spread of non-native aquatic animals. The Fossil Creek Fish Restoration Project, located on the border of the Coconino and Tonto National Forests, represents a successful collaboration between Arizona Public Service, environmental groups, Native American Tribes, educational institutions, and numerous state and federal agencies.

This project is comprised of three activities: native fish restoration, hydroelectric facility decommissioning, and research and monitoring.

A fish barrier was built in the Lower Fossil Creek area. The removal of non-native fish began and native fish were reintroduced. Decommissioning of the Childs and Irving Powerplants will continue through December 2009. Native fish in Fossil Creek include headwater chub, roundtail chub, speckled dace, Sonora sucker, and Desert sucker.

REMEMBER!!

Fossil Creek is closed to fishing until 2007. Contact your local Game and Fish office for more information.

RED ROCK PASS

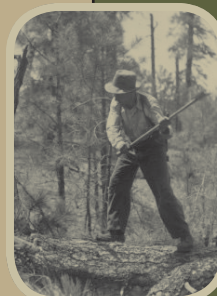
The Red Rock Pass program is a conservation tool designed to protect, enhance, and maintain Sedona's awe-inspiring red rock landscape for the American public today and into the future. Purchasing a pass helps fund the National Forest in making a difference to provide improved visitor information and environmental and cultural site protection! As a "high impact recreation area," the level of care and maintenance required for the Red Rock landscape exceeds that needed in other National Forest areas.

A Red Rock Pass can be purchased at one of our local Forest Service offices or participating vendors in the Sedona area. Once purchased, a pass is to be displayed in the vehicle windshield when recreating on the National Forest. A pass is not required for incidental stopping along National Forest roads, such as taking a photo or to view the scenery.

Benefits of the Red Rock Pass program include:

- Funding approximately one third of the Red Rock District programs and accomplishments.
- Increased visitor information services, staffing at several gateway information centers and increased field patrol.
- Contacts with over 500,000 visitors per year providing trip planning and "Leave No Trace" information.
- Increased public convenience and partnership services with the Chamber of Commerce and other community-based organizations.
- Expanded recreation, cultural heritage, and wilderness resource accomplishments including: the collection of 1000's of pounds of trash, numerous dump sites cleaned, numerous abandoned campfires extinguished, hundreds of miles of trail maintained, soil and vegetation impacts restored and the quick repair of vandalized sites.
- Restoration of watershed and soil conditions from long-term visitor use impacts.

The pass program generates over \$800,000 and is incrementally growing each year. These funds are invaluable in providing for quality recreation, needed maintenance and for the protection and restoration of natural and cultural resources on approximately 160,000 acres of Red Rock Country on the Coconino National Forest.



FIRE MANAGEMENT

Note: WUI Refers to the Wildland/Urban Interface Initial entry broadcast burn WUI Accomplishments:

Prescribed Burns (WUI)	Total: 5950
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Prescribed Burns (NonWUI)	Total: 8650
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Number of Wildfires:

Human Caused	128
Lightening	198
Total:	326

Wildfire Acres Burned:

Human Caused	304.5 acres
Lightening	1303 acres
Total:	1,607.5 acres

2006 WUI Planned Broadcast Burns, Hand Pile Burns and Thinning Projects:

Project	Type	Target
Bald Mesa Fuels Reduction Project	Thinning	200 acres
Bear Park	Hand Pile Burn	50 acres
Fort Valley Phase 2	Thinning	985 acres
Kachina Village	Thinning	100 acres
Kachina Village (different contract)	Thinning	977 acres
Kachina Village	Broadcast Burn	540 acres
Kachina Village	Pile Burn	650 acres
Lake Mary	Hand Pile Burn	300 acres
Oak Creek	Hand Pile Burn	10 acres
Oak Creek	Hand Pile Burn	70 acres
Oak Creek	Thinning	70 acres
Spearmint (NON-WUI)	Hand Pile Burn	350 acres
Valley (NON WUI)	Broadcast Burn	2,400 acres
Victorine (NON WUI)	Thinning	570 acres

UPCOMING PROJECTS 2006

Wildland Fire Use: Another Tool in the Fire Management Toolbox

The forests of Arizona are born to burn. Researchers have helped us realize that these forests need fire to be healthy ecosystems. However, with overly dense forests and neighborhoods bordering wildlands, it's not as simple as allowing any fire ignited by Mother Nature to burn whenever, wherever it will. In addition to fire suppression and prescribed fire, the Coconino National Forest is developing another tool to have in its Fire Management Toolbox: a Wildland Fire Use Plan. The plan will define specific conditions and areas where naturally-ignited fires can be managed to meet resource objectives such as recycling nutrients into the soil, enhancing habitat for wildlife, and reducing the risk of high-intensity wildland fires. Thus the term "Wildland Fire Use" - fire used to benefit the ecosystem.

A team of Coconino National Forest employees are working together to complete the plan in 2006. Elements such as fire's effects on wildlife habitat and cultural sites, proximity to urban areas and wilderness areas will be considered. Wildland fire use is another step in restoring fire-adapted forest and grassland ecosystems of northern Arizona.

OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE POLICIES

National Transportation Policy Implementation

Cross-country travel is a significant issue on the Coconino Forest as well as nationally. Roads created by off-highway vehicle travel have created resource damage to soil, vegetation and the overall visual quality of national forest lands.

A four-year process will begin this year to implement a national policy on cross-country travel. The NEPA process will be a

collaborative effort to bring motorized users, non-users, and Forest Service personnel together to implement the national policy. The focus of this policy is to create a map which documents the existing system of motorized routes and will potentially include additional routes. Public involvement will be an important part of this process.

5 Forest OHV Project

Meanwhile, five national forests in Arizona are continuing to develop a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that would create a policy prohibiting cross-country travel. During the implementation process travel would only be allowed on existing motorized routes. The aim of the five forest project is to eliminate cross-country travel and to reduce the number of user-created routes as soon as possible; while the National Transportation Policy aims to achieve this within a four year period. Implementation of the National Transportation Policy would evaluate and designate which specific routes would continue to be open to motorized travel. The two policies will converge during the implementation process when the Forest Service works with the public to develop maps designating routes for off-highway vehicle use.

Forest Plan Revision

The Coconino National Forest will be initiating the Forest Plan Revision this year. The Forest Service has a new planning policy that provides the framework for all forest plan revisions. This planning timeline is expected to be briefer than prior efforts and should be complete in about three years. Contrary to the former planning policy, plans under this new rule will be more strategic in light of changing conditions, science and technology. Plan revisions will be based on the need for change where additional direction or more appropriate information is necessary.

This report was prepared by Amber Ramirez and Brienne Untalan

RECREATION AND LANDS:

Number of Individual Campsites Maintained:

District:	Total Number of Sites
Peaks Ranger District	78
Mormon Lake Ranger District	185
Mogollon Rim Ranger District	196
Red Rock Ranger District	93
Total:	552

Number of Group Campsites Maintained:

District:	Total Number of Sites
Peaks Ranger District	3
Mormon Lake Ranger District	1
Mogollon Rim Ranger District	2
Red Rock Ranger District	5
Total:	11

Recreation Areas:

Picnic Areas	9
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Cabin Rentals	3
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Miles of Trail	641 miles
Number of Trailheads	43
Miles of Forest Roads	5,914 miles

Volunteer Information

District	Volunteers	Hours	Value
Red Rock Ranger District	400	40,000	\$472,800
Mormon Lake/ Peaks Ranger Districts	328	11,710	\$133,473
Mogollon Rim Ranger District	839	10,756	\$141,922
Totals	1,567	62,466	\$748,195

Law Enforcement Statistics:

Total Incidents	2,145
Warnings Issued	288
Arrests	48
Public Assists	65
Agency Assists	155
Violation Fines Collected	\$61,169.50
Total Value of Damage to FS Property	\$93,087.00
Total Value of FS Resource Damage	\$2,949.00
Incidents/Violations Responded to:	
Fire Investigations	136
Cannabis Plots Eradicated	1 (consisting of 19,953 plants)
Other Agency and Public Contacts	22,294

Stewardship

Acres of Noxious Weed Treatment	1,937 acres
Acres of Soil and Water Improvement	155 acres
Acres of Wildlife Habitat Restored or Enhanced	4,090 acres
Acres of Lake Habitat Restored	20 acres
Miles of Stream Habitat Restored	5 miles

Plan components consist of:

- Desired social, economic and ecological conditions
- Concise, time-specific objectives
- Guidelines
- Suitability of areas for uses compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area
- Special areas: areas are designated for unique or special characteristics, including areas designated by statute such as wilderness

Plan revisions will be developed in a collaborative environment.

Although plans under this new rule will not typically contain final decisions that approve projects or activities, they will contain the above five components which set forth broad policies to help guide future on-the-ground decisions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office
1824 S. Thompson
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
(928) 527-3600

Mormon Lake Ranger District
4373 S. Lake Mary Rd.
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
(928) 774-1147

Peaks Ranger District
5075 N. Highway 89
Flagstaff, AZ 86004
(928) 526-0866

Red Rock Ranger District
PO Box 20429
Sedona, AZ 86341
(928) 282-4119

Mogollon Rim Ranger District
HC 31, Box 300
Happy Jack, AZ 86024
(928) 477-2255

Visit our website at: www.coconinoforest.us