

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







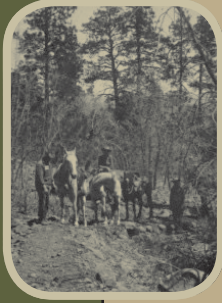
## CELEBRATING OUR CENTENNIAL YEAR

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

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Visit our website for updates and information about current and upcoming prescribed fires.  
[www.coconinoforest.us](http://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