



## News from the Forest Service

Edited on: August 24, 2005

### !NOTICE!

#### **Kinder Springs Meadow CLOSED to ALL Motorized Vehicles**

Due to extensive misuse of recreational vehicles, such as 3 and 4 wheelers, dirt bikes, and other miscellaneous off highway vehicles we are closing the Kinder Springs area to ALL motorized vehicles. The resource damage this meadow has endured over the years is unacceptable! Illegal off road ATV District has increased significantly on many areas of the District. Currently we are in the process of reviewing these areas and discussing how to stop the misuse of your forest.



We regret having to close the other areas, but we have no lands for soils, vegetation and

choice if we want to protect your wildlife.

Kinder Springs area and possibly

If you own an ATV and frequently ride in the national forest we must ask that you stay on existing roads. We have begun to **strongly** enforce the rules and regulations regarding ATV use. If you have any questions regarding these laws, please feel free to call Blue Ridge Ranger Station or the Happy Jack Information Center and we will be more than happy to explain them to you. We could use your help too! If you see any areas that show evidence of off road misuse please, please tell us. Help us spread the word that this has become a very serious problem and people will be ticketed if they are not abiding by the law. Thank you so much for your cooperation, and just remember this is everyone's forest and lets help each other to take care of it so we can enjoy it for many years to come!

#### **Restoration of Native Fish in Fossil Creek**

In the fall of 2004, nearly 100 people from around the state worked together to restore Fossil Creek to a native fishery. This work involved removing non-native fish that had invaded the stream so the few remaining native species would have a chance to survive. Native fish in Fossil Creek include the headwater chub, roundtail chub, speckled dace, Sonora sucker and Desert sucker.



Why Save the Natives? The most important biological reason is that by preserving the integrity of our natural ecosystems we can maintain diversity and healthy ecologic function. Additionally, each species presents un-explored medical applications but if we lose these species, we also lose the potential for making life-saving discoveries. From a cultural standpoint, if we didn't preserve what is native and unique to our state by letting non-natives take over, we would lose what makes our state unique from others and our fisheries would look much like the rest of the nation. Many believe that we have an ethical or moral obligation to preserve all species. In addition, we all have a legal responsibility under the Endangered Species Act to preserve and recover rare species so that future generations can enjoy the same biological wonders that we do today.

## Native Fish contd.

Why were the non-natives removed? Not only were non-native green sunfish and small mouth bass out competing the natives for food and space, they were also eating them! In some reaches of Fossil Creek, speckled dace were completely absent and there were no more young chub or suckers. Although there were some adult natives that were capable of spawning, the eggs and young were gobbled up by the non-natives. Without intervention, the few adult fish remaining would eventually have died and all of Fossil Creek would have been completely occupied by non-native fish!

In order to allow fish populations to recover after restoration of the creek, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has issued a new Commission Order that CLOSSES the entire Fossil Creek to fishing for two years until January 1, 2007.



## Marshall Stewart Voted Wildland Firefighter of the Year!

This summer the Flagstaff Masonic Lodge once again recognized the firefighter and law enforcement officers of the year. In years past the Coconino National Forest was not included in this prestigious award, however this year the forest service has been included with the other agencies and our own Marshall Stewart from our district won! A banquet was held in Flagstaff at the Radisson Hotel for the award presentation.

Marshall was present along with the different Flagstaff Fire Departments. Marshall has been with us for quite some time:

27 years ago in 1978, Marshall's first summer with the forest service was working on the dozer crew. On his first day of work, the Dozer operator had to show him how to start a chain saw. They didn't teach that in band director school. He worked on the dozer crew for three summers.

1981-He moved to a Type 6 engine crew working and living at the very remote Buck Springs guard station.

1982 thru 1999- Marshall worked on a Type 3 Engine, Engine 7-1 at Blue Ridge Ranger Station, starting as a crewman, becoming the lead crew person and then the assistant. He served as the engine captain for three of those years, one of which, he lead his engine to place 1st in the annual Coconino National Forest hose lay competition.

Presently Marshall is the captain of Engine 7-2, in addition to working as a Fire Prevention Patrol, Forest Protection Officer and mentor. Marshall has the respect of his peers and predecessors.

So you ask...What makes him so special to qualify him for Firefighter of the year? Marshall is not a permanent employee with the Coconino National Forest. He lives and teaches in Tucson half of the year. But he has brought his teaching skills and 27+ years of fire experience to teach and train at least two generations of wildland fire fighters here on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District, developing and pushing them up the fire career ladder which was never within his reach because of his seasonal status.



Happy Labor Day, till next month, Jean Gilbertson, Editor

## A Word from the Ranger

Hello Neighbors,



It has been a busy summer and I feel a need to provide you with a short summary of a short status report regarding the Mogollon Rim Ranger District.

**Fire Season.** We were blessed with a wet spring and with a wet (though late) monsoon season. For the first time in years, we not only did not have to implement “closures to entry” but didn’t have to go into “campfire and smoking restrictions” on the District. Our number of human-caused fires was relatively low. We did have quite a few lightning fires during the monsoon season but none escaped initial attack. We provided a lot of support to our neighboring lower elevation Forests, such as the Tonto, who did have a severe fire season. We are now providing support to the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rocky Mountains in their fire season.

**Bark Beetles.** The wet spring and summer helped keep new bark beetle attacks in the pine trees at low levels, or at least provided enough moisture for most trees to be healthy enough to repel beetles with pitch. Mortality levels are far less than they were in 2003.

**Marijuana Gardens.** The same wet weather that helped keep our trees and grass green provided the means to support some extensive marijuana gardens in our remote canyons. We just completed a major multi-jurisdictional week-long raid on a series of gardens in the Calf Pen and Sandrock Canyons of the Fossil Springs Wilderness. Four arrests of Mexican nationals were made and many thousands of plants were confiscated and destroyed through the efforts of the Forest Service, Gila County Sheriff’s Office, Arizona DPS, the federal Drug Enforcement Agency and National Guard. Miles of irrigation piping and large quantities of trash were removed from the Wilderness. Please inform us or the Sheriff’s Office if you encounter possible marijuana cultivation. Do not investigate it yourself for your own safety!

**Fuels Management.** We had a good year for treating natural forest fuels. We burned over 7000 acres of forest floor to reduce natural fuel accumulations and thinned 1300 acres of small-diameter ponderosa pine. Much of the burning and all of the thinning was in the Blue Ridge Urban Interface area as part of an effort to emphasize treatments in locations that provide community protection. We will do more starting this fall.

**Blue Ridge Dam and Hydroelectric Project.** The ownership of the dam and associated private land as well as the pipeline and powerline infrastructure was recently transferred from Phelps-Dodge to Salt River Project. We have been working with SRP on the permitting process to continue to authorize the private structures on National Forest land and to work out an operating plan. Soon the ownership will transfer one more time to the US Bureau of Reclamation as per recent legislation with SRP being designated as the Bureau’s operator. We will soon be working with BOR on a Special use permit and an operating plan. Eventually water from Blue Ridge Reservoir will be made available to Payson and northern Gila County. It should also be noted that the same legislation that authorized the government to accept ownership of the project has also mandated that the Blue Ridge Reservoir name will change to C.C. Cragin Reservoir. The timing of this change has not yet been set.

**Bar T Bar/Anderson Springs Range EIS.** My self and the Mormon Lake District Ranger jointly signed this decision which was published this summer with an appeal date of July 11. Only one appeal was filed on this 7-year analysis and decision. However, the Arizona Wildlife Association decided to withdraw their appeal and support implementation of the project which provides for a large number of wildlife, wetland and grassland enhancement projects in addition to continuing the livestock grazing authorization for these allotments on Anderson Mesa.

**Land Exchanges.** There are several proposed land exchanges with the Forest Service “on the table”. The owners of Section 19 in East Clear Creek near the Horse Crossing has proposed trading their 820-acre parcel for a 500-acre parcel of National Forest in Section 30 adjacent to the Happy Jack Lodge and west of FH3. The Forest Service is interested but the exchange process has barely started. It generally takes several years at best for the process to occur and will include public involvement. The privately-owned Sections 9 and 15, also in East Clear Creek near the confluence with Leonard Canyon, are also involved in a potential land exchange. In these cases the federal lands to be acquired by private owners are within other National Forests. Congressional legislation passed last year which authorized a three-way land exchange called the Montezuma Castle Exchange but has not yet been implemented. It will trade Tonto NF lands near Payson for some private lands near the Montezuma Castle National Monument and a portion of the privately-owned Double Cabin Park on this District North of the Happy Jack Ranger Station.

**Solid Waste Disposal.** Coconino County Board of Supervisors has been concerned for a couple of years about the relatively low rate of cost recovery for their operation of the Clint’s Well Transfer Station. They have discussed shutting it down but have continued to operate it with fee increases so that it is the highest net cost transfer station in the County. Last year the County appointed a local citizens group to advise them on solutions. The Forest Service utilizes that transfer station without charge but also does not charge the County fees for it being located on National Forest. Some people have felt that this meant the Forest Service is the real problem. The full picture is that the Forest Service also provides free solid waste services for the community through our operation of Little Bly Pit for the disposal of natural debris, such as slash, dirt and rock (no lumber or garbage!). If we did not do this then the community would have to dispose of such material on their own land or take it to the Clint’s Well Transfer Station. The County has approached me about letting them operate Little Bly Pit and charge fees. This would get the Forest Service out of the free solid waste business and help the County solve it’s cash flow problem. I have been reluctant to do this because it would reduce public service (Little Bly would then operate only on a staffing schedule) and could be a disincentive (because of fees) for some people to clean up their lots to make them fire safe. The issue has not yet been resolved.

**Discovery Channel Telescope.** Henry Brill and I were privileged to participate in the formal ground-breaking for Lowell Observatory’s new 4.2 meter telescope on July 12. This telescope will be located on the top of a small cinder cone near FH3 about a half mile northwest of the Happy Jack Ranger Station on National Forest land. The Mogollon Rim Ranger District will partner with Lowell in the sense that we will allow Lowell to co-locate some administrative buildings on the ranger station compound under a Special Use Permit and a cost-sharing agreement. This reduces the “footprint” of the facility on top of the cinder cone and will save the Forest Service money through shared maintenance of water and sewage systems and other costs such as snowplowing. The Road and telescope pad have been constructed, the telescope building structure

**APS 69-KV Powerline.** The permit for APS to construct a new powerline into the Blue Ridge area from Winslow has been approved and clearing on National Forest has been started. Expect to see a lot of activity this fall and winter for clearing and pole installation. The powerline should go into operation some time next year.

That is probably more than enough to cover this time but certainly doesn’t cover all that is going on. Feel free to call us or stop in if you have questions about happenings on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District!

LARRY G. SEARS  
District Ranger