

## Four Forest Restoration Initiative

Quarterly Stakeholder Newsletter



### Forest Restoration in Action

#### Northern Arizona Forests are Speeding Up Restoration Efforts

In February, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) shared with the public that the four northern Arizona national forests that comprise 4FRI are getting additional funding to accelerate implementation of 4FRI treatments. The forests are ramping up prep work and start increasing capacity to accelerate and sustain these efforts. According to Scott Russell, 4FRI Chief Executive representing the four Forest Supervisors, “Social consensus from our collaborative efforts on restoration plans has put us in the position to justify this level of support at the national level.”

The USFS has developed a 5-Year Plan identifying thinning and prescribed fire projects across the four forests to help anticipate staffing and resources needs. This plan for 2016 focuses on offering more mechanical thinning contracts outside of the Phase One Stewardship Contract.



Scott Russell

“Approximately 1/3 will be issued as Task Orders under the Phase 1 Stewardship Contract and about 2/3 will be offered for bid to other harvesting businesses,” reports Scott, which equates to 13,760 acres and 26,166 acres respectively.

The USFS is also working with industry to better understand the economics around restoration – particularly around biomass, locations of infrastructure, and haul costs. These efforts will help ensure thinning treatments are both economically viable and meeting restoration goals.

To put this additional financial boost to its best use, the USFS is:

\* Bringing in help from other USFS resources across the country to get started

right away in boosting site preparation. The Region 1 Timber Strike Team and the Enterprise TEAMS organization are conducting resource surveys and site preparation, and preparing thinning contracts.

\* Developing 18 new positions across the four forests in timber, silviculture, fire, botany, archaeology, and hydrology. These positions are being hired specifically to support 4FRI implementation.

\* Examining the overall 4FRI organization to create efficiencies in leadership, communications, and administration. This has already led to the creation of a single line officer position to provide overall strategic leadership for 4FRI. The 4FRI Chief Executive will report to the four Forest Supervisors and have decision-making authorities to expedite the many aspects of the day-to-day program. Scott Russell will serve as the Acting 4FRI Chief Executive until the position is filled, and the Coconino NF has brought in Erick Walker as the Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor behind Scott. This effort has also led to the creation of the 4FRI Innovations and Efficiencies Coordinator – now Henry Provencio – whose first priority will be to work with collaborators to develop a strategy that addresses issues relating to mechanical thinning and the wood industry in eastern portions of 4FRI.

The focus this year is not only to accelerate 2016 projects, but to also conduct the preparation work required for projects in 2017 and beyond, to sustain this higher level of accomplishment.

The USFS has seen enormous success with the NEPA plans through collaboration and Scott notes, “we have no doubt our continued work together will ensure we’re equally as successful as we move forward with implementation.”

#### Upcoming Meetings/Events:

Natural Resources Working Group	May 17 June 21
<a href="#">Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership</a>	May 17 June 21
<a href="#">4FRI Stakeholders</a>	May 25 June 22

#### 2016 Ramp-up Work

- Marking and Cruising—50,000 acres
- Silvicultural Prescriptions—65,000 acres
- Prescribed Fires—58,000 acres
- Mexican Spotted Owl surveys—44,000 acres
- Northern Goshawk Surveys—150,000 acres
- Noxious Weed Surveys—23,000 acres
- Botany Surveys—33,000 acres
- Cultural Resource Surveys—21,000 acres
- Landline Surveys—20 miles
- Road Maintenance—111 miles

## Industry Insider

### Across Our Forest: Successful Prescribed Fires on the Tonto

Following the Industry Round Table organized by the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization, Senators Jeff Flake and John Mc Cain held several meetings with USDA Chief Thomas Tidwell in March to stress the importance of forest restoration in Arizona, including maintaining the existing White Mountains industry infrastructure through secure and stable wood offerings, and developing longer-term wood supply plans in close communication with local government and industry. During a subsequent U.S. Senate hearing, the USFS responded with added funding, additional personnel, a shift of focus (see lead story) and a plan to boost planning and site preparation. Video [here](#).

The weather and fuels conditions this year created an exceptional window to perform prescribed fire treatments in and around Rim Country on both the Payson and Pleasant Valley Ranger Districts. The early fall moisture allowed burning of 1,259 acres of debris piles that were created around communities after fuel break treatments. These treatments leave roughly 35-45 piles per acre, which require the right conditions to burn these piles. The weather window for pile burning is typically very short.



Broadcast Burning on the Tonto

The communities that we burned piles around this year include: Shadow Rim, Rim Trail, Verde Glenn, Bonita Creek, Tonto Village, and Whispering Pines.

As we progressed into the burning season the weather and fuels conditions allowed us to perform large landscape scale broadcast burning, totaling 9,415 acres. The broadcast burn size varied from 100 - 3,000-acre burn blocks. The areas treated include: Chamberlain at 2,242 acres, Myrtle at 87 acres, Verde at 1,013 acres, Lion at 2,075 acres, Payson at 3,039 acres, and Parallel at 759 acres. All these areas have communities in close proximity to the burn site.

This magnitude of burning requires collaboration with multiple partners. Cooperators include: Arizona Public Service, Salt River Project, AZ Department of Transportation, Whispering Pines, Hells Gate, and Payson Fire Districts, Gila County, and AZ Department of Environmental Quality. In addition to the permanent and career seasonal work force on the Tonto NF, we received help from the Coconino and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests during our large landscape burns. The support from all cooperators and agency employees helped us succeed in completing this magnitude of burning around these priority wildland-urban interface communities. *-Submitted by William Dudley and Jeremy Plain, Tonto National Forest*



### Stakeholder Spotlight: Steve Gatewood

A poll of attendees at our February meeting showed unanimous support to put Steve Gatewood in this newsletter's Stakeholder Spotlight. Steve has played an integral role in creating the building blocks for forest restoration in Arizona that has grown into the largest forest management project in the nation. His entrée as a Flagstaff resident and Director of the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) in 2003 was preceded by positions in Arizona (Executive Director for both the Society for Ecological Restoration and The Wildlands Project, both in Tucson) and Florida, his native state, with The Nature Conservancy. Currently, Steve has his own consulting business, WildWood Consulting, LLC, which works in the natural resource and non-profit fields.

Steve has participated in the 4FRI planning process since its inception, filling various roles including Co-Chair of the 4FRI Stakeholder Group and Steering Committee. He remains active with the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership and continues to work with other agencies and organizations to help protect communities and restore northern Arizona's forest ecosystems.

Among several diverse projects, Steve was Technical Services Program Manager for the Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District and Coordinator of the San Francisco Peaks Weed Management Area. He served as a GFFP Board member and represented that organization in various forest restoration programs, including his work with the Four Forest Restoration Initiative.



Commendations for Steve, February 4FRI mtg

At our February 4FRI stakeholder meeting, thanks to a behind-the-scenes effort by Paul Summerfelt, Mark Brehl, and Anne Mottek to surprise him, Steve was formally commended by the stakeholder group for many reasons: his commitment to Arizona's forests and other wildlands; his decades-long energy and drive to bring about success; and his "no lines drawn in the sand" belief that solutions must be found that work for all. Despite a significant health setback over a year ago that may have offered anyone an escape route from the often-drawn out deliberations that collaboration calls for, Steve remains at the table, ever willing and eager to move forest restoration forward. From the Stakeholder Group and many others, thank you, Steve, for all that you do.



Steve, flanked by colleagues Anne Mottek and Mark Brehl

Contact our 4FRI Stakeholder Group Co-Chairs: [Pascal Berlioux](#) [Steve Gatewood](#) [Tommie Martin](#) [Allen Reidhead](#)  
[Steve Reidhead](#) [Sue Sitko](#) [Greg Smith](#) [Paul Summerfelt](#) [Diane Vosick](#) [Paul Watson](#) [Jason Whiting](#) [Brad Worsley](#)



# The Wood Basket

## Economic Monitoring Grant Awarded

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) was recently awarded the Coconino County Board of Supervisors' Community Initiative Grant. As part of the Multi-Party Monitoring Board's program of work, the grant will be used to initiate the collection of economic information from various sectors of the timber industry. Contractor reporting forms will be tested with operators in road maintenance, logging, trucking, milling, and biomass processing. Once the instruments are tested and refined, database construction and news release templates will be developed. Economic data may be collected as early as 2016. The monitoring project will provide relevant economic metrics such as local jobs created and the types of timber products being produced. The information is important to ensure government officials, decision makers, and members of the community understand how forest restoration projects provide economic benefits to local rural communities.



## Forest Facts: El Niño Projections Fizzling for 2016

Cumulative watershed precipitation on the Salt and Verde Watersheds from October 1 - March 21 was 8.48" which is 87% of normal. January precipitation was 158% of normal (3.14") leading to above normal average snowpack conditions by February 1st, but was followed by a warm February, the 12th driest on record (10% of normal/0.19").

This resulted in early melting and an average snowpack condition, about 1/3rd of normal by March 1st. The dry trend has continued into March with minimal precipitation (0.03" as of March 21st) across the watershed.



## A View From the Inside: SRP Flowtography™

The Salt River Project (SRP) has recently pioneered an innovative and low-cost technology that gathers images of stream depth information. SRP Flowtography™ is a minimally invasive method of time-lapse photography equipped with event gages designed to quantify stream flow at a given location. Collecting time-lapse images across sites of interest, scientists, hydrologists, and analysts at SRP are able to better understand and characterize existing watershed (baseline) conditions, and ultimately monitor forest restoration impacts on watersheds.

Flowtography also provides data that account for weather events, tree health, snowpack and other environmental conditions. Photo data are transmitted remotely allowing scientists to be virtually on-site within the watershed. Once image and sensor data are collected, stage data can be used to create a predictive rating curve, compute flow, and create hydrographs. Images can be used repeatedly, and in the future will assist with other investigations to identify peripheral conditions or parameters at a site at the time of the image collection.

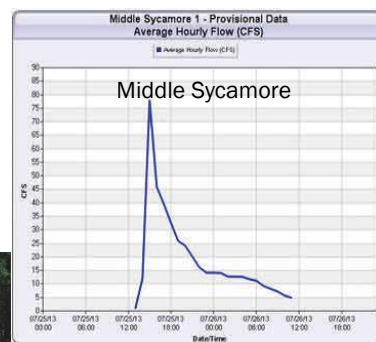
Each Flowtography site on the watershed collects approximately 96 images per day; 12 sites in 2 4FRI areas of study.



July 25, 2013 @ 14:50



July 25, 2013 @ 15:05



Flowtography is currently in use at various sites within the Verde watershed, with two locations within 4FRI; the Middle Sycamore and the Flagstaff Lake Mary areas.

## Coming Attractions: Collaborator's Corner

May 7: Forest harvesting methods public showcase, see page 4 for more information.

May 10: Public input opportunity for draft of the Proposed Action for 4FRI's second Environmental Impact Statement. 6—8 p.m., Messinger Hall, 901 S. Westerly Rd., Payson, AZ. For more information, contact [Brienne Pettit](#).

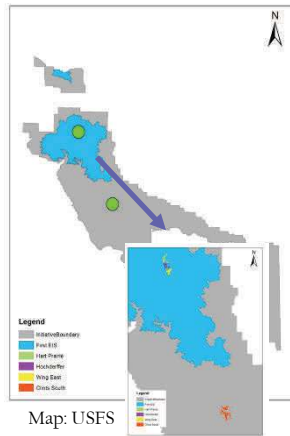
# The Wood Basket

## Monitoring Forest Treatments: 2015 Report

At the March 4FRI stakeholder meeting, the Multi-Party Monitoring Board (represented by Travis Woolley) provided us with information on the monitoring activities occurring in 2015. The Board's goals for the year were to accomplish pre-treatment monitoring for as many Tier 1 (highest priority) indicators as possible and to test sampling protocols.

Indicators monitored included: Mexican spotted owl (MSO; largely accomplished by U.S. Forest Service through mandatory compliance monitoring); songbirds and Northern goshawk (occupancy); forest structure and vegetation; landscape-level metrics; invasive plants; and socio-economic variables.

Monitoring sites selected for songbird, goshawk, and vegetation surveys were within four task orders depicted here, selected for their NEPA-ready status and similarity to proposed 4FRI treatments. Songbird data were collected at sites within a 1 km grid cell, with data collected on bird species observed. Within separate smaller plots, vegetation data was measured including tree species, diameters, and heights; understory plant composition and cover; and fuel loads. This information will help answer questions related to changes in songbird populations as well as potential fire behavior, adherence to treatment prescriptions, and effective movement towards desired conditions.



For MSO, monitoring has been initiated, and will occur, across 18 Protected Activity Centers, or PACs, with nine to be treated and nine to be used as reference sites (untreated). The Board anticipates at least two, possibly three, years monitoring prior to treatments in the nine sites, along with two to three years monitoring post-treatment. The Board hosted a MSO workshop in January to share information presented by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, NAU, and the Bird Conservancy of the Rocky Mountains to stakeholders, researchers, and managers to better coordinate and improve upon monitoring methods and research. More workshops on topics of interest will be planned due to the success of this workshop.



Measuring and analyzing landscape metrics help inform effects of treatments at a much larger scale than the above vegetation monitoring. The Board has enlisted the assistance of the Landscape Conservation Initiative at NAU to accomplish this monitoring using aerial photography and GIS. A pre-treatment assessment is currently ongoing. The timing of a post-treatment analysis is undecided at this point, and dependent upon funding and the cumulative amount of treatments needed to assess change.



Due to anticipated extensive mechanical equipment operations across the forest, there is a priority concern about the potential for the introduction and establishment of invasive plant species. By monitoring invasive plants, we can determine if they are occurring (and where), whether or not efforts to control such occurrences are successful, and if populations are expanding. The Board is coordinating with both the Coconino and Kaibab forests to help fill gaps with regular monitoring efforts, and investigating opportunities with partners such as weed control groups or with citizen science volunteers to examine post-treatment sites and conduct control efforts.

Some aspects of socio-economic monitoring have begun (see p. 3 for economic grant award), with the Board developing a contractor reporting form that can be used at mills and other plants such as biomass facilities as well as with harvesters and truckers to determine levels of employment; labor demographics; production costs; type, volume, and value of products; and various financial assistance received.

Looking at 2016 and beyond, the Board plans to use lessons learned from this initial field data collection to improve and expand monitoring efforts; better forecast potential shifts in implementation timelines and budgets; and think more critically about sampling design and Forest Plan alignment in order to become most efficient in using the limited funds available. Seeking partners and in-kind contributions will be likely. Please stay tuned for more monitoring information as the Board and U.S. Forest Service continue this important work!

(Cont'd from p. 3)

## Harvesting Methods to be Showcased for Public May 7

The GFFP is also pleased to announce a free public open house about "Harvesting Methods & Wildfire Preparedness" on May 7 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Aquaplex in Flagstaff. The community is invited to learn about various harvesting methods used to restore our forests and to reduce the risk of severe forest wildfires. Residents will also have the opportunity to better understand how to protect their homes, property, and family from wildfire. Various agencies and organizations will be available to discuss forest treatment operations, Firewise principles, and answer questions. Exhibits include: photo opportunities with lumberjacks, firemen, equipment/trucks, timber sports, forest treatment operations videos, a kids' corner, and refreshments. This event is sponsored by the Fire Adapted Community Learning Network and is held in conjunction with the National Community Wildfire Preparedness Day.



Harvesting equipment to be showcased May 7