

Four Forest Restoration Initiative Quarterly Stakeholder Newsletter



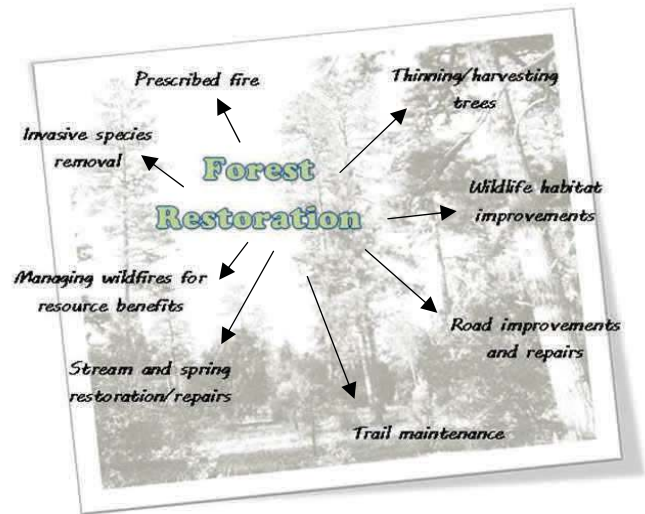
Forest Restoration in Action

Annual USFS Restoration Report Shows Progress

At the end of every federal fiscal year (September 30), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) compiles a summary of all forest restoration accomplishments in that year. While helpful on many fronts, this report is mandated under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Program to be reviewed by Congress, and helps acquire funding for next year's restoration efforts.

Many activities undertaken by both USFS staff and partners can directly, and indirectly, benefit forest restoration efforts, and are counted in this total. If you look at the graphic to your right, you'll see many actions that contribute to the total progress made toward restoring our forests; many are intuitive, some are not. For example, road improvements—which can include realigning, placing culverts, grading, or adding gravel—how do they help restore forests? Improving roads can reduce the amount of sediment that may enter into a streambed—which in turn helps reduce erosion and improve watershed conditions. Trail maintenance can have a similar effect.

So from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015, what progress did we see across northern Arizona forests?



Almost 130,000 acres were treated by mechanical efforts, establishing vegetation, improving wildlife habitat, treating noxious weeds, prescribed burning, or managing fire for resource benefits. The 4FRI “footprint,” a subset of the total above, was just under 85,000 acres and included thinning, treatment of noxious weeds, and prescribed and managed fire. Over 1,100 miles of roads were maintained or improved and 160 miles of trails were maintained to standards.

Did the USFS meet their goals? In many cases, yes—and in some instances, these goals

were exceeded. In other cases, no.

Regardless, restoration efforts are a combination of multiple contracts, many partner-shared efforts, and staff dedication. Success often depends on available funding, wildfire suppression staff needs across the country, and even weather restrictions. The 4FRI annual reports can be found in the “Highlights” section of the Forest Service 4FRI [website](#). For more information, contact Dick Fleishman at (928) 226-4687.

Coming Attractions: Collaborator's Corner

Collaborative Restoration Workshop: Working Toward Resilient Landscapes & Communities, April 26-28, Denver, CO. *Achieve more effective planning and implementation; enhance restoration outcomes.* Join the contact list for more information [here](#).

Watch the recording of ERI's Mixed Conifer Forest Ecology: Emerging Science webinar held November 15 [here](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

Natural Resources Working Group	Feb. 16 Mar. 15
Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership	Feb. 16 Mar. 15
4FRI Stakeholders	Feb. 24 Mar. 23

Jargon Jigsaw

(acronyms and terms explained!)

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR): A national program paid for by Congressionally-appropriated funds to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes.

Record of Decision (ROD): the final step of the NEPA process for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Upon a Final ROD, management activities can commence.

Hand Thinning: Thinning of trees by hand where machinery is unable to operate or to limit effects on resources (i.e. steep slopes, endangered species habitat) usually completed by crews using chain saws or other hand-held equipment.

Cable Logging: The use of cables, typically on steep slopes, connected to machinery at the summit or bottom of a slope, to carry logs to an accessible landing.

Helicopter Logging: The use of helicopters to lift logs out of a cut area and transfer them to an accessible landing. Typically very expensive and reserved for critical areas in need of thinning where other methods cannot be used.

Industry Insider

Highlights from our wood industry partners:

- An industry “dashboard” of restoration data is being drafted for Stakeholder Group review in February 2016. Monthly updates will show progress and industry capacity, and be distributed on Basecamp.
- East-side industry and counties are meeting with ADOT to convert a temporary allowance of higher logging truck weights on select highways in Navajo and Apache counties to a permanent allowance.
- The planning group for Rim Country EIS is soliciting input on economic desired conditions from industry and stakeholders. Please contact [Pascal Berlioux](#) or [Brad Worsley](#) to get involved!
- Wood industries and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests staff continue discussing developing a long-term wood supply plan to help offset an often sporadic wood supply.
- On Jan. 19, Senators Flake and McCain followed up with U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell in Washington D.C. to help support Arizona forest industries in obtaining a more stable wood supply.

Stakeholder Perspective

“Other states hope for the opportunities our challenges present”



Paul Summerfelt, Wildland Fire Manager, City of Flagstaff, at our October 2015 meeting.

Across our Forest: Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project

Three years ago, in an amazing display of leadership and foresight, Flagstaff voters approved a \$10M bond to support the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP). A partnership between the City of Flagstaff, the state, and the Coconino National Forest, FWPP’s goal is to help reduce the risk of devastating wildfires and post-fire flooding in the Rio de Flag and Lake Mary watersheds, a source of Flagstaff’s drinking water. And now, the FWPP has reached another important milestone—a final Record of Decision for the project’s Environmental Impact Statement. A signing ceremony was held on October 22nd for partners and collaborators to celebrate this historic achievement. Coconino National Forest Supervisor Laura Jo West says “This is a monumental occasion of which the entire community should be proud.”

This decision approves treatment of 8,668 acres through a combination of mechanical thinning, hand thinning, and prescribed burning. Mechanical thinning will include a combination of ground-based equipment, cable logging, helicopter logging, and specialized steep slope equipment. Within the next several months, the project will undertake marking, thinning, and prescribed fire. Work already completed within the FWPP footprint includes 475 acres of traditional ground-based mechanized logging and 209 acres of hand thinning on city-owned parcels. Fact sheets explaining details on the project’s harvesting methods can be found [here](#).

This project is unique in its origin and funding, and is being looked across the West as a model for other local governments facing these same issues. A case study exploring solutions created through FWPP and community partnerships that may help can be found [here](#).



Stakeholder Spotlight: Empire Machinery



Empire Machinery has been a 4FRI Stakeholder since 2014. Empire was founded in 1950 as a Caterpillar dealership and moved to Arizona in 1959, building strong partnerships with construction and mining industries. Now Empire represents a broad array of services, including equipment sales, technology, field services, and training. Empire’s business philosophy focuses on customer service, community involvement, teamwork, and stewardship. Empire aims to “add to” rather than “take from” the assets entrusted them, with an emphasis on developing human capital and taking care of their people while protecting the environment and giving back to communities. Putting this spirit into action, Empire is one of the founding partners in the Northern Arizona Forest Fund, a program designed to improve the health and function of forests and watersheds in northern Arizona. Billy Masters and Greg Smith, both of Empire Machinery, dedicate time to the 4FRI collaborative effort as well, with an eye toward innovative partnerships and improved forest conditions. They also work closely with all of Empire’s forestry clients (i.e., loggers, sawmills, pellet and biomass plants).



Forest Facts: Desired Conditions

“Ecological conditions for habitat quality, distribution, and abundance contribute to self-sustaining populations of native and desirable nonnative plants and animals that are healthy, well distributed, connected, and genetically diverse.”

This is an example of one of the Desired Condition statements for ecosystem health in the [2015 Revised Apache Sitgreaves National Forest Plan](#). But what is a Desired Condition, and why is it so important?

Desired Conditions (DCs) are a description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of a national forest. They attempt to paint a picture of the desired state of forest resources, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. Normally expressed in broad, general terms, DCs are not commitments or final decisions, and may be achievable only over a long period of time. In some cases, a DC matches a current condition, so the goal is to maintain it.

As the USFS and the 4FRI Stakeholder Group move forward with the 4FRI Rim Country EIS, DCs from the revised and existing forest plans for the Coconino, Apache-Sitgreaves, and Tonto national forests are being reviewed. Through the forest plan revision processes, the 4FRI Stakeholder Group and other members of the public should become familiar with this vision for landscape and ecosystem conditions...all of which will be vital when considering how to move the Rim Country project area toward the DCs as the Forest Service develops the Proposed Action, and then later on, other alternatives. Learn more about the 4FRI Rim Country EIS and forest plan DCs [here](#).