

THE LOOKOUT

Four Forest Restoration Initiative



Stakeholder Newsletter / June 2022

4FRI Working Groups

Communications Working Group
[Tayloe Dubay](#)

Comprehensive Implementation Working Group
[Hannah Griscom](#)

Industry/Biomass Working Group
[Adam Cooley](#) and [Brad Worsley](#)

Multi-Party Monitoring Board
[Jamie Sanderlin](#)

Rim Country Final EIS Working Group
[Rob Nelson](#) and [Amy Waltz](#)

Stakeholder Engagement Working Group
[Pascal Berlioux](#) and [Melanie Colavito](#)

4FRI Partners

Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership
www.GFFP.org

Natural Resources Working Group
[Jason Whiting](#)

Stay Connected

4FRI Stakeholder Group website:
www.4FRI.org

Forest Service 4FRI webpage:
www.fs.usda.gov/4fri includes all public documentation of the 4FRI project, including maps, contacts, and public input opportunities.

County Forest Restoration Initiative Earns Top Honors at Arizona Forward's Environmental Excellence Awards

The Coconino County Flood Control District's (District) Forest Restoration Initiative (FRI) won the 2021 Governor's and President's awards at the Arizona Forward's 40th Annual Environmental Awards Gala on March 19, 2022 in Phoenix.

The awards, which honor creative programs that foster the economic vitality and long-term sustainability of Arizona's future, recognized the District's Forest Restoration Initiative as an exemplary sustainability project dedicated to reducing the threat of wildfire and post-wildfire flooding, which are considered by the District to be the greatest public safety threats to the County's residents and businesses, and which will have devastating economic, and financial impacts on our communities. Arizona Forward's President and CEO Lori Singleton emphasized that wildfires and post-wildfire flooding are major threats throughout Arizona and are being accelerated by climate change.

"I'd like to thank Arizona Forward for these awards, which acknowledge the critical importance of forest restoration to our County and our state," said Chair of the Board of Supervisors and Flood Control District Chair Patrice Horstman. "Mitigating the risk of catastrophic wildfire is a top priority

because post-wildfire flooding affects everything from public safety and our economy to the quality of the water that many Arizonans drink daily. Our successful Forest Restoration Initiative was created to develop strategies and partnerships that significantly reduce these threats to our communities, and we hope it can serve as a model for other counties across Arizona and the Western United States to emulate."

Building off of the County's legacy in flood mitigation following the 2010 Schultz Fire, the District established the Forest Restoration Initiative in 2018. Under the direction of Forest Restoration Director Jay Smith, FRI uses a science-based approach to identify and restore forest health and address the causes and reduce the risk of post-wildfire flooding within Coconino County. In addition to funding projects that model at-risk watersheds and map the most critical areas for forest restoration, FRI builds partnerships with local industry, non-government organizations, and government agencies to support accelerating restoration efforts that will significantly reduce the likelihood of impacts to County communities and forest resources from catastrophic wildfire and post-wildfire flooding.

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Since 2019 the District, through FRI, has partnered with the Kaibab National Forest and the National Forest Foundation on a project to reduce hazardous fuels on the steep slopes of Bill Williams Mountain south of Williams. In addition to mitigating the estimated \$365–\$700 million economic threat of wildfire and post-wildfire flooding, the goal of the project is to reduce the threat to public safety and the impacts to the water sources and critical infrastructure of the City of Williams.

To date, the District has contributed \$2.8 million to the Bill Williams Mountain Steep Slope Project, the first two phases of which have thinned 476 acres of densely treed steep slopes as well as removed large amounts of dead and down timber. The District has committed \$4 million towards future phases of the project. Steep Slope 3, which will treat an additional 285 acres, is scheduled to begin late this summer or early fall.

Arizona Forward is dedicated to bringing business and civic leaders together to promote cooperative efforts that improve the environmental sustainability and the economic vitality of Arizona. Since 1980, the organization’s Environmental Excellence Awards Program has served as benchmarks for economic and environmental accomplishments and projects that foster the economic vitality and long-term sustainability of Arizona’s future. ■

— Article reprinted in full from an April 2022 Coconino County news release.

4FRI Stakeholder Group Releases Consensus Letter on Rim Country Final Environmental Impact Statement, Draft Record of Decision

The Forest Service released the 4FRI Rim Country Project Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision in March 2022, which was followed by a 45-day objection period. As the Forest Service works through any and all objections, the 4FRI Stakeholder Group (SHG) released a letter, with 100 percent consensus, which recognizes the accomplishments and resolution of 4FRI stakeholders, as well as desired future outcomes for the project.

The 4FRI SHG has worked closely since 2019 on both the development of official comments, and then the joint resolution of those comments through a stakeholder-run working group with the Forest Service 4FRI Interdisciplinary Team. The 4FRI SHG consensus letter can be found [here](#). In summary, “the SHG feels that the collaborative work among all stakeholders and the Forest Service team had a very positive influence on the final analyses. In

particular, the final analyses and decision honored, or directly incorporated, many of the recommendations provided by the SHG in their comments on the Draft EIS.”

More from the letter, “The SHG recognizes Alternative 2 as representing the 4FRI collaborative vision of desired future conditions for the four forests ... While no document can possibly encapsulate the integral embodiment of so many different stakeholders’ and agencies’ individual visions, and while individual stakeholders may continue to seek adjustments on specific issues through the objection period, we believe that the Draft ROD represents many of the Forest Service and SHG’s common goals and desired future conditions for the 4FRI Rim Country Analysis Area.” ■

— Amy Waltz, Ecological Restoration Institute, Co-Chair of 4FRI Final Environmental Impact Statement Working Group

Coconino Community College Commercial Driver's License Training Underway

Safety inspections. Figuring out 13 gears while double clutching. Backing a 53-foot trailer.

All very important, among a host of other important skills, to successfully driving a semi, which is why a commercial driver's license is required to operate one.

In June, Coconino Community College began offering a Commercial Driver's License Training program for people interested in driving semis for a living.

"CCC is so pleased to partner with HDS Trucking, Inc. and the Phoenix Truck Driving School to offer CDL training for pathways to employment," said Kay Leum, CCC's Executive Director of Extended Learning. "CCC worked over the last several years to find the right approach to offer this important career training. HDS Trucking developed a very successful program in Kingman through Mohave Community College, and that success made the decision to partner easy."

Maggie Blancarte, admissions coordinator for the program, said that the course lasts four weeks and covers 160 hours of instruction to test for the Class A CDL. A Class A covers all larger vehicles up to 18-wheelers.

"The demand for truckers is extremely high, and it opens a lot of doors to say you have a Class A CDL," Blancarte said.

The first week is completed online and covers all elements necessary for students to receive a permit to drive a truck. Once students receive the permit, they can begin the training in and around the vehicle, said Kevin Kahn, primary instructor for the Flagstaff program.

"This is not an easy course," he added. "You need to study and work hard, just like anything in life."

After getting their permits, the students will be going over the truck from the outside to the inside in order to learn all the safety, maintenance and operational features before ever starting it up and getting behind the wheel, Kahn said. Once they learn all pre-trip skills, they will begin working on yard skills of backing up and parallel parking. The third step will be to take the semi out on the road. Students will all be learning this together so that they can learn from one another.



Kevin Kahn, primary instructor, and Maggie Blancarte, admissions coordinator, staff the new CDL program at CCC, made possible through a partnership with HDS Trucking, Inc. and the Phoenix Truck Driving School.

"All this is about safety and to know what they are doing," Kahn said.

The course is designed very much like the actual CDL test, which is administered in three parts – pre-trip, yard skills and the road test. Once students pass all three parts with the Arizona Motor Vehicle Division, they receive their Class A CDL and can start looking for careers. Kahn added that his team works hard to make sure that the students have job prospects before they complete the class and work on passing the test at the MVD. When students apply, they also fill out a "pre-hire" form, which is sent to local companies interested in drivers.

Blancarte and Kahn would like to invite anybody curious about the program to the CCC Fourth Street campus, 3000 N. Fourth St., for a visit. Hop in a truck, take a look around, get a feel for it and see if driving a truck might be a good career for you.

The CCC program also offers Class B CDL training, which covers working vehicles like cement mixers, delivery trucks and dump trucks that do not have a trailer.

For more information about the CDL program at CCC, visit the Phoenix Truck Driving School's website at www.flagstaffcdl.com. For more information on CCC's courses, degrees and certificates, visit www.coconino.edu. ■

– Article reprinted in [full](#) from CCC News.

Arizona Forest Restoration and Lumber Company Secures \$200 Million Bond Funding

– Article adapted from a March 2, 2022 NewLife Forest Restoration, LLC press release.

NewLife Forest Restoration LLC, a leading sustainable forest products business in the US Southwest, has raised new funding to scale its forest restoration activities and reduce the incidence of catastrophic wildfires.

The company closed a \$200 million “sustainability-linked” bond financing to fund the expansion of NewLife’s wood products manufacturing facilities and forest restoration capacity, enabling a significant increase in annual acreage restored. Goldman Sachs acted as underwriter and placement agent on the financing. The “sustainability-linked” bond issued by the Arizona Industrial Development Authority is one of the first of its kind in the US “green bond” market and mandates specific forest restoration targets.

“These funds transform our company’s ability to lift Arizona’s forest restoration efforts to the much-needed level of scale,” said NewLife CEO Ted Dergousoff.

NewLife has developed a manufacturing system to extract value from the low-quality fiber removed from the forest as part of its restoration initiatives. The expansion program will dramatically increase the total industry processing capacity within the Four Forests Restoration Initiative (4FRI) operating area, enabling large-scale forest restoration efforts across Arizona. The company will restore 25,000 acres of forestland per year, dramatically expanding the capacity to proactively address the rising concerns of wildfire.

Through its subsidiary, NewLife is contracted by the US Forest Service (USFS) as part of the 4FRI. The landscape-scale restoration project was designed to combat the impact of climate change and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire by restoring the forests to a more natural state while protecting large healthy trees, wildlife and the watershed. Wildfires have devastated the western forests, endangering local

towns, causing severe damage and unleashing huge quantities of greenhouse gases.

NewLife has managed Phase 1 of the 4FRI contract since 2017 and partners with the USFS on mechanical thinning initiatives throughout Arizona.

The company will use the proceeds of the bond to complete the build-out of its 425,000-square-foot industrial facility in Bellemont, Ariz., which will include a new high-speed sawmill, planer mill, and dry kilns. NewLife will also double the capacity of its Engineered Wood Products (EWP) plant and significantly expand the capacity of NewLife’s Lumberjack sawmill located near Heber, Ariz.

Production from the new sawmill will commence in the next six months and scale to full capacity in 2023, in a multi-phase roll-out that will create hundreds of new jobs with opportunities in the sawmill, remanufacturing facilities, forest operations, and hauling operations. ■

