

# **GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP**

## **Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community**

### **Annual Report – 2017**

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is a respected community-based organization that supports collaborative efforts and has been a leader in examining and demonstrating approaches to forest ecosystem restoration in the ponderosa pine forests surrounding Flagstaff, Arizona since 1996. GFFP continues to help lead a shift in public understanding and support for proactive forest management that is designed to increase awareness of threats our forested communities face and the proactive solutions underway to reduce our risk. GFFP is one of the longest standing forest restoration collaborative organizations in the country and has been recognized as a national model. Various organizations are represented within GFFP including academic; private; and municipal, state and federal agencies.



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**Our Vision:** To research and demonstrate the various approaches to forest ecosystem restoration in the ponderosa pine forests, our actions are based on improving the overall sustainability and resiliency of the forests in the greater Flagstaff area. Sustainable and resilient forests are those that have the capacity to recover to pre-disturbance composition, structure, and/or function over time and can be maintained for future generations of forest users. As GFFP works towards future sustainability and resiliency of our forests and communities, our efforts focus on: 1) multi-agency planning and coordinated and complimentary implementation of forest restoration projects, 2) monitoring and adaptive management, 3) utilization of woody biomass, and 4) outreach and education.

In 2017, GFFP's work plan and accomplishments were focused on the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP), the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FACLN), and in cost-share programs that encourage and fund on-the-ground forest restoration treatments on private property in and around Flagstaff.

**Planning and Implementation.** GFFP regularly participates in the 4FRI stakeholder group and, through our work and grants received, has made a substantial contribution to increasing capacity and funding toward the Initiative. In addition, GFFP has contracted with the City of Flagstaff to work on various aspects within the FWPP in four broad areas: public engagement, monitoring, financial leverage and project management. GFFP completed work last fall on 325 acres in Ft. Tuthill County Fairgrounds that was funded by a Wildland Fire/Hazardous Fuel (WFHF) grant. The Partnership has been awarded another WFHF grant this year to conduct treatments on private



*Mechanical Thinning Operations at Ft Tuthill County Park*

parcels in Hart Prairie, at The Nature Conservancy Preserve, and on Flagstaff Unified School District and County land located off of Hwy 180. GFFP has partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service on a Conservation Implementation Strategy that paves the way to apply for funding for treatments on private, state and municipal lands. Since 2004, the cost share program has resulted in total funding of upwards of \$1.4 million that has been distributed to property owners to treat approximately 3,000 acres of land. Lastly, the Partnership is continuing to work on updating the Greater Flagstaff Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and GFFP's treatment map that illustrates completed treatments within the greater Flagstaff area.

**Monitoring and Adaptive Management.** GFFP continues to work with 4FRI's Multi-Party Monitoring Board to plan and conduct projects like songbird, forest structure and vegetation inventories. GFFP secured two grants from Coconino County and AZ Dept.

of Forestry and Fire Management to support an economic monitoring program to analyze the regional economic contributions of 4FRI-related projects. The Partnership has updated the FWPP Monitoring Plan and will review and finalize the Plan with a group of engaged stakeholders early next year. GFFP also assisted FWPP in planning for installation of hydrologic monitoring equipment to assess stream flow in relation to precipitation in the Dry Lake Hills on the west side of the San Francisco Peaks. Collectively, these efforts assist in conducting monitoring projects that better determine FWPP and 4FRI effectiveness. Based on monitoring results, application of lessons learned promotes enhanced economic, social and ecological outcomes and programmatic sustainability.

**Public Outreach and Education.** This is the fifth year that GFFP participated as a national member with the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FACLN). The FACLN supports the Partnership to develop and share best practices and innovations that accelerate the adoption of fire adapted communities' concepts. GFFP took a leadership role in the Network by participating in a strategic planning

workshop to propel the Network's future growth. By engaging with the Network, GFFP has committed to developing and implementing innovative activities that increase the Flagstaff community's resilience to wildfire. Notable activities completed this year included: 1) Harvesting Methods & Wildfire Preparedness Day Open House; 2) Developing a statewide fire adapted communities learning network, called "AZ-FAC;" and; 3) Firewise landscape contest and awards luncheon in which many City officials, including Mayor Evans, attended to congratulate the winners. GFFP organized three Festival of Science events and a Science on Tap event to inform citizens of our progress in restoring forested ecosystems in and around Flagstaff. GFFP also assisted FWPP with outreach to key groups: 1) Forest Service International Seminar on Watershed Management (23 individuals from 15 countries); 2) Western State Foresters/Western Forest Leadership Council's annual meeting, which included State Foresters and USFS Regional Foresters from across the country; and 4) Northern Arizona University's School of Forestry Advisory Council. GFFP also exhibited logging equipment and a display booth at the County Fair to assist the public in better understanding logging operations and how to contribute by being "Firewise."

**Utilization and Economic Development.** The Partnership continued involvement with other FWPP and 4FRI stakeholders to pursue



*GFFP Partners at Ft Tuthill County Park*

and promote new ways of reducing treatment costs, modify forest density and fuel loads, minimize fire risk, while promoting economically viable solutions to forest restoration efforts. GFFP continued to seek opportunities to attract businesses that use woody biomass by-products from local forest restoration projects. The Partnership engaged and worked with local contractors to assist in implementing cost-share treatments in Ft Tuthill County Park. A Digital Restoration Guide that marks units using a digitally formatted map was tested in the Park as a means of replacing traditional paint to mark trees. The Partnership also held a field tour with forestry professionals and contractors to discuss lesson learned in cutting units with this technology. Also, through the FACLN, GFFP co-chairs the Wood Utilization Community of Practice, which is a forum to share challenges, lesson learned and practices to improve wood utilization success across the west.

**Management and Administration.** The Partnership targets limited funding to specific project areas through contract work. Partners help to develop and guide activities and specific programs and organizations or individuals with expertise specific to each task are contracted to complete projects. GFFP also engaged students from NAU as paid interns that provided them valuable experience. In addition, the Partnership secured external grant funding to supplement our work. GFFP sponsored both the AZ Wildland Urban Interface & Firewise Summit and the Northern AZ Chapter of Society of American Foresters events. In addition, the Partnership held a Board of Directors retreat at Mormon Lake Lodge (thank you to the Mormon Lake Lodge for donating retreat space). Outcomes at the Board retreat guided a Partnership retreat that was designed to expand GFFP's reach and Partner involvement. The Board of Directors meets monthly to review financial status, complete other administrative duties and coordinates with and oversees project contractors. This model, initiated in 2008, has assisted with our financial viability and has proved effective. As a result, administrative expenses are limited to insurance; accounting and bookkeeping services; office space, supplies, and expenses; and website hosting and maintenance.

**Looking Forward:** In 1996, the Partnership began efforts to determine how the community should address the forest health crisis and reduce risk to Flagstaff from threats presented by wildfires burning in the area. We've come a long way.

In 2018, GFFP plans to provide support for:

- Providing a local professional forum and collaborative entity to achieve Partners' goals;
- Website redesign and overhaul;
- Implementation of the 4FRI 's first analysis area in the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests and planning for the second analysis area in the Apache-Sitgreaves and Tonto National Forests;
- Support FWPP efforts through monitoring, public engagement, financial leverage and program management;
- Implement effective on-the-ground treatments and continue to seek cost-share funding for targeted private lands;
- Increase the Flagstaff community's awareness, mitigation and resilience to wildfire through implementing FACLN activities;
- Continue to build a statewide Fire Adapted Community Network;
- Promote the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy 1) Resilient Landscapes, 2) Fire Adapted Communities, and 3) Safe and Effective Wildfire Response;
- Participate/support regional workshops and conferences that assist restoration efforts and our goals; and
- Continue to develop and implement monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness of our work

**GFFP Board of Directors**

**Mark Brehl**, President, AZ Dept. of Forestry and Fire Management

**Bryce Esch**, Ecological Restoration Institute, NAU

**Aaron Green**, Secretary, AZ Dept. of Forestry and Fire Management

**Dirch Foreman**, Fire Chief, Highlands Fire District

**Anne Mottek**, Treasurer, Mottek Consulting

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