

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community

Annual Report – 2019

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.



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 toward 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.



*Wildfire Mitigation Award
Recognition Ceremony at City Hall*

2019 Highlight. GFFP received the prestigious [Wildfire Mitigation Award](#). This award is the highest national honor and recognizes the outstanding work and significant program impact GFFP has in wildfire preparedness and mitigation. By honoring the GFFP, the award sponsors see the Partnership as an exemplary model that others can learn from and transmit in their communities. GFFP was commended at a joint Flagstaff City Council and Coconino County Board of Supervisors' meeting. GFFP was also recognized with a [State of Arizona Commendation](#) from Governor Ducey, as well as a [Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition](#) from Senator McSally's office. This award recognizes all of the GFFP partners who contributed to this success over the last 23 years.

In 2019, GFFP's work plan and accomplishments were focused on the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FACLN), Arizona Fire Adapted Communities (AZFAC) and in cost-share grant programs that encourage and fund on-the-ground forest restoration treatments on private and non-federal land, adjacent to and complimenting project treatment areas on federal land, like the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP) in the Coconino National Forest.

Planning and Implementation. GFFP regularly participates in the 4FRI stakeholder group and has provided substantial impacts that contribute to increasing accomplishments of the Initiative. In addition, GFFP is the primary stakeholder group for FWPP and assists the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) and the City of Flagstaff as needed. GFFP completed mechanically thinning trees this summer on 10 acres at Camp Colton, a highly valued Flagstaff Unified School District property used as an environmental camp for sixth grade students. Small experimental blocks were collaboratively planned at the camp with Northern Arizona University's (NAU) School of Forestry. In addition, five privately-owned parcels, totaling 33 acres, were hand thinned this fall in Hart Prairie, an area that is highly valued and used by researchers, scientists and recreationist. [Drone imagery](#) was captured, which depicts a bird's eye view of the parcels before and after thinning treatments. These thinning projects were funded by a Wildland Fire Hazardous Fuel (WFHF) grant awarded to the Partnership. 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.



*Thinning Operations at
Camp Colton*

Monitoring and Adaptive Management. GFFP continued to work with 4FRI's Multi-Party Monitoring Board (MPMB) to plan and conduct projects like songbird, forest structure (LIDAR and drone imagery) and vegetation inventories. GFFP has assisted the MPMB in providing comments to the Draft Environment Impact Statement for Rim Country, 4FRI's 2nd analysis area. GFFP contributed to assuring that the USFS continues to prioritize monitoring and support a dedicated USFS Monitoring Coordinator. Collectively, these efforts assist in conducting monitoring projects that better determine 4FRI effectiveness. Based on monitoring results, application of lessons learned promotes adaptive management and enhanced economic, social and ecological outcomes and programmatic sustainability.

Public Outreach and Education.

This is the seventh year that GFFP participated as a national member with the [FACLN](#). The FACLN supports the Partnership to develop and share best practices and innovations that accelerate the adoption of fire adapted community concepts and actions. Notable FACLN activities completed this year include: 1) a targeted pilot program in the Starlight Pines community to demonstrate and refine application of the “Rapid Wildfire Risk Assessment” approach that is designed to raise awareness and provide resources to property owners to mitigate wildfire ignition; 2) hosted a Festival of Science event, “Harvesting Methods & Forest Restoration Showcase,” and a tour at Ft Tuthill County Parks’ forest restoration kiosk and demonstration area; 3) created an [online version of the forest/fire ecology restoration kiosk](#) that was developed and installed at Fort Tuthill County Park last year – the online version contains interactive pop-ups linked to scientific fact sheets and reports; 4) continued to develop a statewide learning network, “Arizona Fire Adapted Communities, AZ-FAC” (see [azfac.org](#)). The state network hosted many events to promote AZFAC that include: 4a) presented at the Arizona Fire District Association meeting; 4b) joined a Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) site visit in Pinetop-Lakeside to understand how this team provides land-use planning expertise to communities with wildfire risk; 4c) the AZFAC Chair attended a state network training in Durango, CO with other western state network leads; 4d) presented at a Forest Health Symposium and at the Western Extension Forestry Coordinating Committee meeting in Payson to encourage Extension Agents to connect with the FACLN and their state FACLN network leads; and finally, 4e) presented at the Association for Fire Ecology conference. GFFP also promoted forest restoration practices and benefits during an interview with [KAFF Radio](#), and in partnership with FWPP, at NAU’s ecological restoration class.



Forest Restoration Kiosk at [gffp.org](#)



Logging Equipment Displayed at Festival of Science

Utilization and Economic Development.

The Partnership continued involvement with other FWPP and 4FRI stakeholders to pursue 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 support businesses that use woody biomass by-products from local forest restoration projects. For example, GFFP, along with Campbell Global, engaged and worked with local contractors to assist in implementing cost-share treatments in Hart Prairie. Through the FACLN, GFFP co-chairs the Wood Utilization Community of Practice, which is a national forum to share challenges, lesson learned and best practices that 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. In addition, the Partnership secured external grant funding to supplement our work. The GFFP website ([gffp.org](#)) continues to be updated to reflect the Partnership’s direction and accomplishments. The Board of Directors meets monthly to review financial status, complete other administrative duties and coordinates with and oversee project contractors. A Board retreat was held this year to plan GFFP’s future direction. 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 and supplies, 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 severe wildfires burning in the area. We’ve come a long way.

In 2020, GFFP plans to provide:

- a professional forum and collaborative entity to achieve Partners’ goals;
- assistance with implementation of the 4FRI ‘s first analysis area and complete planning for the second analysis area;
- support for FWPP efforts through monitoring, public engagement, financial leverage and program management;
- funding for/implementation of on-the-ground treatments for targeted private and non-federal lands;
- increased awareness, mitigation and resilience to wildfire through implementing FACLN activities across Arizona;
- a statewide Arizona Fire Adapted Community Learning Network (AZFAC);
- promotion of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: 1) resilient landscapes, 2) fire adapted communities, and 3) safe and effective wildfire response;
- support for and participation in regional workshops and conferences that assist restoration efforts and our goals; and
- development and implementation of monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness in our work.

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