

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community

Annual Report - 2010

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is a 15-year old community-based collaborative that has been working to restore the health of area forest ecosystems and protect our communities from the threat of high-severity wildfire.

Specifically, the Partnership seeks to accomplish the following:

- Restore natural ecosystem composition, structure and function in ponderosa pine forests.
- Manage forest fuels to reduce the probability of high-severity fire and to protect our communities.
- Research, test, develop, and demonstrate key ecological, economic, and social dimensions of forest restoration and community protection.



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Our efforts in calendar year 2010 continued work in five major areas: project design and implementation, development of economic alternatives for use of the small diameter trees and woody biomass removed from our forests, evaluating the effectiveness of our actions, educating the public and engaging them in what we do, and managing and refining the structure we have in place to accomplish our work.

Project design and implementation. Our initial efforts - to start on the west and southwest sides of town, where fires that might start in existing thick forest fuels would be pushed by prevailing winds right into Flagstaff, and develop collaborative projects that would encircle the community in a protective zone of treated land – has been completed. We continue to track progress on implementation of treatments, with over 70,000 acres of Forest Service land scheduled for treatment – 49,750 of mechanical thinning and 20,975 burn only. To date, approximately 44,000 acres have been treated (by the USFS and all others) within the GFFP boundary. A major focus this year has been on establishing collaborative project design guidelines based on GFFP projects for the first Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) project area. Other significant activities included: continuing collaboration with the Flagstaff Fire Department on the City's Airport project and management of our fuel reduction thinning projects on private land within the CWPP area.

Public information and involvement requires constant effort as newcomers and visitors arrive or visit our area. We continue to promote, track and facilitate implementation of the *Community Wildfire Protection Plan*, especially as it relates to coordination with the 4FRI. The Partnership continues to receive various grants from AZ State Forestry Division to provide cost-share assistance to cover a portion of the cost of treating private lands within the Flagstaff wildland/urban interface. To date, almost \$450,000 has been distributed to more than 120 property owners to treat 1,000+ acres of land. Our targeted program to treat strategic acres resulted in Little America Hotel completing treatment of 63 additional high priority acres (310 total). The Hardy fire was stopped when it entered a portion of their treated land. Our major outreach effort this year was development of the "Yellow Belly Ponderosa" education program for K-5 grades with Flagstaff Community Partners funding and Flagstaff Leadership Academy production. Additional public information on forest health and Fire Wise information was provided during the 2010 Flagstaff Festival of Science in the Park, by members of our Board.



Utilization and economic development opportunities continue to be actively pursued. To reduce treatment costs to the federal government for thinning forests to reduce fuel loads, we have been working with Coconino County Sustainable Economic Development Initiative (SEDI) and 4FRI industry representatives to attract businesses that use woody biomass by-products from our forest restoration projects, and also to secure long-long-term and large-scale commitments of wood fiber from the US Forest Service through stewardship contracting. Progress has been slow, slow, but landscape-scale and long-term restoration initiatives are attracting interest from potential industries. We continue to explore various bio-energy options for utilization of woody forest biomass as a feedstock, including with NAU and with the wood

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procurement companies associated with the new Drake Cement plant in Pauldin.

Monitoring and research allows us to understand how our actions affect ecosystems and communities and then guides the implementation of adaptive management that ultimately promotes economic, social and ecological sustainability. Since forest restoration is a relatively new science, we have not been able to predict with absolute accuracy the levels of fire protection that are being provided to our community, neighborhoods and infrastructure. Our goal is to implement treatments that reflect a diverse, heterogeneous forest structure of tree clumps and groups interspersed with grassy openings, verses homogenous stands of evenly spaced and similarly sized trees with a few embedded openings. In attempting to achieve these conditions, only monitoring will confirm if that has been achieved. Major effort was directed towards post-treatment monitoring of conditions at the City Well Field site and the resulting determination of the effects of these treatments. In conjunction with NAU's School of Forestry, we continued monitoring of our Mountaineer "partner mark" sites and followed through with post-treatment monitoring for the City Airport site. NAU students and staff are also completing fire modeling to determine pre- and post-treatment fire conditions to determine differences in predicted fire behavior. AZGFD continues wildlife studies (Abert's squirrel) to assess the effects of treatments at the Mountaineer and Airport sites. We completed Phase I of the smoke & health study and are looking at options to continue with Phase II. Our Lesson's Learned Report that identifies key achievements and how we can improve into the future was completed and utilized in collaborative activities for 4FRI. Lastly, we continue to refine and update our website.



Management and administration activity is essential for any collaborative organization addressing complex issues. The Partnership continues to refine our all-volunteer organization. We target limited funding to specific project areas through contract work. Partners have supported action teams to guide activities and specific programs, and then organizations or individuals with expertise specific to each task have been contracted to accomplish on-the-ground actions. Board members have stepped up to complete tasks and coordinate with project contractors. The model we initiated in early 2008 appears to be working well and, as a result, our administrative expenses have been limited to general liability and Directors' & Officers' insurance, accounting and bookkeeping services, copying, printing and mailing, web maintenance, and miscellaneous minor charges.

It was back in 1996 that the founders of the Partnership got together for the first time to figure out how the community could address the forest health crisis and protect Flagstaff from threats presented by wildfires burning in the area. A lot



was accomplished in 2010, but we look forward to the future as we continue to meet the needs of Flagstaff and surrounding communities with our volunteer effort. In 2011 our major effort will be to assist 4FRI with review and support of the Draft EIS for the first 750,000 acre analysis area and to support the USFS on issuance of an RFP for long-term and large scale commitments of wood, which will facilitate the establishment of new community-based, sustainable wood products industries. We will also financially support treatment of targeted private lands, educate students through the "Yellow Belly Ponderosa" presentations, focus planning efforts on the Lake Mary & Rio de Flag watersheds, and use adaptive management to assure effectiveness of our programs.

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