

# GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

## Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community Annual Report - 2011

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is a 16-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.



GREATER  
FLAGSTAFF  
FORESTS  
PARTNERSHIP

WWW.GFFP.ORG

Our efforts in calendar year 2011 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 primary effort to design and implement collaborative projects with the Coconino National Forest and other land managers to buffer the community with areas of treated land has been completed. We continue to track progress on implementation of treatments, and to date, approximately 49,000 acres have been treated (by the US Forest Service and all others) within the GFFP boundary. We continue to provide significant input and leadership for the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), and along with the City of Flagstaff, submitted a letter to encourage designation of the Rio de Flag and Lake Mary watersheds as priority treatment areas within the first 988,000-acre analysis area. Other significant activities included: initiating a “review” of the *Greater Flagstaff Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan* (CWPP), approved in 2005, to document implementation progress; and continuing management of our fuel reduction thinning projects on private land within the CWPP area, including contracting with a local forestry company to identify critical gaps in treatment for priority action and funding.



**Utilization and Economic Development.** 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 various industry representatives to attract businesses that use woody biomass by-products from local forest restoration projects. The 4FRI stewardship contracting Request For Proposals (RFP) was issued and bids are being evaluated to mechanically treat 30,000 acres per year for 10 years on the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests – it should be awarded spring of 2012. We coordinated use by the City of Flagstaff of chipped forest biomass from the Airport Project as alternate daily cover at the City landfill. We continue to explore various bio-energy options for utilization of woody forest biomass as a feedstock, including use at Northern Arizona University (NAU) campus and with the wood procurement companies associated with the Drake Cement plant in Pauldin AZ.

**Monitoring and Research.** We continue to monitor our activities in order to understand how our actions affect ecosystems and communities. Our goal, and that of 4FRI, is to implement treatments that reflect a diverse, heterogeneous forest structure of tree clumps and groups interspersed with grassy openings supporting a natural fire regime, versus homogenous stands of evenly spaced and similarly sized trees with a few embedded openings. Implementation of adaptive management based on monitoring results allows adjustments that ultimately promote enhanced economic, social and ecological sustainability. We continued our efforts with NAU’s School of Forestry and their graduate students for post-treatment monitoring and fire behavior modeling of conditions at the City Airport and Mountainaire “partner mark” sites. In conjunction with 4FRI, we assisted with development of the overall ecological monitoring framework, and took a leadership role in designing the social and economic monitoring program. In addition, the AZ Game & Fish Dept (AZGFD) continues wildlife monitoring (Abert’s squirrel) at the Mountainaire and Airport treatments sites.

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

1300 S. Milton Road, Suite 209 ~ Flagstaff ~ Arizona ~ 86001 ~ [www.gffp.org](http://www.gffp.org)

**Public Information and Involvement.** We continue to promote, back and facilitate implementation of the CWPP, 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, more than \$500,000 has been distributed to 132 property owners to treat 1,200+ acres of land. Both the Woody and Hardy fires were stopped when they approached and entered privately treated land. Our major outreach effort this year was continuing to pursue options for funding expanded performances of the “Yellow Belly Ponderosa” education program for K-5 grades. Success was recently confirmed when we were notified that YBP had been funded through the Kaibab NF with a new “More Kids in the Woods” grant. A community performance of Yellow Bellied Ponderosa (YBP) occurred during the 2011 Festival of Science. Lastly, we continue to refine and update our website.



**Management and Administration.** The Partnership continues to refine our all-volunteer organization, including the addition of three new Board members late in the year. We target limited funding to specific project areas through contract work. Partners help to develop and guide activities and specific programs, and then organizations or individuals with expertise specific to each task are 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 is 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, meeting registration and expenses, travel, web maintenance, and miscellaneous minor charges.

It was back in 1996 that the founders of the Partnership got together for the first time to determine how the community should address the forest health crisis and protect Flagstaff from threats presented by wildfires burning in the area. A lot was accomplished in 2011, but we look towards the future as we continue to meet the needs of Flagstaff and surrounding communities with our volunteer efforts. In 2012, GFFP plans to focus on: assisting 4FRI with review and support of the Draft EIS for the first 988,000 acre analysis area and to support the successful bidder for the long-term and large scale stewardship contract, which will facilitate the establishment of new community-based, sustainable wood products industries; financially support treatment of targeted private lands; educate students through YBP presentations; focus planning efforts on the Lake Mary & Rio de Flag watersheds, including exploration of “Payment for Watershed Services” to help fund watershed based treatments; and use monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness of our programs.

#### **GFFP Board of Directors**

***Paul Summerfelt***, *President*, Flagstaff Fire Department

***Steve Gatewood***, *Treasurer*, WildWood Consulting, LLC

***John Aber***, *Coconino County Community Development*

***Scott Harger***, *Coconino Natural Resources Conservation District*

***Shaula Hedwall***, *US Fish & Wildlife Service*

***Alan Kaufman***, *Coconino Rural Environment Corps*

***Anne Mottek Lucas***, *Mottek Consulting, LLC*

***Mark Sensibaugh***, *Ecological Restoration Institute, NAU*



#### **GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP**

1300 S. Milton Road, Suite 209 ~ Flagstaff ~ Arizona ~ 86001 ~ [www.gffp.org](http://www.gffp.org)