

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community

Annual Report - 2012

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is a 17-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.

Our efforts in calendar year 2012 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 through monitoring and adaptive management; 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, over 50,000 acres have been treated (by the US Forest Service and all others) within the GFFP boundary. We made significant contributions to the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), including serving as Co-Chair of the Stakeholder Group and taking a leadership role in design of their social and economic monitoring efforts. Follow up activities for the Rio de Flag and Lake Mary watersheds included support to the City of Flagstaff in design of their Forest Health and Watershed Protection Project Bond question. 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. Since 2004, more than \$560,000 has been distributed to 145 property owners to treat 1,200+ acres of land.



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Utilization and Economic Development. To reduce treatment costs to the federal government for thinning forests to reduce fuel loads, we have been working with various partners to attract businesses that use woody biomass by-products from local forest restoration projects. The 4FRI stewardship contract that is planning to mechanically treat 30,000 acres per year for 10 years on the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests was awarded to Pioneer Forest Products and GFFP partners look forward to working closely with them. We continued to provide chipped forest biomass from the West Route 66 Project as alternate daily cover at the City landfill, and we continue to explore various bio-energy options for utilization of woody forest biomass as a renewable and sustainable feedstock.

Monitoring and Research. We continue to monitor our activities in order to understand how our actions affect ecosystems and communities. Implementation of adaptive management based on monitoring results allows adjustments that ultimately promote enhanced economic, social and ecological sustainability. We expanded our efforts with NAU's School of Forestry students for monitoring conditions at the West Route 66 project. In conjunction with 4FRI, we took a leadership role in designing the Social and Economic Monitoring Frameworks that will assist in conducting these kinds of monitoring projects. In addition, the AZ Game & Fish Dept. (AZGFD) continues wildlife monitoring (Abert's squirrel) at the Mountaineer and Airport treatments sites.

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Public Information and Involvement. Our major outreach effort this year was continuing to pursue options for funding expanded performances of the “Yellow Belly Ponderosa” (YBP) 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. In addition, we received a grant from SRP to further develop the YBP program by teacher-led development of pre- post lesson plans and evaluations for the 4th and 5th grades, as well as produce a professional filming of the production that can be distributed to schools across the State. To children’s delight, the YBP characters appeared and visited with them at the 2012 Festival of Science. We presented at three conferences this year: Arizona Planners Association, 2012 Smallwood Conference, and Association for Fire Ecology Southwest Regional Conference. Lastly, we continue to refine and update our website.



Other Significant Activities: 1) Published report on Review and Update of the *Greater Flagstaff Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*, initially approved in 2005; 2) began to engage with City to assist facilitation of the voter-approved (73%) Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project, in the areas of public engagement, funding leverage, tribal relations, and monitoring efforts; and 3) initiated evaluation of a new proposed logging technique – Forester Informed/Cutter Select Harvesting and Monitoring.

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 then organizations or individuals with expertise specific to each task are contracted to accomplish on-the-ground actions. Board members 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.

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

In 2013, 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;
- support efforts to implement forest treatments in the Rio de Flag/Dry Lake Hills and Upper Lake Mary watersheds through the City Forest & Watershed Protection Bond; and
- use monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness of our programs.



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* Paul Summerfelt resigned as President in January 2013

