

# **GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP**

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

### ***Annual Report – 2013***

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is an 18-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 2013 continued work in five major areas: 1) project design and implementation; 2) development of economic alternatives for use of the small diameter trees and woody biomass removed from our forests; 3) evaluating the effectiveness of our actions through monitoring and adaptive management; 4) educating the public and engaging them in what we do; and 5) managing and refining the organizational structure to accomplish our work.

The major focus of our efforts were tied to the work associated with the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP), and on the ground forest restoration treatments on private properties in and around Flagstaff.

**Project Design and Implementation.** GFFP efforts have been primarily focused on strategic involvement in the planning efforts of the 4FRI and FWPP projects. GFFP has taken a leadership role in the 4FRI steering committee and the Landscape Assessment and Monitoring Working Group and has also contributed monetarily towards the professional facilitation. We also assisted in the 4FRI's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) review and provided comments directly to the Forest Service (USFS). In addition, GFFP has contracted with the City of Flagstaff to work on the FWPP in outreach, implementation, monitoring, tribal engagement and external grant funding. We have implemented treatments along Route 66 testing a Forester Informed Cutting Select Harvest and Monitoring (FISCHM) system. 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 (WUI). We are working collaboratively with the State Forestry Division and Northern Arizona University to develop "Standards of Treatments" to communicate to private landowners that receive cost-share assistance the appropriate on the ground results we expect from fire risk reduction treatments. Since 2004, more than \$600,000 has been distributed to property owners to treat 1,500+ acres of land.



**Utilization and Economic Development.** The Partnership continues to seek new ways of reducing treatment costs to reduce forest density and fuel loads. Our efforts include working with various partners to attract businesses that use woody biomass by-products from local forest restoration projects. GFFP continues to provide support and solutions to utilization efforts associated with the 4FRI stewardship contract, the largest in history. This effort plans to mechanically treat 30,000 acres per year for 10 years on the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests and was recently awarded to Good Earth Power AZ. GFFP has begun to engage with the new contractor and looks forward to working closely with them in the future. We continue to explore various bio-energy options, such as the proposed NAU biomass plant, for utilization of woody forest biomass as a renewable and sustainable feedstock.

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**Monitoring and Adaptive Management.** 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. GFFP was a leader in completing the *Adaptive Management Biophysical and Socioeconomic Monitoring Plan* for the 4FRI and we are leading the completion of the FWPP Capacity Monitoring Frameworks for Fire Behavior, Hydrologic Response, and in Socioeconomic. These products will assist in conducting monitoring projects to better determine FWPP and 4FRI effectiveness. The Partnership also supported the 4FRI focus groups with cash incentives for the participants.

**Public Information and Involvement.** Our major outreach effort this year was completing performances of the “Yellow Belly Ponderosa” (YBP) education program for K-5 grades that were funded by two grants awarded in 2012 (USFS More Kids In The Woods and SRP, totaling approx. \$30k). Ten traveling performances were delivered to Native American schools across northern Arizona in the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests (see: [yellowbellyponderosa.org](http://yellowbellyponderosa.org)). In addition, SRP funding was used to enhance the YBP program by developing and administering teacher-led pre- post-lesson plans and evaluations for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, as well completing a professional filming of the production that can be distributed as an educational package to schools across the State (see: <http://www.srpnet.com/education/yellowbelly.aspx>).



GFFP participated in the SRP conference, “Restoration Investment Strategies” and displayed informational booths for both the YBP program and for the FWPP. We also presented at the USFS Region 2 and 3 Collaborative Forest Restoration Program’s (CFLRP) Conference in Colorado. Lastly, we are redesigning and updating our website.

**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 the work. In addition, the Partnership seeks external grant funding to supplement our work. Board members complete organizational tasks as required and coordinate and oversee 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 2014, GFFP plans to focus on:

- assisting the 4FRI with review and support of the Final EIS for the first 988,000 acre analysis area and to support Good Earth Power AZ for the long-term and large scale stewardship contract, which will facilitate the establishment of new community-based, sustainable wood products industries;
- financially support and provide standards of treatments for targeted private lands;
- continue outreach and education efforts throughout the community;
- support efforts to implement forest treatments in the Rio de Flag/Dry Lake Hills and Upper Lake Mary watersheds through the FWPP;
- support internships for NAU students to provide services that achieve our goals;
- participate in regional workshops and conferences that support our goals; and
- continue to develop and implement monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness of our programs.



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