

# **GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP**

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

### ***Annual Report – 2014***

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is a 19-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 2014 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 this year were tied to the work associated with the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP), the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, and in cost-share programs that encourage and fund on-the-ground forest restoration treatments on private properties in and around Flagstaff.

**Project Design and Implementation.** GFFP has been primarily focused on strategic involvement in the efforts of two major projects in the area; the 4FRI and FWPP. In 2014, GFFP has taken a leadership role in the 4FRI steering committee, the utilization and communication working groups, and the Multi-Party Monitoring Board. GFFP also assisted in the open house event that was held for the 4FRI's release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and worked to review how the USFS addressed the stakeholders' comments within the FEIS. In addition, GFFP has contracted with the City of Flagstaff to work on various aspects for the FWPP in five broad areas that include: outreach, implementation, monitoring, tribal engagement and grant funding. Similar to the 4FRI, GFFP assisted in a FWPP open house event for the community to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and provided comments to the FWPP DEIS to the US Forest Service (USFS). This year, the Partnership has received a \$200,000 (\$11,900 in match) WFHF grant from AZ State Forestry Division to provide cost-share assistance to cover a portion of the cost of treating areas in Ft. Tuthill, the Arboretum, and smaller tracks of private land. The partnership has also received a WBBI grant of \$100,000 (\$105,000 in match) for treatment of 250 acres on Observatory Mesa. Since 2004, the cost share program has resulted in total funding of upwards of \$1 million that has been distributed to property owners to treat approximately 2,000 acres of land.

**Utilization and Economic Development.** The Partnership continues to be involved with other FWPP and 4FRI stakeholders to seek out and promote new ways of reducing treatment costs, modify forest density and fuel loads, minimize fire risk, while promoting overall resiliency of our forests. 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. GFFP has been part of the 4FRI stakeholder utilization working group to engage community members and the Forest Service with industry and looks forward to helping to facilitate solutions to small diameter wood utilization 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, as well as other wood product solutions.



Photo credit: A. Mottek

**Monitoring and Adaptive Management.** GFFP continues to monitor 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 is working with the 4FRI's newly established (June 2014) Multi-Party Monitoring Board (MPMB). The MPMB is working toward establishing ecological, social and economic monitoring sampling designs, protocols, analyses, and developing an accessible database. Further, GFFP led the completion of FWPP's City Monitoring Plan and will continue to update the plan as various studies are complete. Both of these efforts will assist in conducting monitoring projects to better determine FWPP and 4FRI effectiveness.

**Public Information and Involvement.** GFFP has become one of the national "hubs" with the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FACLN) (see: <http://www.fireadapted.org/region/fac-learning-network.aspx>). The FACLN is supporting GFFP to encourage



Photo credit: FACLN

the development and sharing of best practices and learning innovations that accelerate the adoption of fire adapted community concepts. Through this learning exchange, GFFP has committed to implementing and sharing the work we are doing to increase the Flagstaff community's resilience to wildfire. GFFP displayed informational booths for both the FACLN and FWPP at two regional conferences, "Healthy Forest, Vibrant Economy" hosted by the Salt River Project (SRP), and the Southwest Fire Science Consortium's Wildland Fire Smoke Workshop. Lastly, we continue to work on 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. We also engage students as paid interns from Northern Arizona University (NAU) to accomplish our work. In addition, the Partnership seeks external grant funding to supplement our work, which has occurred this year through the FACLN and with AZ State Forestry Division cost share grants. Board members attended a retreat to fine tune management of the Partnership. The Board completes organizational tasks as required and coordinates and oversees project contractors. The model we initiated in early 2008 is working well and, as a result, our administrative expenses have been limited to Directors' & Officers' insurance, accounting and bookkeeping services, general office services, conference/workshop registration and expenses, travel, and web maintenance.

**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 2015, GFFP plans to focus on:

- Assisting the 4FRI with support and implementation of the Final EIS for the first 1 million acre analysis area
- Support Good Earth Power AZ/Campbell Global 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;
- Increase the Flagstaff community's resilience to wildfire through FACLN activities;
- Support FWPP efforts through monitoring, outreach, tribal engagement and financial leverage;
- Support internships for NAU students to provide services that achieve our goals;
- Participate in regional workshops and conferences that support restoration efforts and our goals; and
- Continue to develop and implement monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness of our programs.

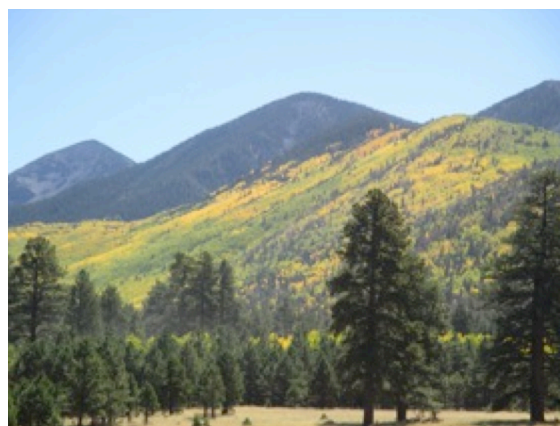


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#### **GFFP Board of Directors (2014)**

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