

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community

Annual Report – 2020

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) is a respected community-based organization that supports collaborative efforts and has been a leader in examining and demonstrating approaches to forest ecosystem restoration in the ponderosa pine forests surrounding Flagstaff, Arizona since 1996. GFFP continues to help lead a shift in public understanding and support for proactive forest management that is designed to increase awareness of threats our forested communities face and the proactive solutions underway to reduce our risk. GFFP is one of the longest standing forest restoration collaborative organizations in the country and has been recognized as a national model. Various organizations are represented within GFFP including academic; private; and municipal, state and federal agencies.



Our Vision: To research and demonstrate the various approaches to forest ecosystem restoration in the ponderosa pine forests, our actions are based on improving the overall sustainability and resiliency of the forests in the greater Flagstaff area. Sustainable and resilient forests are those that have the capacity to recover to pre-disturbance composition, structure, and/or function over time and can be maintained for future generations of forest users. As GFFP works toward future sustainability and resiliency of our forests and communities, our efforts focus on 1) multi-agency planning and coordinated and complimentary implementation of forest restoration projects, 2) monitoring and adaptive management, 3) utilization of woody biomass, and 4) outreach and education.

In 2020, GFFP's work plan and accomplishments were focused on the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FACLN), Arizona Fire Adapted Communities (AZFAC), and in identifying high priority areas in need of forest treatments (thinning trees and prescribed fire).

Planning and Implementation. Parcels within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) that compliment other treatments have been identified for cost-share grant applications. These grants encourage and fund on-the-ground forest restoration treatments on private and non-federal land, adjacent to and complimenting treatment areas on federal land, like the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP) and Bill Williams Mountain in the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests. Since 2004, the cost share program has resulted in total funding of upwards of \$1.4 million that has been distributed to property owners to treat approximately 3,000 acres of land.

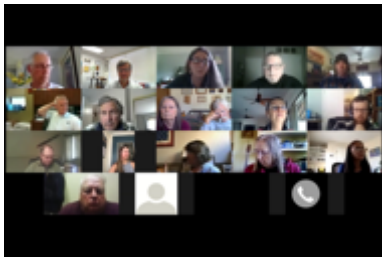


Thinning Operations behind Sechrist Elementary School on Hwy 180

GFFP regularly participated in the 4FRI stakeholder group and has provided substantial impacts that contribute to increasing accomplishments of the Initiative. This year, several GFFP Board members served as co-chairs of the stakeholder group. GFFP is also the primary stakeholder group for FWPP and assists the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) and the City of Flagstaff as needed. GFFP supported representation at the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes' "Cross-Boundary Landscape Restoration Workshop" to share successes, lessons-learned and to develop actionable strategies on cross-boundary, collaborative efforts to restore fire adapted forest landscapes

Monitoring and Adaptive Management. GFFP continued to work with 4FRI's Multi-Party Monitoring Board by updating the *Socioeconomic Monitoring* section of the "Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan" in the Draft Environment Impact Statement for Rim Country - 4FRI's 2nd analysis area on the east side of the state. These efforts assist in conducting socioeconomic monitoring projects that better determine 4FRI effectiveness. Based on monitoring results, application of lessons learned promote adaptive management and enhanced economic, social and ecological outcomes and programmatic sustainability.

Public Outreach and Education. This is the eighth year that GFFP participated as a national member with the FACLN. The FACLN supports the Partnership to develop and share best practices and innovations that accelerate the adoption of fire adapted community concepts and actions. Notable FACLN activities completed this year included: 1) solicited participation in the Wood Utilization Community of Practice at the Council for Western State Foresters' Forest Utilization Network's annual meeting; 2) continued development of our statewide learning network, "Arizona Fire Adapted Communities," "A Z FAC" (see azfac.org). The state network hosted many events that included: 2a) presented to the Southwest Fire and Prevention Information Committee – this occurred in collaboration with Fire Adapted New Mexico Learning Network; 2b) hosted our first virtual learning exchange designed to bring three communities (Pinetop, Prescott, and Strawberry/Pine) together to share and learn about fire adaptation issues and practices occurring across the state; and 2c) attended a "Network Coordinator's Workshop" to fine tune strategies to assure AZFAC's growth and sustainability. In partnership with FWPP, GFFP hosted Northern Arizona University's Ecological Restoration class on a field tour to Observatory Mesa. Lastly, GFFP is assisting Coconino County and other partners to distribute GFFP outreach materials to residents living in Parks and in planning a "Parks Community Forest Health and Safety Fair" in summer 2021.



Participants at AZFAC's Virtual Learning Exchange

Utilization and Economic Development. The Partnership continued involvement with other FWPP and 4FRI stakeholders to pursue and promote new ways of reducing treatment costs, modify forest density and fuel loads, minimize fire risk, while promoting economically viable solutions to forest restoration efforts. GFFP continues to seek opportunities to support businesses that use woody biomass by-products from local forest restoration projects. For example, as GFFP secures cost-share grants, we plan to engage and work with local contractors to assist in implementing forest treatments in critical areas within the WUI. In cooperation with the USFS, GFFP contributed during several virtual round table sessions to consider innovative conservation finance mechanisms that could be used to accelerate forest restoration treatments. Finally, GFFP co-chairs FACLN's Wood Utilization Community of Practice, which is a national forum of forestry professionals who share challenges, lesson learned, innovations and best practices that improve wood utilization success across the west.

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 organizations or individuals with expertise specific to each task are contracted to complete projects. The Partnership also secured external grant funding to supplement our work. The GFFP website (gffp.org) continues to be updated to reflect the Partnership's direction and accomplishments. The Board of Directors meets monthly to review financial status, complete other administrative duties and coordinates with and oversee project contractors. This model, initiated in 2008, has assisted with our financial viability and has proved effective. As a result, administrative expenses are limited to insurance, accounting, office space and supplies, and website hosting and maintenance.

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

In 2021, GFFP plans to provide:

- a professional forum and collaborative entity to achieve Partners' goals;
- assistance with implementation of the 4FRI 's first analysis area and complete planning for Rim Country (2nd analysis area);
- support for FWPP efforts through monitoring, public engagement, financial leverage and program management;
- funding for/implementation of on-the-ground treatments for targeted private and non-federal lands;
- increased awareness, mitigation and resilience to wildfire through implementing FACLN activities across Arizona;
- a statewide Arizona Fire Adapted Community Learning Network (AZFAC);
- promotion of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: 1) resilient landscapes, 2) fire adapted communities, and 3) safe and effective wildfire response;
- support for and participation in regional workshops and conferences that assist restoration efforts and our goals; and
- development and implementation of monitoring and adaptive management to assure effectiveness in our work.

GFFP Board of Directors

- Mark Brehl (President), National Forest Foundation
- Neil Chapman, City of Flagstaff Fire Dept., Forest Health Supervisor
- Dirch Foreman, Highlands Fire District, Fire Chief
- Aaron Green (Secretary), AZ Dept. of Forestry & Fire Management
- Anne Mottek (Treasurer), Mottek Consulting
- Andrew Sanchez Meador, Ecological Restoration Institute, Executive Director
- Jay Smith, Coconino County, Forest Restoration Director