

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community

Annual Report – 2021

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 community 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 2021, GFFP's workplan 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, non-federal land in need of forest treatments (thinning trees and prescribed fire). This year, several GFFP Board members served as chairs of the 4FRI stakeholder group. GFFP is also the primary stakeholder group for the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP) and assists the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) and the City of Flagstaff as needed.

Planning and Implementation. Parcels within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are continuously identified by GFFP for potential cost-share grant proposals. 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. This year, GFFP was awarded a Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI) grant to treat 147 acres. This area is located three miles southwest of Flagstaff's business district and is owned by Northern Arizona Health Care. These planned forest treatments will reduce wildfire risk to the Flagstaff community and increase defensible space for the future site of Northern Arizona's only Level 1 trauma center and medical campus. Fire risk reduction will also benefit nearby assets like Flagstaff Pulliam Airport, many neighborhoods, two high-voltage powerlines, major highways (SR89A/Belulah Blvd., Interstate 17), the Flagstaff Urban Trail System ("FUTS"), and the 660-acre Fort Tuthill County Park. The project will add to landscape level fire resilience as it borders the Coconino National Forest's 2000-acre Southside



GFFP Partners' field tour with the USFS at Hart Prairie

Airport Project (estimated to begin in 2022) and the 325-acre Fort Tuthill County Park thinning project that was completed by Coconino County and GFFP in 2017. Since 2004, the cost share program has resulted in total funding of upwards of \$1.5 million that has been distributed to property owners to treat approximately 3,200 acres of land. In addition, GFFP hosted a field tour at Hart Prairie to visit prior GFFP grant funded treatments at Camp Colton and on private parcels. Partners also met that day with the USFS to visit and learn about thinning treatments for the Wood for Life Program where cut logs are transported to tribal communities for fuel use. GFFP regularly participated in the 4FRI stakeholder group and has provided substantial impacts that contribute to increasing accomplishments of the Initiative.

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 Final 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 ninth 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) designed and developed COCOWildfire.org. This new website contains a brief description and associated links to monitored websites and social media platforms that provide reliable information for emergency wildfire events throughout Coconino County; 2) cochair of the Wood Utilization Community of Practice to encourage forest byproduct utilization strategies across the west; 3) continued development of our statewide learning network, “Arizona Fire Adapted Communities,” “AZ FAC” (see azfac.org). The state network completed several activities this year that included: 3a) developed an internal communication platform (“Podio”) for member-to-member communication; and 3b) hosted an “AZFAC Membership Drive Webinar” to encourage membership and connect community members, leaders, and wildfire practitioners to implement fire adaptation practices across the state. In partnership with FWPP and the Ecological Restoration Institute, GFFP was host to Northern Arizona University’s Ecological Restoration class on a field tour to Observatory Mesa (part of FWPP treatments). GFFP’s Board of Directors joined the Sedona Westerners Hiking Club to discuss the importance of prescribed fire and how their community can mitigate smoke effects.



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. 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 designed to accelerate 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 oversees 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 2022, 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;
- support for the Community Wildfire Protection Grant Program and other initiatives in the Infrastructure Act;
- increased awareness, mitigation and resilience to wildfire through implementing FACLN activities across Arizona;
- growing the 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

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Neil Chapman	City of Flagstaff Fire Dept., Forest Health Supervisor
Dirch Foreman (Secretary)	Highlands Fire District, Fire Chief (retired)
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