

GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Forest Ecosystems and Protecting Our Community

Annual Report – 2022

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 Greater Flagstaff Regions' 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 2022, GFFP's workplan and accomplishments were focused on the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net), Arizona Fire Adapted Communities (AZFAC), and in identifying high priority, non-federal land in need of forest treatments (e.g., thinning trees and prescribed fire). This year, several GFFP Board members served as chair of the 4FRI Stakeholder Group and Steering Committee, and these efforts have provided substantial impacts that contribute to increasing accomplishments of this Initiative. 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, through a Healthy Forest Initiative grant, GFFP completed treatments on 133 acres, owned by Northern Arizona Health Care (NAH Project). This fire risk reduction effort benefits many local assets like Flagstaff's westside business district, Flagstaff Pulliam Airport, nearby neighborhoods, two high-voltage powerlines and a communication line, major highways (SR89A/Belulah Blvd., Interstate 17), and the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS). Likewise, the project adds to landscape level fire resilience as it borders the Coconino National Forest's 2000-acre Southside Airport Project and the 325-acre Fort Tuthill County Park Project completed by Coconino County and GFFP in 2017. This summer, GFFP and Campbell Global hosted a field tour so that Partners could see the treatments first-hand and understand the pre- post-treatment monitoring that occurred through drone flights and heat maps generated from ground based cruise data. The project's exemplary outcomes earned Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's "[ADEQ Copper Voluntary Environmental Stewardship Program \(VESP\)](#)" recognition award. This acknowledgement is awarded each year for partnerships/collaborations "...that have completed a project that resulted in measurable improvements



GFFP Partner Field Tour at NAH Project

to the environment." GFFP Partners will continue to capitalize on opportunities to reach out to the community with messaging that highlights the effects of these treatments, and overall forest health and FireWise principles. Since 2004, the cost share program has resulted in total funding of upwards of \$2 million that has been distributed to property owners to treat approximately 3,333 acres of land. To further accomplishments in planning and implementation, GFFP Partners participated in and contributed to outcomes of the national "[Confronting the Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#)" Roundtables. These roundtables were designed to assist the USFS in developing this strategy, which will assure a dramatic increase in the scale and pace of forest health treatments. In turn, this will proactively address wildfire risk to critical infrastructure and communities as well as improving forest resilience over the coming decade.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management. GFFP updated the *Socioeconomic Monitoring* section of the “Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan” that is included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Rim Country – 4FRI’s 2nd analysis area on the eastside of the state (Final Record of Decision, Sept. 2022). This effort will assist those interested in conducting monitoring projects to better determine 4FRI’s socioeconomic outcomes. 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 tenth year that GFFP participated as a national member of FAC Net. FAC Net supports the Partnership to develop and share best practices and innovations that accelerate the adoption of fire adapted community concepts and actions. Notable FAC Net activities completed this year included: 1) Spanish translation to COCOWildfire.org. This website is designed to provide reliable information for emergency wildfire events for residents throughout Coconino County; 2) led the Wood Utilization Community of Practice to encourage forest byproduct utilization strategies across the west; and 3) continued development of the statewide network, AZFAC. In partnership with the School of Forestry, GFFP and the City of Flagstaff hosted Northern Arizona University’s (NAU) Ecological Restoration class on a field tour to Observatory Mesa (part of FWPP). GFFP also hosted teachers in summer seminars with NAU’s Dine Institute for Navajo Educators. During this field tour, GFFP showcased the Ft Tuthill County Park Forest Restoration Project/demonstration area so that teachers could improve their knowledge in forest health and restoration and effectively transmit this information to their students.



NAU’s Ecological Restoration Class on Observatory Mesa

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, the recent GFFP funded NAH Project hired a local contractor to thin 133 acres. In turn, these treatments dramatically reduced wildfire risk in a critical WUI area in Flagstaff. To further biomass utilization, GFFP hosts and supports the nascent Forest Biomass Coalition (FBC) to address the lack of forest biomass processing facilities on the western side of the State.

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 the work. The Partnership also secures 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 accounting, insurance, 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 2023, GFFP plans to provide:

- hosting and supporting professional forums, like FBC, and acting as a collaborative entity to achieve Partners’ goals;
- oversight for implementation of the 4FRI ‘s first and second analysis areas across northern Arizona;
- support for FWPP efforts through a collaborative forum, public engagement, and complimentary treatments;
- funding for and implementation of on-the-ground treatments for targeted private and non-federal lands;
- support for the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program and other initiatives in the Infrastructure Act;
- increased awareness, mitigation, and resilience to wildfire through implementing FAC Net activities across Arizona;
- 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.

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