

FRIENDS OF NORTHERN **ARIZONA FORESTS**



Photo courtesy Bill Waters

NEWSLETTER

November 2023

State of the Organization for 2023

Friends of Northern Arizona Forests



Bob Dyer, FoNAF President

2023 has been a remarkable year in making our forests friendlier for wildlife and human activities. We have again expanded and diversified our overall level of accomplishments thanks to a group of very skilled volunteers in the field who consistently demonstrating their enthusiasm for completing all approved projects to our high standards.

For the 2023 FY our volunteers gave 5501 hours of their time toward fulfilling FoNAF's mission to the Forest Service.

While our achievements this year have been significant and numerous, I need to bring special attention to the Aspen Team. It has increased from a historical base of roughly eight to ten volunteers to an average of twelve to fourteen highly motivated core members this year. Due to the consistency of meeting twice a week from early May until late October, the collective skill sets of these volunteers are broad and effective. Each member can work independently on a variety of project types, making for a highly productive group. As of early October, over 50 projects have been successfully completed. Thanks to all the team members and to Tom Mackin, Outdoor Coordinator and VP, for an amazing year of making our forests better.

The highlights for 2023 are numerous. Below are a few stand out examples:

Fencing:

- Over 4070 volunteer hours by the Aspen Team.
- 11 miles of barbed wire removed from the forest floor.
- 23 tons of wire and other fencing material destined for recycling.
- 1000 feet of log worm fences built to prevent OHV damage to forests.

Exclosures/Trick Tanks:

- Exclosure stewards faithfully checked over 120 sites twice a year, making repairs on the spot or calling in reinforcements.

- No new aspen exclosures were built this year so maintenance dominates our exclosure work with significant expansion into KNF.
- Refurbishing trick tanks focused on two being rebuilt this year.

Affiliations and Awards:

- Accepted as an affiliate of Arizona Wildlife Federation.
- Initiated stronger coordination with AZG&F for joint project planning.
- “Enduring Service Award” from the Forest Service for "making a difference locally."
- “Citizen of the Year” honor to Tom Mackin, VP.

Financial Support:

- Mike Anderson’s \$25k gift for wildlife protection projects (see below).
- Ride Northern Arizona Side X Side organization’s gift of \$3200 from their charity event in September.

FoNAF was blessed with a substantial financial gift from Mike Anderson, a person dedicated to sustaining and improving wildlife habitat in Northern Arizona and a longtime friend of FoNAF. FoNAF was chosen as recipients by Mike due to our sustained efforts and contributions over the years in the forest. The funding of \$25,000 each year into the future can be used for wildlife or habitat projects approved by the Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department as the protocols require. We are very grateful to Mike, his generosity, and we sincerely thank him.

The Aspen Team has formed a special volunteer relationship with NAU Professor Ben Carver’s university staff made possible by a new university policy allowing staff to substitute work hours for volunteer hours. We were pleased to have as many as six NAU employees join the Aspen Team on several outings to remove old fencing. Clearly this is a win-win for everyone and we hope to renew our association with NAU next year.

A primary objective this year of enhancing our communications, working relationships, and project coordination with the Kaibab National Forest representatives has been very successful. Two FoNAF team members have become excellent resources for monitoring and correcting the eighty exclosures in the Williams area. Their commitment to our goals in the forest is very much appreciated and welcomed. Despite focused efforts to have a stronger presence on the Mogollon Ranger District for exclosure improvements and maintenance, results have been less than desired due to ranger district communication and planning shortcomings.

Trail Ambassadors/PSAR set a high bar this year for delivering a valued service to hikers and to the goal of making mountain rescues rare. A dedicated team of FoNAF members and Forest Service representatives worked the trailheads every weekend and holidays all summer. Thanks to them and the important role they play in keeping safety first.

Thanks to everyone for another very successful year for FoNAF!

Fall with the Trail Ambassadors

By Bill Waters



*Photo courtesy
Bill Waters*

Fall is upon us and that means Aspens in FULL COLOR. For your Trail Ambassadors/ Preventative Search & Rescue (TA/PSAR) members it is the busiest time of year and the two most asked questions are “where is the Aspen’s color the best?” and “why do the Aspen leaves change color?”

In recent memory, the Aspens at 7000’ and above turn to those golden colors about the second week in October, but their timing can be finicky. As we can all see, there are aspen groves in many places around the San Francisco Peaks and each has its own timing as to when the leaves turn yellow or orange and drop for winter. You know that the leaves are the tree’s food factory, taking water and nutrients from the ground and carbon dioxide from the air. They combine in photosynthesis producing chlorophyll and green leaves. Come fall the bright green fades away and we are gifted with yellows and orange. Temperature and moisture are the main influences. Warm sunny days and cool but not freezing nights plus the moisture levels in the soil seem to make for the most spectacular color. So a warm wet spring, favorable summer weather, warm sunny fall days with cool nights are the best. Easy, right! Fingers are crossed for a spectacular color season this year.

Your FoNAF TA/PSAR team will be ready when the Aspens are at peak providing both hiking safety information and tips as well as directions to the best Aspen Color areas around the Peaks. This year the focus will be on Aspen Corner along Snow Bowl Rd, Aspen Loop Trail, Kachina Trail and spots on (Hart Prairie Rd) FS 151 & FS 418 roads. A big favorite for leaf peepers has been the switchbacks at Inner Basin Trail up slope from Lockett Meadow. But this year access to Lockett Meadow has been reduced to hiking and biking due to the needed reconstruction and upgrades of FS 533. As you know, there are lots of clusters of aspens in the Coconino National Forest at 7,000’ and above so although some of largest clusters of aspens are on and around the Peaks, there are many smaller ones almost in every direction. You can be sure that your TA/PSAR volunteers will be telling the important story of the work being done by FoNAF volunteers throughout the Coconino National Forest and beyond to protect and support the regeneration of aspens.

Getting to Know Matt Sommer



Matt and Marlin enjoying the forest together

Most of us have met him, but let's take this chance to get to know Matt Sommer a little bit better. Matt is the Volunteer Coordinator with the Flagstaff District of the Coconino National Forest and he has been in this position for three years. Matt started with the Forest Service as a seasonal employee in 2005 and has been in the Coconino since 2007 except for a two-year stint in the Manti-La Sal National Forest in Utah.

Matt hails from Bluffton, Ohio, a small town in western Ohio near Toledo, but was drawn west and mixed his early college career between Ashland University in Ohio and community college in Albuquerque before coming to NAU in Flagstaff where he earned his BS in Parks and Recreation Management in 2004. He and his wife, Emily, who is a USGS employee, enjoy hiking, backpacking and kayaking, particularly with their dog Marlin.

His duties with the Forest Service include not only coordinating the volunteer efforts of groups like FoNAF, but also supervising the Developed Recreation Crew, which manages all recreation sites in the district other than trails. Some of the projects with this group have involved FoNAF, including activities like building logworm fences around dispersed camping areas and other places, and cleaning up abandoned (and trashed) campsites throughout the forest. This crew has three permanent and three temporary members and oversees a large area of forest.

One of Matt's highlights, in addition, of course, to getting to know the diverse group of FoNAF members, has been the transition from being a simply a "do-er" to a facilitator. This type of transition has its challenges, but seeing that he can help others with both volunteer and career work, and at the same time get a lot more done than if he was only out doing "hands-on" work has been a particular source of satisfaction for him. Matt has been a tremendous help to FoNAF and we certainly appreciate all the work he has done on our behalf.

The funds you gave us will be applied very prudently to purchasing fencing material such as logs for our building log worm fences. The Forest Service asks us to build this style fence to help regulate unwanted vehicle traffic on protected forest land. We have built over 1000' so far in 2023 thanks to the funding Ride Northern Arizona gave us in 2021.

Thank everyone for helping us in such a significant way. We do truly appreciate it.

Bob Dyer, FoNAF President

Thanks to Tom Mackin and his son Rob for manning one of the poker-run pick-up spots along the designated route on forest roads.



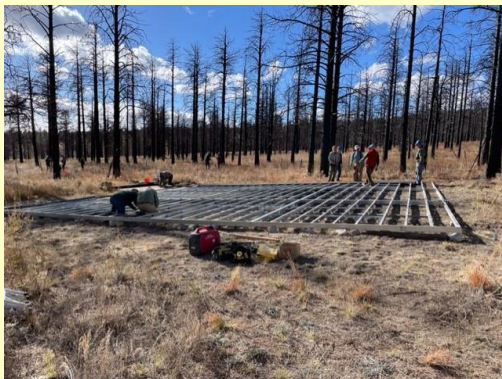
This past summer the FoNAF removed the fence from enclosure #5. Looks a lot better doesn't it?

Rebuilding a Trick Tank the FoNAF Way

Over four days in late October, members of FoNAF rebuilt a trick tank near the White Vulcan Mine that had been burned in the 2022 Pipeline Fire. The first two days were spent tearing down the burned and twisted remains and preparing the site, while the last two days consisted of the rebuilding of the apron, clearing out the muck in the drinker, repairing an outer fence and constructing a new fence around the apron itself. Over 15 people took part in the effort.

Debris Trick Tank, located at the northeast base of Sugarloaf in GMU7E, was one of four similar water developments built by the Forest Service in the late 1970's or early 1980's that were damaged by recent fires in the area. FoNAF worked on two of the others in recent years and Debris was the last one that was salvageable. There have been numerous wildlife species in this area for years and keeping these water developments in good repair is important for sustaining these local populations. Species include mule deer, elk, pronghorn, turkey and many varieties of song birds and other smaller mammals.

With the burned trees readily apparent, the area is not very pleasing to view but as these trees eventually fall and start to decompose, they will provide nutrients and additional organic matter to support future vegetation growth, including replacement trees, grasses and shrubs.



Complete frame, ready for apron



Apron under construction



FoNAF members getting their hands dirty cleaning out the drinker vault.



Completed trick tank



The Trick Tank Rebuilding Crew

FoNAF Fall Meeting Highlights

The FoNAF annual meeting/board meeting was held October 18th. In addition to many members, several people from the Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department attended. Nick Mustoe, Deputy Director for the Coconino Forest and Matt Sommer, Volunteer Coordinator for the Flagstaff office, and Megan Young, Volunteer Coordinator for Arizona Game and Fish were there, and Mark Nable, Silviculturist with the Flagstaff office attended via Zoom. Nick, Matt and Megan gave brief thanks for our efforts and Mark made a virtual presentation on the status of aspens in the Coconino Forest. Bob Dyer gave his state of the organization presentation, including the generous donation from the Northern Arizona SxS group, Tom Mackin described the efforts of the Aspen Team, Bill Waters gave an update of the work of the Trail Ambassadors, and Sue Priest reported that the enclosure monitoring had gone well. A slate of officers was approved and the new members of the board of directors were welcomed, including Rick Kalinowski, Pat Stein and Dianne Vosick. Overall, this was another very successful year for FoNAF.

Kudos to FoNAF from Matt Sommer

Below is an email that Bob Dyer received from Matt Sommer, Volunteer Coordinator for the Flagstaff District of the Coconino National Forest. Bob asked that it be included, with Matt's permission, and it helps express how many people feel about the group.

Friends of Northern Arizona Forests members,

After the annual FONAF meeting this afternoon I took the dog out for a walk and regretted not expressing better how I feel about you all and the work and time you devote to volunteerism. It has been inspiring to work with you over the last handful of years and your dedication to making the forest a better place for wildlife, plant ecosystems, recreation, education and forest health in general is really something that I am proud to play some small role in. If I make it to retirement I may just become a regular member!

Every year as I record volunteer hours I save you for last so I can see our number soar. It is really satisfying I gotta say. I have a personal competition with the Coronado N.F. (they have no idea), but this year we just might win. They are sort of like the Patriots, or the Yankees. They always seem to come out on top at the last minute, but once in awhile someone else sneaks in there.

From the volunteer coordinator seat there are some things I feel like I need to touch on. It is easy to look at the numbers and see tangible results in your work, but there is so much behind the scenes work that folks devote to keeping FONAF successful that I want to address. Membership and funds management, website maintenance and outreach, grant proposals, money laundering (only kidding), project recon, tool and supplies acquisitions, continued efforts to improve safety, trainings and a multitude of other things that need to happen to keep the organization strong. It is not always an easy thing to be a volunteer, however you all have done a great job creating, growing and maintaining the FONAF organization.

There are many days I wish I was out there with you and mostly that is true, but now and again someone drops off the dump truck keys in my office and all I have to do is look at the scratches, torn and dirty shirts and when they leave I am thankful I was not on that project, but grateful that we have a group of folks that feel passionate enough about their mission that they keep coming back for more. In my few years working with FONAF I cannot recall a single project that was turned down? Thank you for the continued thoughtful support and enthusiasm for public lands!

FoNAF Board of Directors

Bob Dyer, President	Dick Coast	Jim Hoyne
Tom Mackin, Vice President	Rick Kalinowski	Bill Kluwin
Dave Downes, Treasurer	Curt Knight	Jim McGeorge
Tom Barberic, Secretary	Sue Priest	Doug Shepard
	Pat Stein	Rob Vane
	Dianne Vosick	

Coconino National Forest information:

District Rangers: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/coconino/about-forest/offices>

Website address: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/coconino/>

Friends of Northern Arizona Forests

Website: <http://www.friendsofnorthernarizonaforests.org/>

Contact: inquiry@FriendsofNAzForests.org