



FRIENDS OF NORTHERN **ARIZONA FORESTS**

NEWSLETTER

April 2022

Trail Ambassadors “Get Ready!”

By Bill Waters

Background and Overview

Since the US Forest Service Flagstaff District began the preventive search and rescue program on the Kachina peaks and Humphrey's Trail in 2015, FoNAF has been very involved. It was recognized by the Forest Service that Humphreys Peak, the tallest point in Arizona at 12,633', was a strong attraction for as many as 35,000 local, regional, national and international visitors. Challenging weather, high mountain oxygen issues, and sometimes unprepared visitors, the mountain presented a risk to many.

Over the years the focus has been on Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) efforts to screen “hikers” going up the mountains, mitigating personal injury disasters for them requiring complex and expensive rescue efforts. A win-win for both the hikers and the rescue agencies. In the past we've had an information station at the trailhead near the

Snowbowl. Our FoNAF volunteers are an integral part of this effort with the Forest Service to promote hiker safety on the trail to our highest peak in Arizona.



Curt Knight and Bill Waters at the trailhead

New “Trail Ambassador” Program Design and Benefits

Forest Service managers recognized the opportunity to provide visitors with important information about the Coconino Forest and the Kachina Peaks Wilderness through in person contact and information signage. The concept of information sharing and safety support continues today. The volunteers and leaders from FoNAF in concert with the USFS staff and volunteers will again be supporting the 2022 season.

Through many FoNAF volunteers over the years and now the leadership of our board members **Bill Waters and Curt Knight** the program has evolved and now is named “Trail Ambassadors.” Trail Ambassadors are divided into two specialty categories. “Information Specialists” and “Trail Preventative Search & Rescue.”

- **Information Specialists** staff the trailhead booth to provide information of the Kachina Peaks and the area trails as well as assessing the readiness and capability

of the hikers. If there is doubt that the visitor/hiker is prepared for the 5-6 hour hike up to Humphreys peak, the specialists provide information making them aware of the effort and supplies/equipment required for a successful, safe hike.

- **Trail PSAR's** hike the three Kachina Peak trails carrying extra water, medical supplies, snacks and a smile to assist on-trail visitors. They are not EMT's or medical specialists, but are able to provide assistance and information. Engaging our visitors on the trails reduces the need for the Coconino County Sheriff's SAR to be called out. Radio communication between the trail head and the PSAR rovers provides the ability to be aware of possibly unprepared hikers and to report and coordinate actions.

Our volunteers have learned a great deal, I'll say an impressive amount of information that allows them to answer questions ranging from very technical to very simple.

What Volunteers Can Expect

The Trail Ambassador's volunteer during the season (May to October) on the high-volume days of Saturday and Sunday and on the extra day provided by long weekend holidays. They are on "duty" at the trailhead or on the trail from 8am to 3pm. History has shown that the "peakers" who arrive very early in the morning are more experienced, knowledgeable and prepared than those that arrive in the late morning and afternoon. For this reason Trail Ambassadors cover those times when hiker traffic increases midmorning and early afternoon. Weather conditions are always an issue on the Kachina Peaks Wilderness and the volunteers keep track of adverse weather and retreat to safety long before it becomes dangerous.

The Trail Ambassador program has been an outgrowth of FoNAF's mission. Once the USFS identified the need for hiker assistance at the trail head it became clear FoNAF could play a key role. Trail Ambassadors will now provide good and accurate information about the Coconino National Forest as does the Trail Ambassador's ability to reach 35,000 visitors.

Every volunteer comes away from their time on the mountain with a new respect for Mother Nature, increased knowledge of the Kachina Peaks Wilderness, the flora and fauna, changing weather, history and delights of the San Francisco Peaks and Kachina Wilderness. And they also come away with the satisfaction of helping people from all over the world safely enjoy our unique wilderness gift.

Leading the Charge

In addition to Bill and Curt from FoNAF as a part of the 2022 Trail Ambassador program, the Forest Service has provided valuable leadership in obtaining seasonal

volunteers, program design, training, and resource materials. The three USFS Flagstaff Ranger District staff that are a part of the Trail Ambassadors this season are:

Victoria Allen, Asst Recreation Staff/Prog Lead, Flagstaff Ranger District
Matt Sommer, Volunteer Coordinator, Flagstaff Ranger District
Jody St. Clair, PSAR Volunteer Coordinator, Flagstaff Ranger District

The USFS and FoNAF will conduct a half day training session led by Curt Knight and the USFS managers for Trail Ambassadors volunteers in preparation for beginning our presence at the Humphrey's Trail head.

If you have an interest in volunteering for the Trail Ambassadors, either as an Information Specialist or a Trail PSAR Specialist or if you know people that would be interested in the program, please contact FONAF member Bill Waters, 901-846-9762 or flyingbill1@me.com or Matt Sommer, USFS Flagstaff Ranger District Volunteer Coordinator 928-606-3460, matthew.sommer@usda.gov.

See you on the Trail,

Bill Waters
Field Volunteer Leader
Trail Ambassadors
Kachina Peaks
Flagstaff Ranger District
Coconino National Forest



Aspen Team Have Their Boots on the Ground Early!

by Dave Downes and Tom Mackin

Spring in Flagstaff means many irritating things – demands for help with spring cleaning, winds that are measured in miles per second, and city council election campaigns. But for the Aspen Team, it means the opportunity to pull out our work

boots, find our tool belts and head out in the field with our teammates while trying to remember their names without having to admit that we didn't.

Following are descriptions of two projects of most interest the Aspen Team has already completed so far this year:

1. Limestone Trick Tank (commonly called a water catchment)

For 2022, we started the work season on March 26th rebuilding a water catchment (called a trick tank in the local vernacular but no one knows why) called

“Limestone.” Not sure why it's called that but apparently is the recent name used most frequently. It is located somewhere in the Pinyon-Juniper country north of the Peaks, but for those of us riding in the back seats of the FS trucks, we were sure it was near the Canadian border. It took two Saturdays to complete the rebuild and the finished job is sure an improvement according to the survey we conducted of the area's elk and deer (did you know that Tom Mackin



speaks fluent elk and can converse in deer?). Over the two days we had 21 volunteers help: 15 from the Aspen Team, 3 from Arizona Elk Society, and 3 from the Mule Deer Foundation.

FYI on the Limestone Trick Tank:

Built in the early 1980's, this is one of numerous Forest Service trick tanks developed solely for wildlife even though it's in the middle of an active livestock grazing allotment. With the recent climatic changes that will surely continue for the foreseeable future, including warmer temperatures, less dependable precipitation, increased winds and lessened snowfall, these trick tanks serve an important purpose for many species of wildlife. Recent studies on specifically mule deer behavior indicate that mule deer in this area frequently make an annual

75 to 90 mile migration from the slopes of the San Francisco Peaks to the forests south of the Grand Canyon, making the long return trip as well later in the year.

These trick tanks are an important water source during these migrations and keeping them in good repair is well worth the effort. Arizona Game and Fish Department Wildlife Managers and Department biologists repeatedly emphasize the importance of these developments and FoNAF working with other wildlife conservation organizations will continue to monitor the condition of these



catchments and make necessary repairs as long as funding and volunteers remains available.



Limestone crew on day two

2. Lake Mary Road - Log Worm Fences (2)

While the weather continued to be pleasant, we returned to our “roots” – building, replacing, and removing fences. April found us working on two areas along Lake Mary Road. We replaced a decrepit barbed wire fence at the entrance to the Fay

Ridge TH with smooth wire that is designed to keep various motorized vehicles operated by inconsiderate baboons from infiltrating the area when it is closed.

Late in April, we replaced two old, mostly rotted, log-worm fences – one at the entrance to the Pinegrove Campground and one in the back of the Fay Ridge trail where the road ends and turns to a single-track trail.

We are looking forward to another productive work season with lots of good camaraderie, now that we remember everyone's name.



Stewards checking Aspen Enclosures—Now!

Spring is one of two times each year for volunteers to check on the condition of each enclosure* they've been assigned. Some stewards have multiple sites and depending on weather conditions can be challenging to reach. Other enclosures are near a road and can be managed easily. These are reserved for the seasoned (older) group of Aspen Team members.

In order to assure consistent monitoring of aspen and riparian enclosures each site is assigned a steward – a FoNAF member who has volunteered for this duty. He or she visits their assigned enclosures(s) at least two times a year – early spring after the snows have melted and late fall before the snows arrive. If a steward observes minor damage, the steward may make the needed repairs immediately. After their site visits a written report is prepared and sent in to the Fence Coordinator.

In the case of more severe damage, such as when a tree has fallen on the fence, the steward will immediately report the problem to **Sue Priest** the Fence Coordinator for resolution. If the damage will compromise the integrity of the enclosure then a “strike team” of volunteers is formed and sent to the site for repairs.

*Enclosures are fenced areas protecting new growth of aspen saplings from grazing by elk and deer. Once the young trees are established the fence is removed.

\$3000 Gift from Ride Northern Arizona SxS

Last fall FoNAF was given \$3000 from a local off roading association “Ride Northern Arizona SxS” sponsored by Kaizen Collision Center located on East Huntington Circle. “SxS” is shorthand for Side by Side.

In October their first annual charity “Fall Colors” fun run was conducted with financial proceeds from entry fees and raffle tickets going to a local charity. Kevin Hegg and the new owners of Kaizen Collision Center organized the event and orchestrated the selection of the lucky charity. Due to FoNAF's sustained involvement with forest improvements and the community's awareness of our efforts, their group selected us for a \$3000 contribution.

Below is the thank you letter from president Tom Mackin for this incredible gift that will be used for our supplies and equipment in 2022.

Kaizen Collision Center:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Friends of Northern Arizona Forests I would like to thank you for your recent fundraising activities to benefit this "Friends" group. Your efforts, both monetarily as well as the many hours in support of this activity, are greatly appreciated. We're looking forward to similar efforts in the future as well as partnering with us in support of our National Forests.

Sincerely,
Tom Mackin, President



2021  **KAIZEN COLLISION CENTER**

Present Flagstaffs 1st Annual Fall Colors Charity SxS Show & Fun Run
Flagstaff, AZ Oct 1st & 2nd

Registration \$10 Show	Where - Kaizen Collision 2360 E Huntington Dr Suite 100 Flagstaff, AZ 86004 When - Friday & Saturday Oct 1st 5 - 9pm Show Time Oct 2nd 8am - 1pm Fun Run 100% of Proceeds to Charity Bring CASH for Raffle Tickets For your chance at PRIZES	Registration \$25 Fun Run
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REGISTER AT - RideNorthernAZ.com
Awards for BEST of SHOW and BEST HAND
Food Trucks & Music
Stickers, Hats, Koozies, Shirts for sale and More
<http://www.friendsofnorthernarizonaforests.org/>

An off-highway vehicle (OHV) is any motorized land vehicle predominantly used for recreational purposes on unimproved roads, trails, and other approved use areas not suitable for conventional two-wheel-drive vehicular travel. As the term suggests, OHVs are generally not designed to operate on publicly maintained roads and highways. Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs or side-by-side vehicles), snowmobiles, and four-wheel-drive vehicles (such as Jeeps and trucks) can all be defined as OHVs.



FoNAF's UTV

FoNAF Board of Directors

Tom Mackin, President	Bruce Belman	Barry Brenneman
Bob Dyer, Vice President	Ed Clark	Tony DeCou
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	Doug Shepard	Bill Waters

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

Photos: Bill Waters and Bob Dyer