

FRIENDS OF NORTHERN ARIZONA FORESTS



NEWSLETTER

August 2020

A Summer Like No Others

It was pretty certain back in March when FoNAF President Tom Mackin announced all planned Aspen Team activities were suspended due to Covid-19 that our normal work environment would be turned upside down for the summer and beyond.

Reflecting on those initial emotions two words became the mantra: perseverance and flexibility. With the leadership and guidance of Dave Downes, Aspen Team Coordinator, a plan was put together and approved by the board of directors to move forward with caution and safety in identifying and completing projects. Although the official start for the announced outings came in late June, Dave and Tom Mackin organized small “swat teams” to work on critical issues in the forest needing immediate assistance (see the March Newsletter for details on these activities).

Tom called an emergency Zoom board meeting on May 5, 2020 to consider a motion from Dave on restarting the Aspen Team outside activities on or about May 15th incorporating a set of rules and guidelines consistent with Forest Service expectations.

Below is a summary of that meeting:

After much discussion primarily focused on the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the risks to the team especially given our average ages, the consensus of the attendees was that it is still too early to consider restarting the whole team to undertake projects. We recognized that a few outings will be necessary to undertake “mission critical” projects such as emergency repairs to existing fences and watering of the new aspen saplings planted last year. These outings will be undertaken at the discretion of Tom and Dave and will involve as few others as are considered necessary to accomplish the tasks.

Decision: *Reconvene the board on or about June 1st to revisit this issue.*

When Dave contacted board members individually on June 1st the virus was only getting more invasive and prolific, requiring “flexibility” in the timing and structure of the projects to be worked under the new circumstances. Well thought-out and strict guidelines Dave and Tom proposed for the Aspen Team were accepted by the board and the Forest Service so the following rules were adopted -- “perseverance.”

We will avoid any projects that require ladders so no new aspen enclosure work. Social distancing will be a firm requirement and we will ask each volunteer to remind others if he or she is concerned that another team member is getting too close. Masks will be encouraged and required for certain actions. We will not be using Forest Service vehicles so team members will be required to drive to the work site and this will be a consideration for our selection of sites.

Although these requirements provided team parameters, Dave wanted more specific rules for volunteers to agree upon and follow while working at Aspen Team projects. Each volunteer was presented with a written list of policies and asked to sign a copy to reflect their complete awareness and understanding of what's expected. The document below states expected behaviors which are now being followed:

Friends of Northern Arizona Forests



Aspen Team Policies Under COVID-19 Pandemic

To volunteer during this time of COVID-19 pandemic, we are asking you to agree to follow US Forest Service or FoNAF policies, rules and practices and to accept the personal responsibilities set forth below.

1. Only one person in a Forest Service vehicle and we use them only for hauling tools and supplies, not team members. Each Forest Service vehicle must be sanitized before and after each use. This is a Forest Service rule.
2. Always try to be at least six feet from the nearest person – this includes while working, at lunch and at the tailgate safety meeting.
3. Most of us must drive our personal vehicles to the worksite so sites must be easily accessed.
4. Each volunteer must have a face mask with them. It should be worn whenever tasks may require working closer than six feet from another person. We recommend wearing a face mask at all times.
5. Everyone should wear work gloves while working. Soap and water will be provided for hand washing as needed.
6. Tools and equipment that are shared will be sprayed with disinfectant before each use. Disinfectant will be provided by FoNAF.
7. A maximum of nine volunteers will be allowed at each outing – this is a Forest Service rule.
8. Safety of our members will be the absolute highest priority. If anyone is not feeling well, they should not come, or if they are already present, they should leave immediately. If anyone is observing behavior that is risky to others, they should immediately bring it to the group's attention. More than ever we must look out for each other.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (printed) _____

Forest Service restrictions of 10 volunteers per outing and one person per vehicle created additional challenges that meant less work could be completed per outing, but flexibility once again kicked in. Instead of one outing per week as the Aspen Team does in normal times, Dave and Tom felt comfortable in attempting two outings per week. This allowed for more opportunities for volunteering in case the limit of ten is met quickly and most importantly the back log of less aggressive projects could be completed quickly.

At this point in the year all is well with meeting the revised project completion goals and no reports of Covid-19 related illnesses have been made by volunteers. Volunteers have successfully adapted to the new working rules and safety requirements. But most of all everyone is happy to again be in the forest and enjoying outdoors productively.

The attention to safety rules and project selection by Dave and Tom has been successful and have allowed for continued high volunteer participation and much needed work in the forest. Other articles in this newsletter feature some of the accomplishments so far this year.

Aspen Team Focuses on Removing Old Fencing

by Dave Downes

When the Aspen Team decided to restart its outings in June we also decided that fence removals would provide a better opportunity for maintaining social distancing than the construction of new exclosures. So we have spent the past three months removing any unneeded aspen exclosure and several miles of old pasture fence, taking more than **eight tons** of scrap to the metal recycler.

In doing so, we have made several areas much safer for wildlife travel as well as more attractive from a human perspective. Our power winder has been a huge help in the removal of pasture fence – a greatly beneficial investment for the Aspen Team. For the remainder of the summer and fall we will continue to remove old fences as we receive permissions to do so.

We will also be building the log worm fences described in the next article about the Heritage Fund Grant FoNAF recently received. When the pre-cut logs arrive in

September we will turn some of our focus on those projects we enjoy and that allow good social distancing.

Below are photos of recent projects finding, retrieving, bundling, and transporting old fencing from various project sites just south of The Nature Conservancy's Hart Prairie Preserve off FR151, FR418 near the Bear Jaw – Abineau Trail Head, Schultz Tank at the Schultz Trail Head, and the Mogollon Rim.

Searching for barbed wire at Hart Prairie-Way too much fun



Repairing fencing on the Mogollon Rim exclosures





Loading wire and t-posts at Hart Prairie onto dump truck from UTV



Full load of scrap metal headed for recycling

Heritage Fund Grants Program

by Tom Mackin

For more than 20 years the Heritage Fund has made a difference not just to wildlife conservation efforts but also to the state's economy, public access, environmental education and outdoor recreation. The fund provides up to \$10 million each year from Arizona lottery proceeds to the Arizona Game and Fish Department for the conservation and protection of the state's wildlife and natural areas.

Working with the Forest Service late last year, the Friends of Northern Arizona Forests, FoNAF, submitted a grant proposal to purchase pressure treated logs to build three log worm fences on the Coconino National Forest. These three fences will be designed to protect two wetland areas and the third will assist in preserving a wildlife corridor in an area heavily used by Off Highway Vehicles (OHV's).

FoNAF was successful in securing one of these grants and the logs have been ordered and we hope to commence construction by late September. We'll provide updates in future newsletters once construction is completed.

For further information on the Heritage Grant Program, visit <https://www.azgfd.com/Wildlife/HeritageFund/Program/>.



Completed log worm fence

A Tricky Business—Lennox Trick Tank Rebuild

by Bruce Belman

As most of our readers know, a trick tank is a large steel water tank associated with wildlife drinking systems of variable types. Water is supplied to the tank from rainfall collected on a large apron of some sort. There are dozens of these structures on the Coconino National Forest and they serve as a critical supply of water for elk, deer, pronghorn, small mammals, birds and even insects. Photo to the right shows the old panels lifting up and essentially useless.



Many of the trick tanks on the forest were constructed years ago and have fallen into disrepair. Working with Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona Elk Society and The Mule Deer Foundation we have been replacing these damaged wildlife water sources with new water-collection aprons. This season we completed the construction of a new apron on the Lennox Trick Tank which is west of Shultz Pass Road near

Deer Hill. The photo above shows laying out the substructure the new panels are attached to.



The new apron was constructed using a design that involves metal studs such as are used in some commercial construction. Essentially, we build a ten by twelve foot wall that lies flat on the ground. Depending on the size up to twelve of these walls are fastened together and then

the surface is covered with metal roofing material. The entire apron is slightly sloped so that water falling onto the surface runs down into a large gutter at the low end. This gutter directs the water into the drinker tank, usually with a minimum 3000 gallon capacity.

Funding for the materials for this recent project was made available from the Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation license plate grant fund as well as the Mule Deer Foundation and the Coconino Sportsmen. Labor was provided by the Friends of Northern Arizona Forests, the Mule Deer Foundation and other local volunteers.

New Lennox Trick Tank



UTV Needing a Good Home?

The Aspen Team's efforts this summer in removing old fencing have convinced us of the value of owning a Utility Task Vehicle or Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) similar to the one in the photo on page 7.

Below are three very important justifications:

- to carry team members to and from remote work sites not accessible with Forest Service or private vehicles,
- to haul out the scrap fencing that we generate, and
- to carry our power fence winder to remote locations.

We currently have four team members certified to drive a UTV. The Forest Service has several UTV's but they are often not available to us when needed.

If you or someone you know has a UTV and trailer they would consider donating to FoNAF, we can offer a tax deduction for its value as we are a 501.c.3 organization. Please contact Tom Mackin or Dave Downes for details.

Closing Note from the Executive Committee

We hope you have enjoyed reading about the activities of your organization in this newsletter. These projects can only be completed with your support and enthusiasm. If you know of anyone that might be interested in "work-in-the-field" experiences please share this newsletter and encourage them to join FoNAF.

FoNAF Board of Directors

Tom Mackin, President	Ed Clark	Curt Knight
Bruce Belman, Vice President	Tony DeCou	Jim McGeorge
Bob Dyer, Secretary	Jim Hoyne	Bill Waters
Dave Downes, Treasurer	Bill Kluwin	

Coconino National Forest information:

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