



FRIENDS OF NORTHERN **ARIZONA FORESTS**

NEWSLETTER

July 2022

Legendary Volunteers: **The McGeorges**

For most people there isn't necessarily a common knowledge of what a "crosscut saw" is. But even rarer is to know anyone who actually use one of these non-motorized saws in the forest. After reading this article you'll actually know two volunteers who regularly use one.

What started out as a feature article about the heroic efforts of two FoNAF members and their tireless volunteering commitment to keeping



hiking trails clear of fallen trees using a crosscut saw has turned out to be a much different story.

Our newsletters seem to focus on activities and accomplishments of the Aspen Team in general and often overlooks members who quietly have their boots on the ground working in the forest making it safer and healthier.

After gathering information about **Pat and Jim McGeorges'** careers with the Forest Service and how they became involved in so many aspects of volunteering, their complete and diverse volunteering story is far more interesting.

Meeting in Liberia and getting married over 50 years ago, Pat and Jim's careers and volunteer work have focused on helping others and having a positive impact on their respective interests. Their story with Forest Service began nineteen years ago in Northern Arizona and is still fulfilling their bedrock philosophy of helping others.

Jim tells their story below: (with some paraphrasing)

After retiring and moving to Flagstaff in 2003, I knew that one of the things that I wanted to do was volunteer with the National Park Service or US Forest Service. Sometime earlier we had seen Bart Thompson volunteering on horseback on the Weatherford Trail for the Peaks (Flagstaff) Ranger District. He was off his horse hand sawing a tree. The rest is history as I immediately applied to be a USFS volunteer and got on as a Trails & Wilderness volunteer in August 2003.

I started off with the mounted program (3 horses and 1 mule) at the Flagstaff RS, but quickly began doing a lot more hiking on the trails. I was having so much fun that Pat quickly joined me as a volunteer, especially when she retired from NAU in 2007.

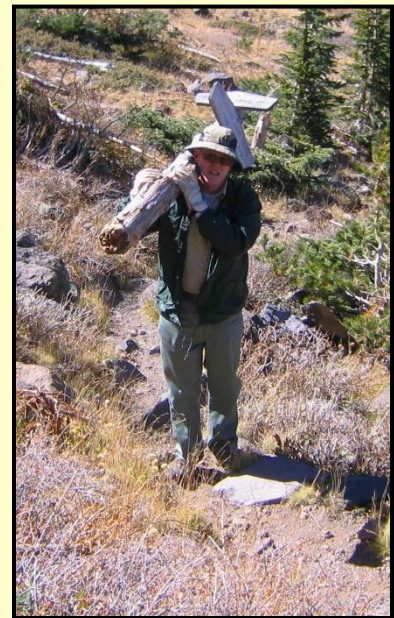
Over the last 19 years our interests have expanded beyond crosscut sawing and now include all of the following fun activities we enjoy doing for the USFS:

Crosscut Saw Sawyers — I was USFS certified in 2004 after a training class at the Flagstaff Ranger Station, immediately followed by many years cutting tons of trees that have fallen on the trails. Each tree is different and

presents its own challenges. We need to be certified every three years and First Aid/CPR every two years. This is our favorite activity.



Trail Patrol — Chat with forest users, check trail conditions, repair or install signs and recon reports of forest issues. We have hiked every foot of the Kachina Peaks Wilderness, Strawberry Crater Wilderness, the portion of Sycamore Canyon Wilderness in the Flagstaff Ranger District, the 116 miles of the Arizona Trail in the Flagstaff Ranger District and almost all the trails in the district except the Kelly Trail system.



Kachina Peak Wilderness Winter Back Country Permits — Issued permits at the Snowbowl on weekends and chatted with folks about winter back country preparedness and avalanche safety. This program was suspended several years ago, but it was fun having “our” Federal government office in a bar at the Snowbowl. Often time after issuing the permits, we would get on snowshoe patrol on Humphreys and Kachina Trails.

Mounted Patrol — We became certified and went out on horse patrol. Helped pack in fencing materials for construction of fences around Wupatki and Walnut Canyon National Monument in a great collaboration with National Park Service. The horse program at Flagstaff Ranger District was discontinued 8-10 years ago.

We are frequently involved with the following activities in addition to our crosscut sawing:

- **Forest Service gate monitoring and surveys** — Check gates in winter along 180, 89, Lake Mary Road, I-17 & I-40. Inventoried most of the gates in the Flagstaff RD.
- **TRACS Surveys** — conducted annual required trail surveys.
- **NAU Wilderness Management Course** — Since 2004 Jim has helped with this fall course for the FS portion of the course by mentoring a group of students for a semester long Wilderness project.
- **Trail Ambassadors** — Helping at Humphreys trail head.
- **Trail Work Days** — Helped in various ways including being Safety Officers for the large events.
- **Orient Forest Service Volunteers & Staff** — Helped with this including crosscut outings.

Why do we dedicate ourselves to these Forest Service callings or anything that is asked of us?

1. Fun and outdoors. — I was a desk jockey for 30 years.
 2. Good exercise. — Don't have to go to gym.
 3. Enjoy working with FS staff and volunteers.
 4. Sense of accomplishment with a variety of projects.
 5. FS volunteering is flexible based upon time available and interests.
- We only do things that are fun for us.

We also have other volunteer projects serving as emergency responders and/or advisors such as Coconino County Sheriff's Office Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Coconino Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) that recommends the allocation of funds for projects to the Forest Supervisor.

A Special Thank You

In spite of this legendary list of volunteering, Pat and Jim are most recognized today as the crosscut sawyers doing a tremendous service to hikers and the safety of the forests in general.

It seems somewhat of an understatement to simply say thank you for your continued dedication to volunteering with the Forest Service, but as FoNAF members for many years we appreciate Pat and Jim's contributions and we are proud to call them true "friends of the forest."



FoNAF and the Mogollon Rim Ranger District

by Tom Mackin

When FoNAF was in its earliest years, most projects were centered around Flagstaff in the Flagstaff Ranger District, but that is certainly no longer the case. For over 12 years now, in addition to “local” FRD projects, many hours are spent in the wonderfully biologically diverse Mogollon Rim Ranger District, commonly just called “the Rim” when planning activities.



Our earliest southern forest activities came after a 2011 request from the Arizona Elk Society to assist with the repair of several important wet meadow exclosures located near Merritt Spring, almost 90 miles from Flagstaff. These important meadows were being grazed heavily by elk and other ungulates when the exclosure fences incurred damages from falling trees, heavy snows and Spring runoff.

Following several conversations with the AES folks as well as Forest staff, we organized a field trip to get a better idea of what needed to be done. For several of us, this was our first visit to this beautiful area and after organizing and completing a few work days, we all realized this was another general area where we could once again assist the Forest Service and other non-governmental organizations in the protection and enhancement of our public lands.

Since those early years we’ve returned frequently to work on wet meadow and aspen exclosures, assisting staff hydrologists, wildlife technicians and silviculture planners with their responsibilities. In 2022 we’ve already made three visits to this southern portion of the Coconino National Forest with at least 2-3 more visits planned before our work season ends in the late Fall.

“THE RIM” photos from the Archives



An Encouraging Essay about Aspen Trees

It's not often professionals and volunteers who track aspen research receive positive news about the health of aspen groves. This essay presents some hopeful research that our FoNAF members should find interesting.

[Following a special request from FoNAF, the author granted permission to reprint his essay that appeared in the February 2022 *Western Aspen Alliance Newsletter* the "The Tremblings."]

"Aspen: A Reason for Hope"

by

Robert A. Andrus

School of Environment, Washington State University

Tens of millions of trees have died in recent decades in subalpine forests in the western US. Much of this tree mortality has been caused by two natural disturbances—wildfires and outbreaks of native insects (i.e., bark beetles). The loss of so many trees has left us wondering what is next for these areas. Will they return to forest and if so, what will they look like?



Our recent research highlights that aspen is a key reason why some subalpine forests are recovering from these disturbances. Understanding aspen's importance in forest recovery requires a quick lesson about which tree species are affected by bark beetles. We conducted our research in the San Juan Mountains (CO) where recent outbreaks of bark beetles only affected Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir, not aspen. Mortality of Engelmann spruce from bark beetles is particularly severe in the San Juan Mountains, often approaching 90% of spruce trees; ~800,000 acres (323,748 ha) of spruce forest were affected from 2005-2017. With the loss of conifers came an opportunity for aspen. In areas where aspen was present prior to

outbreaks, large aspen trees now form an important part of the forest canopy and small aspen trees are thriving among dead conifers.

Though it may take up to a century, mature aspen surrounded by conifer and aspen regrowth are evidence that former bark beetle outbreak sites appear to be recovering.

Subsequent burning of these areas can, however, significantly reduce chances for forest recovery. In 2012 and 2013, wildfires burned ~140,000 acres (56,656 ha) of subalpine forest previously affected by beetle infestations in this region. These fires created burned patches of hundreds to thousands of acres/hectares with 100% tree mortality, which is characteristic of fires in subalpine forests and particularly problematic for conifer recovery. In our 2019 investigation, we found that no conifers were recovering in areas previously affected by bark beetle outbreaks, but aspen were regenerating prolifically where they were present pre-fire.

The lack of conifer regeneration and abundant aspen regeneration can be explained by the species affected by the bark beetle and differences between conifer and aspen regeneration strategies. Most conifer seeds are produced by the largest trees and the largest spruce trees were killed by bark beetles prior to the fire, leaving relatively few seeds to support recovery. Additionally, seeds of conifers are dispersed by wind but can't fly much further than ~500ft (150 m). This severely limits dispersal into large areas with complete mortality. In contrast to conifers, aspen can regenerate by resprouting from roots which often survive forest fires. Where aspen existed prior to fire, we found abundant aspen regeneration, often so thick it was hard to traverse. Additionally, aspen seeds can travel much further than conifer seeds (multiple miles/km) and true aspen seedlings are commonly found after high severity fires. Newly regenerating aspen stands have threats of their own, such as elk herbivory and climate change, but high abundances of small aspen indicates that we should expect aspen forests in these locations in the future. Next time a fire or bark beetles affects your favorite hiking area, go have a look for newly regenerating aspen the following summer.

Aspen Team Project Update

By Dave Downes

It's been an interesting and challenging time for the Aspen Team so far this work season. We have built several log-worm fences (a favorite activity) and pasture fences (not so much), removed old pasture fences (another fav), modified some fences to make them wildlife friendlier, repaired a couple of fences protecting wet meadows, rebuilt a trick tank, and cleaned up camp sites that had been trashed. The one thing we did not do to justify the team's name is build a new aspen enclosure – but one is on the docket for later this year.

While we love the active monsoon season that we are experiencing, we have had to cut short several outings and even cancel a couple. Several team members spent two long days making repairs to fences at Buck Springs and along FR 137, both on the Mogollon Rim District, and we have lots more work needed down there if we can continue to muster the enthusiasm for the long drives and if the weather-gods give us a couple of days with no storms in the forecast.



Along the Land Fill Rd

List of Key Projects

Here are a few major projects that we have accomplished (or hopefully will have by the time you read this):

- Remove old fences around Matson Tank on Observatory Mesa and Log Cabin Tank along the Old Walnut Canyon Road
- Rebuilt pasture fence below Upper Lake Mary dam

- Built log-worm fences at Fulton Canyon, Ashurst Run, Schoolhouse Draw, Fay Canyon, Ward Camp, and at the entrance to Pinegrove Campground
- Built almost a mile of fence along FR 776, the road off US89 into the Cinder Hills OHV area, to prevent off-roaders from accessing forest land that is not part of the OHV area



Near Pine Grove Campground

FoNAF West

We now have two members who live in Williams – George Nelsen joined in 2020 and Ken Ehlers this past winter. They have agreed to be stewards for all of the exclosures on the Kaibab NF and the Aspen Team has spent several days repairing damaged fences found during their monitoring efforts. We call them the FoNAF-West team and we are delighted to have them be part of our team effort.



Cinder Hills OHV



Near Pine Grove Camp Ground

Special Aspen Team Volunteer Request

We continue to miss several team members who stopped coming out during the COVID shutdown and have yet to return to again partake of all the fun and excitement, so please consider rejoining the team. We need and appreciate your participation.

Annual Meeting in October

Mark your calendars for FoNAF's 2022 Annual Meeting for all members on October 26. The location will be announced later.

FoNAF Board of Directors

Tom Mackin, President	Barry Brenneman	Ed Clark
Bob Dyer, Vice President	Jim Hoyne	Bill Kluwin
Dave Downes, Treasurer	Curt Knight	Jim McGeorge
Tom Barberic, Secretary	Doug Shepard	

Coconino National Forest informatin:

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