



# FRIENDS OF NORTHERN ARIZONA FORESTS

## NEWSLETTER

March 2017

### **FoNAF Founder Ralph Baierlien Retiring to California**

From a professor of physics to a steward of our forests, Ralph Baierlein has blessed northern Arizona with his passion and leadership for preserving our beautiful outdoors and sustaining significant landmarks for future generations. Now he and his wife Jean have decided to add another chapter to their lives and relocate to Santa Rosa, California.

As FoNAF's founder back in 2009, Ralph has been the organization's president until 2015 and has continued on the Board of Directors, and now we will very much miss his leadership, contributions, and inspiration. Below is a brief summary of Ralph's story in Flagstaff and his many achievements.



In 2009 the Flagstaff Ranger District leadership asked Ralph to organize a group similar to the "Friends of the Forest Sedona" to supply volunteers to support the mission of the Forest Service in situations where they couldn't due to budget and/or personnel limitations. Ralph agreed to provide the leadership in this critical early stage, bringing together a variety of forest users, mountain bikers, horsemen, motorcyclists, hikers, wildlife enthusiasts and others, many of whom would not normally be seated at the same table much less working together in the same organization for the benefit of all. Under Ralph's leadership, FoNAF has fulfilled, or in many cases exceeded, the Forest Service's expectations. Here are a few examples of those accomplishments:

- Build, repair and maintain over 85 aspen exclosures, Bebb willow exclosures and fences protecting riparian and other threatened areas across northern Arizona forests. A fence "exclosure" is similar in purpose to any other fence except it keeps wildlife and humans out so that new growth can mature unharmed.

- Following the Shultz Fire, FoNAF assisted the Forest Service in coordinating volunteers for replanting several thousand new pine seedlings, providing team leaders for the actual planting.
- Ralph has successfully written and received several funding grants for projects on the Coconino National Forest. A classic example is a multi-year plan FoNAF embarked on for locating promising aspen friendly areas, harvesting aspen saplings, and nurturing them prior to relocation to "ideal" sections of the Coconino Forest. These new areas include sites where old aspen stands have since declined **or** new locations where conditions are conducive for aspen growing strong and thriving.
- A similar research project Ralph designed and accomplished was isolating “browse resistant” strains of aspen trees. Once identified and transplanted, wildlife would ignore these trees allowing them to mature successfully without the need for protection from a costly fence.
- Under Ralph’s leadership FoNAF developed a “Trail Ambassador” program on many of the heaviest used forest trails near town, providing directions, assistance and reporting problems and segments needing repair.
- FoNAF partnered with the Forest Service to provide a “Preventative Search and Rescue” (PSAR) program on the Kachina Peaks Wilderness. Volunteers sit at popular trailheads like the Humphreys Trail and Kachina Trail during peak use periods such as weekends and holidays assisting hikers with safety and equipment issues.
- FoNAF assists the Forest Service in issuing back country permits at the Arizona Snowbowl Ski Resort after the ski area opens for the winter season. Each person who wishes to ski, snowboard, snowshoe, or alpine climb into the Kachina Peaks Wilderness from the Snowbowl receives a permit from FoNAF volunteers on location.



First FoNAF Outing 2009

## **Farewell Event Planned for Ralph and Other Departing Board Members**

A farewell event will be held in early May 2017 for Ralph sponsored by the Forest Service and FoNAF. Also to be recognized at this gathering are John Holmes and Dave Hall, both board members relocating out of Flagstaff. John has moved to Gig Harbor, WA; and Dave Hall is going to Plymouth, MA. Details will be sent out as planning steps are completed.

## **Aspen Team Plans for 2017 by Dave Downes**

Writing this in February 2017, I am not able to predict when the FS roads will be opened so that all of us who are fence stewards can get out and check our fences. Once we have access I will ask each steward to let me know if their fence is in need of repairs and, if so, I will quickly schedule an outing to make them so that the fence is doing its job once the ungulates begin to return to the high country.

We are now responsible for maintaining 61 aspen exclosures, 5 Bebb willow exclosures and 2 fences protecting riparian areas – their locations run from the north end of FR151 south to Broliar Park which is just above the southern boundary of the Flagstaff Ranger District (FRD). As soon as all the repairs have been completed we will turn the team's focus onto some new projects.

- Our list of planned activities for 2017 is long but we anticipate that we can accomplish most, if not all, of it if the weather cooperates and if existing fences do not require a lot of days to make repairs. See photo #1 for Aspen Team planning session at Altitudes in January.
- We plan to build three new aspen exclosures – one along FR193 (west of US180), one at Sheep Spring and one at Archies Tank (both are west of Mormon Lake).
- In addition, we will rebuild the aspen exclosure at Broliar Park, shrinking it significantly and making it easier to access and maintain.
- We have three projects involving riparian areas



Aspen Team meets to review plans for 2017

rebuild and expand the fence at T-six Spring, relocate a section of the fence at Hoxworth Spring and rebuild one of the fences at Houston Draw on the Mogollon Rim RD (we rebuilt the other one a few years ago).

- The aspen team will continue to work on pasture and right-of-way fences to make them pronghorn friendly, raising the bottom wire so they can scoot under it, replacing it with smooth wire if it is barbed, and replacing any sheep fence with single strand wire with smooth on the bottom. For 2017 we hope to rebuild some three-plus miles of pasture fence off FR514 (north of the peaks), in the Mountaineer area and near Babbitt Lakes.

- One of the team's favorite activities is building log-worm fences and we hope to build several more in 2017. While building new fences is more enjoyable than removing old ones, we plan to begin a major cleanup of the old NAU arboretum at Leroux Spring (off Snowbowl Road).
- And finally we will work with the FRD archeologists to repair the Red House Pueblo which is off US89 north of the peaks.

The aspen team is always happy to have more hands whether it is just for a single outing or on a regular basis. When the work site is easily accessible and safe, we will promote the outing as a public work day and invite non-FoNAF folks to join us. More information about opportunities to participate can be found on our web site <http://www.friendsofnazforests.org/page-1504701> or by contacting me directly.

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## **Back Country Permits in Big Demand – 475** (thru March 5)

Many skiers, boarders and hikers are surprised to learn that the danger of avalanches in the San Francisco Peaks is often high when we have good snow conditions. Since the Arizona Snowbowl is bordered by the Kachina Peaks Wilderness in which there are no patrols and often spotty cell phone service, the Coconino NF requires all persons who leave the Snowbowl boundary to have a permit.

As FoNAF volunteers take a break from outdoor projects during the winter months when fence building and trail head monitoring are on hold, we then issue back country hiking, skiing, and snowboarding permits at the Snowbowl. We staff a table at the Agassiz Lodge every Saturday and Sunday morning (9-11:30) when the Snowbowl is operating.

The permits are free and can be issued in just a few minutes but the process gives the issuers an opportunity to ensure the permit holder is aware of the dangers in the backcountry and is prepared for the worst.

For the 2016-2017 snow season at Arizona Snowbowl, Coconino County Sheriff's office and Arizona Snowbowl folks responded to 7 incidents. Of those seven, six involved

snowboarders and one was a hiker. The only injury was a snowboarder with a fractured leg. Back Country permits were present on three of the incidents and there were four incidents where no back country permits were present.

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Barry and Tom issuing permits

## SOMEONE TO KNOW

### Paul Dawson

Coconino National Forest, Volunteer Coordinator



For those of you that have been attending our Board meetings or perhaps some of the late 2016 work projects, you probably have met our newest Flagstaff Ranger District Volunteer Coordinator, Paul Dawson.

Paul grew up in upstate New York, a small community called Mexico, of all things. He graduated from the State University of New York, Environmental Science and Forestry near Syracuse with a BS in 2009 and completed his Masters in Parks and Recreation management.

Following college he worked for 3 years as a Seasonal on the Tongass N.F. in Alaska and that really encouraged him to seek work full time with the Forest Service. Before coming to the Coconino last fall, Paul worked on the Roosevelt National Forest in Boulder, Colorado.

His main interests include trails and wilderness. As far as his relationship with FoNAF, he sees his role as facilitating activities, removing any roadblocks or obstructions for our tasks and assisting in membership growth.

Please join us in welcoming Paul to Flagstaff and the Coconino National Forest!

## Did You Know?

According to a 2016 poll from a Colorado College survey results\* from 7 western states provide the following viewpoints:

- 1) What percent of respondents oppose the transfer of current public lands to State control?  
58%
- 2) What percent of Arizona respondents oppose the transfer of current public lands to State control?  
65%
- 3) What percent of respondents feel that public lands benefit the local economies?  
72%

As FoNAF President Tom Mackin recently said, “Many of us like to hike, bike, ski, hunt, fish or enjoy motorized recreation and the local abundance of our public lands probably has a strong influence on why we chose to live in the Flagstaff area. Converting it to State land may jeopardize this privilege. State lands are not setup for these activities and most are posted ‘No Trespassing’ with little access afforded.”

\*Link to the entire poll: <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/dotAsset/18dc097b-dce9-4003-8630-12796a054c8f.pdf>

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## Friend of Northern Arizona Forests

### Mission Statement:

Friends of Northern Arizona Forests is dedicated to assisting the United States Forest Service in maintaining, protecting, and restoring the natural and cultural resources and the scenic beauty of our forest lands for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. We are a solution-oriented volunteer group that works in partnership with the Forest Service to assist the Service in tasks it does not have the staff or the funds to accomplish on its own. In addition, we seek to connect the community and the Forest Service to the benefit of both parties and of the forest itself.

### FoNAF Board of Directors

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