

# FoNAF News

## Friends of Northern Arizona Forests



Issue 8

Fall 2014

### *The Aspen Team Progresses on Fences*

One of the most significant events in the life of the Aspen Team occurred this spring when two members, Dave Hall and Tom Mackin, received Forest Service certification to use a chain saw to cut and remove downed trees. Before Dave and Tom could get "A" Sawyer certification, they also had to complete certifications for First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, CPR and AED. No longer must we depend upon the willingness and availability of other FS staff or Hot Shots to do our cutting.



*Newly certified chainsaw operator Tom Mackin at work.*

Last spring we asked each steward to report on the general condition of each aspen fence, focusing especially on whether there were any sections that were below 7'6". Several reported this to be the case so the A-Team spent many days adding strands of wire to the tops of fences to raise them so high that ungulates would be unlikely to clear them. In addition, we rebuilt an enclosure at Priest Draw and made major repairs to five others, including three on the Mogollon Rim District. On other days, we removed downed trees from fences and made minor repairs to some 20 enclosures in the Flagstaff and Mogollon Rim districts.

Last year we were asked by Tom Runyon, the hydrologist on the Flagstaff District, if we would assist in making major repairs to an enclosure below Hoxworth Spring. We did not find time until this spring and, after several outings, we got that fence repaired and functional. Then we walked up to the spring itself only to find the fence there in disrepair. So we spent a couple more days rebuilding it. As of this writing, all of the enclosures in the Flagstaff District are in good shape and ready for winter – bring it on.

*-- David Downes, Aspen Team Coordinator*

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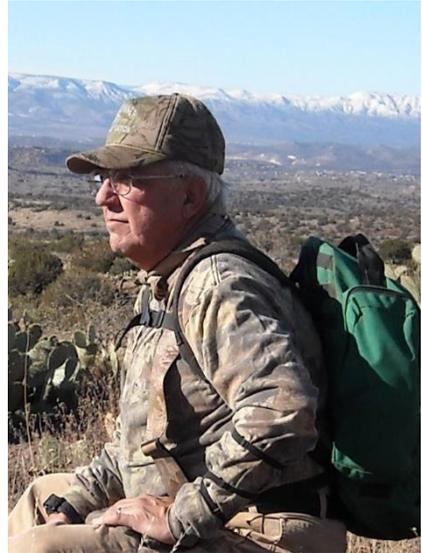
Justin Loxley is the

Flagstaff Ranger District

Volunteer Coordinator

## *The President's Corner*

When I last wrote this column in April, I expressed concerns over fire danger, coming off a meager winter snowpack. Perhaps I should have kept my thoughts to myself because sure enough on May 20<sup>th</sup> the human-caused Slide Fire broke out and scorched approximately 21,000 acres, mainly on the west side of Oak Creek Canyon and the forest above. Fortunately, massive flooding did not subsequently occur and later in the summer all area closures were lifted. The fire did require a great deal of staff time and it seemed like we were never able to catch up so several of our planned activities did not happen, including the construction of new aspen exclosures. The Aspen Team, though, did a lot of repair on existing exclosures described on the front page by our team leader, David Downes.



Working with various FS staff members, we've identified several tasks to tackle in 2015 including additional plantings at the Schultz Burn site, a new wilderness trail informational program, work on several miles of allotment boundary fence bringing them up to wildlife standards and more, all in addition to normal aspen exclosure maintenance and the construction of at least one new exclosure near Wing Mountain. All of these tasks provide volunteer opportunities, so if you've not volunteered before, please keep these projects in mind.

Our next major task will be manning the table at Snowbowl each ski weekend, issuing back-country permits and providing helpful information to those who want to venture beyond Snowbowl boundaries. If you are interested in becoming a permit issuer, please contact Dave Downes at [dhdowens@gmail.com](mailto:dhdowens@gmail.com) or 928-522-9207. You do not need to be a skier or a snowboarder, nor do you need to have ever been outside the boundaries of Snowbowl in winter – you just need to be willing to commit a few weekend mornings to a rewarding activity.

In closing I want to thank all FoNAF members for their 2014 support and efforts and I'm looking forward to an exciting 2015.

*--Tom Mackin, President*

## *Trail Ambassadors Program Expands*

The Trail Ambassador Program will continue into 2015 greeting hikers, providing them with important information for their safety and enjoyment, and reporting to the Forest Service trail conditions that need to be improved such as fallen trees blocking trails, missing signage and trail washouts. The Flagstaff Biking Organization has been an important partner since 2011 in reporting trail conditions, repairing trail damage and building additional trails including the 42-mile-long Flagstaff Loop Trail.

Marty Lee, professor at NAU School of Forestry and vice president of FoNAF, and Brian Poturalski of the Forest Service have formed a partnership that involves students of Marty Lee's wilderness management class in some Ambassador activities. Participating students also have opportunities to conduct field studies and internships of benefit to the Forest Service.

I had an invitation to join two graduate students at Mt. Humphreys Trailhead on several weekends during the monsoon. Their intern project was to inform hikers that this year is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wilderness Act and how important that act is in the preservation of habitat and the opportunity we all have of enjoying wilderness today. The students prepared a table with information on hiking and safety as well as on the Wilderness Act. Not surprisingly, one of the most asked questions was how to deal with lightning on the Peaks!

My visits to the trailhead made it evident there are more ways that Trail Ambassadors can be helpful to the Forest Service. This winter we will be looking into those possibilities.

In the meantime let's get on the trails while the weather lasts!

-- John Holmes,  
Trail Ambassador Coordinator

## ***A-Team Assists with Aspen Plantings; Wins some, Loses some***

During the spring, the Aspen Team cleared five large fallen trees from an otherwise grassy site on the northern edge of Hart Prairie and built an enclosure to protect the control saplings. At the end of July, a crew from American Conservation Experience planted 330 saplings. Tom Mackin and Bob Dyer delivered 1000 gallons of water to send the saplings off with a good drink of water each. The photo shows ACE crew member Annie Leverich toting two buckets of water just inside the enclosure's gate.

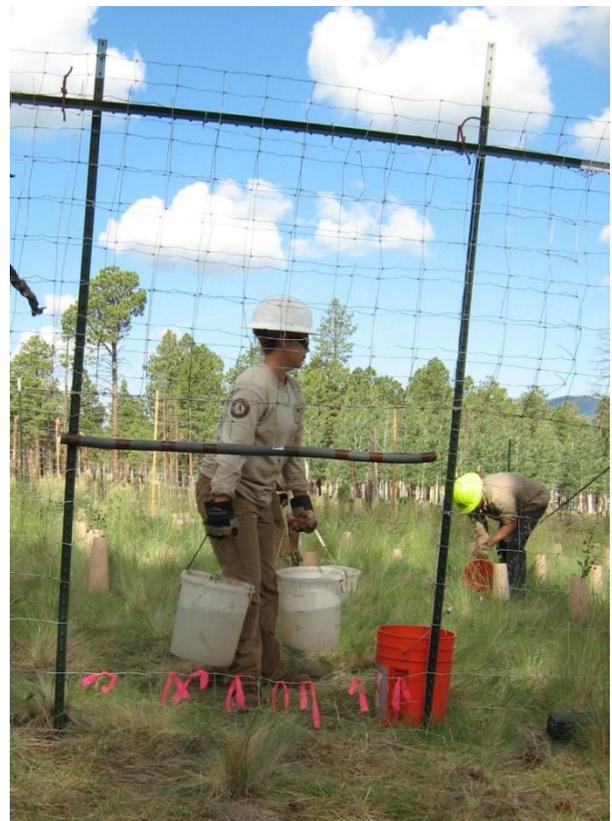
Those saplings are doing well. Because of FoNAF's experience with the 2013 planting, the saplings were planted with chicken-wire protection against burrowing rodents. The saplings planted in 2013, however, have suffered badly. By July 19, 2014, burrowing rodents—probably pocket gophers—had destroyed approximately 40 percent of the saplings outside the enclosure. Mortality inside was less: about 20 percent.

After I removed the cones and mesh sleeves on July 19th, elk and/or deer severely browsed the saplings that are outside the enclosure. The (apparent) browse resistance for which we had selected the clones failed to appear.

The planting site lies in the Geyler Pasture of the Peaks Grazing Allotment, which has been closed to cattle for at least 20 years. So cattle are not the culprits.

Other clones are in the pipeline, however, and we continue to experiment. Moreover, we have some 40 older saplings that we will plant in 2015. Extra growth, by a year or two, may change the chemical composition of the leaves and provide browse-resistance.

--Ralph Baierlein, Coordinator of Propagation Project



## ***Former Seaman Enjoys FoNAF Teamwork in the Woods***

Standing in the middle of Coconino Forest on top of a ladder held by three fellows I just met a few weeks ago while I used a 20-pound fencepost pounder to drive a 10-foot T-post into the rocky ground, I could only think about how lucky I was. You see, I'd volunteered to join the Aspen Team to repair and build fences out in the woods.

And I was now in the forest with my tool belt, hard hat, working gloves and safety glasses having the time of my life. Of course I'm tired and I'll be sore tonight, but volunteering to actually do something to help the forest and its wildlife is worth the effort. I've recently retired after 30 years in the Navy and 11 years with a large corporation and relocated to Flagstaff with my wonderful wife Camille. Outdoor opportunities and adventures are vast and exciting, but as someone who spent his adult life either on the oceans or working around the globe for a large corporation, I didn't feel I had experience or knowledge to offer as a woodlands volunteer. But FoNAF and US Forest Service leaders didn't care about my background. They just wanted help with their important work. I'm glad to be considered someone that is a part of the team. I'm very glad to be a volunteer.



*-- Bill Waters, new member*

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