

# FoNAF News

## Friends of Northern Arizona Forests



Issue 7

Spring 2014

### *Saplings Survive Winter, Predators, Drought*

You may recall that FoNAF and a crew from Coconino Rural Environment Corps planted 380 aspen saplings in July 2013 on the north slope of the Hochderffer Hills. How have the saplings fared since then?

When I visited the site on August 10, I found that our protective cones had been pulled off of five plants. Deer tracks and the track of a large elk were readily evident in the bare earth of the fire line. The great majority of the saplings outside the enclosure, however, were doing well. Mortality was probably only three saplings.

After a visit on October 14, I wrote in my log, "Five or six fresh piles of earth. Gophers have removed several plants—maybe as many as 6-10 since planting time. Not much that I can do about that cause of mortality."

The barren area should be deep in snow. Note, however, that the soil surface in the fire line is still moist. Indeed, when I visited the site on March 11, the soil was still moist 0.5-1 inch below the surface.

By mid-April, we'd lost perhaps 20 saplings to "natural causes" out of the 250 saplings planted outside the enclosure. To put it positively, approximately 92% of the exposed saplings are getting ready for the 2014 growing season.

In late July, we will remove the cones and mesh sleeves (to use on the next planting). Then the real test of whether we have found browse-resistant clones will begin.

*--Ralph Baierlein*



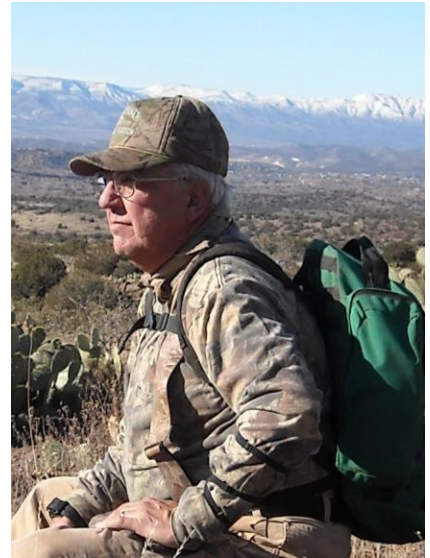
*Here's a photo of the site as of February 17, 2014.*

#### *Our Mission Statement:*

*Friends of Northern Arizona Forests is dedicated to assisting the U.S. 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.*

## *The President's Corner*

Since our fall newsletter, several members have been busy meeting with Forest Service staff to make tentative plans for our 2014 work season. We plan to build a new aspen propagation enclosure and plant additional browse resistant saplings by late July. There is also a possibility of building two new aspen enclosures, one near Wing Mountain and one closer to Mormon Lake. Additional plans include at least two trips to the Mogollon Rim Ranger District to locate, inspect, measure and evaluate existing aspen enclosures in that area and to make repairs to a damaged wetland fence near Hoxworth Spring behind Lake Mary. We also hope to expand our existing Trail Ambassador program to include visits to several area wilderness trails and perhaps to introduce a new program addressing preparedness before going hiking.



As concerns are high right now regarding fire danger, and campfire and smoking restrictions have already been imposed for Coconino and Kaibab National forests with the possibility that the forests will be closed altogether, we cannot be sure how this year's work season will actually play out. However, we will be able to undertake at least some of these projects as well as our ongoing aspen enclosure monitoring and repair work and any work needed on our "adopted" historic landmark markers near Snowbowl and Dairy Spring.

We have started work on improving our website and, following our January meeting, we've formed a small work group to address membership retention and recruitment. If you have any interest in any of these projects, please check our website, [friendsofnazforests.org](http://friendsofnazforests.org), for more information and join us for fun, rewarding outdoor teamwork.

--Tom Mackin, President

## *Earth Day*



*FoNAF Volunteers (from left) Bruce Belman, Tom Mackin, and David Downes join Forest Service staff near City Hall on Saturday, April 19 to inform interested passers-by of opportunities we offer to help out in northern Arizona forests.*

## ***FoNAF Plans Camping & Fixing Exclosures***

Since the fall of 2009, FoNAF has rebuilt more than 30 aspen fence exclosures and constructed another 10. Plus we rebuilt two Bebb willow exclosures and constructed two more. We anticipated that the mild winter would have done little damage to our exclosures and that is what we are finding, based on the reports of our stewards.

Now that almost all of our exclosures are functioning, we decided that it is time to make some modifications to ensure that they were performing as well as possible. This basically implies that all fences be at least 7'6", that small conifers be removed to give the aspen more capacity for growth, and that snags that threaten to fall on the fence be cut preemptively. Where possible, we would also consider ripping any open areas to stimulate new growth. We asked each steward to make an extra effort this spring when they check their exclosures to report on fence heights, presence of snags and small conifers, and potential for ripping. Once we have the results of these surveys, we will schedule the team to visit those exclosures identified with the greatest need for these improvements.

The 54 exclosures that we are maintaining currently are all on the Flagstaff Ranger District. In 2014 we will continue our efforts to improve the exclosures on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District. Our first effort will be to survey and evaluate all of the exclosures – a task that may take several years since the district is about a two-hour drive from Flagstaff and has more than 50 known exclosures with more expected to be found. We plan to spend two days, camping overnight, on each visit and we doubt we can make more than two such trips this summer. But it is a beautiful area and we know we will eat well as long as our outstanding cook, Tom Mackin, is along.

*--David Downes, Aspen Fence Project Coordinator*

## ***We Issue Back Country Permits Despite Snowless Winter***

All of us who spent any part of the past five months here in the high country know that it was a very mild winter. But due to their ability to make snow, Arizona Snowbowl was able to open in late November and stay open uninterrupted until the end of March. With the exception of just a few weekends, there was not enough snowpack on the areas outside of Snowbowl's boundaries for backcountry skiing or snowboarding. Nevertheless, FoNAF volunteers staffed the backcountry permit table at Agassiz Lodge every Saturday and Sunday morning, issuing more than 250 permits. Many were to hikers who were able to take advantage of the warmer weather and low snowpack to hike Humphreys or one of the many other trails on the peaks.

*--Dave Downes, Back Country Permit Coordinator*



*Fence keeps elk out in mild winter.*

## ***American Wilderness Celebrates 50th***

*A Wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where earth and its community of life are untrammelled [not controlled] by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. -Wilderness Act 1964, Section 2(c).*

There are eight designated wilderness areas on our own Coconino National Forest. This year FoNAF, coinciding with the Act's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, hopes to extend its Trail Ambassador program to include oversight of at least one trail in a designated areas, the popular Humphreys Peak Trail.

## ***FoNAF Board Members***

Tom Mackin, President  
Marty Lee, Vice President  
Bob Dyer, Secretary  
David Downes, Treasurer  
Mary Natali, Newsletter Editor  
Ralph Baierlein  
Bruce Belman  
Ed Clark  
Keith Greenwalt  
David Hall  
John Holmes  
Bill Kluwin  
Curt Knight  
Anthony Quintile  
Bill Rahr  
Sheila Walsh

Justin Loxley is the Flagstaff Ranger  
District Volunteer Coordinator

**Check us out at [www.friendsofnazforests.org](http://www.friendsofnazforests.org)**



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