



**USDA
FOREST
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Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

2007 Annual Report

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Celebrating 100 Years!

This summer marks the 100th anniversary of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs).

In 1908, Theodore Roosevelt established the Sitgreaves National Forest from parts of the Black Mesa North Reserve and the Tonto National Forest. The Apache National Forest was established the same year from portions of the Black Mesa South Reserve and other neighboring reserves.

Since 1974, the two forests have been managed as one national forest.

The ASNFs contain some of the most beautiful forests and grasslands in the Nation and include the headwaters that supply water to the ever increasing populations of Arizona.

This report takes a look back at some of the key events and accomplishments that occurred on the ASNFs in 2007.

As we look towards the next 100 years, we are continually challenged to manage the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests to meet today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations.



1939, Fire Lookout at Big Lake



1909, Examination for Forest Rangers on the Apache National Forest



Map of Arizona showing the location of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

National Forest System Lands



Fence between the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests and private land near Show Low, Arizona

As more and more people buy property in the White Mountains ... there is an increasing need to know exactly where the property lines are between the national forests and private lands.

Consolidation of land ownership within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests continues to be one of the primary tools of the Forest Service to prevent habitat fragmentation while assisting local communities with the land base they need for future growth.

During 2007 the forests continued processing several proposed land exchanges, completed one Small Tracts Act case, and one Education Land Grant Act case.

The forests also responded to local county, city and town government needs by processing public road and utility easements for the services they provide to their residents. Several private road easements were also processed.

Location of the national forests' boundaries and required maintenance of survey monuments and property signing were performed. As more and more people buy property in the White Mountains and move into or build their

dream homes, there is an increasing need to know exactly where the property lines are between the national forests and private lands. The forests try to be as proactive as possible in order to prevent an unauthorized occupancy – anything from a fence or road to part of someone's new residence.

The potential for mineral discovery on the ASNFs is low. Interest has increased regarding wind and geothermal energy, although the forests are not an ideal location for these alternative energy sources.

Hundreds of personal-use common variety materials permits for sand and gravel, malapai rock and boulders for landscaping, and cinders continue to be issued to local residents. The Alpine Ranger District administers several commercial cinders permits. Federal, state, and county transportation departments use gravel and cinder sources located on the forests for road maintenance.

Heritage and Cultural Resources

During 2007, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests continued work on several heritage inventory tasks for the White Mountain Stewardship Project. (WMSP).

These hazardous fuels reduction projects associated with WMSP, often in high elevation areas, have offered ASNFs archaeologists an opportunity to conduct landscape-level analyses of previously known but undocumented historic-period sites on the forests.

On the Lakeside Ranger District, archaeologists have documented over seven miles of railroad spur lines used in historic-period logging activities based

out of the Cady Lumber sawmill in McNary, Arizona on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

Archeologists have also documented two logging camps and seven railroad trestle features in the Los Burros area of the Lakeside Ranger District.



Remnants of a railroad trestle located on the Lakeside Ranger District



Remains of a railroad spur line used in historic-period logging by the Cady Lumber Company- located on the Lakeside Ranger District

White Mountain Stewardship Project



Results of forest thinning

The forests continue to make strides in providing improved opportunities for our visitors with disabilities.

In August 2004, the ASNFs initiated and awarded a 10-year stewardship contract to Future Forest, LLC, a local partnership of WB Contracting and Forest Energy Corporation.

The goal of the 10-year contract is in line with the Southwestern Region's central priority: Restoration of Fire-Adapted Ecosystems. The goal is to thin 150,000 acres of primarily small-diameter ponderosa pine trees, focusing on the wildland urban interface surrounding communities in the White Mountains of Arizona. The stewardship project is designed to restore forest health, reduce the risk of fire to communities, reduce the cost of forest thinning to the public, support local economies, and foster new forest product industries to utilize the wood fiber.

In 2007, task orders for the treatment of 7,800 acres were issued, 9,100 acres were treated, and 184,000 green tons of

woody material were removed from the forests. Since the start of the contract a total of 23,300 acres have been treated and 473,300 green tons of woody material have been removed.

The contract supports over 220 full-time jobs in the White Mountains. Last year, the 14 businesses involved with the contract spent 11 million dollars locally.

A citizen's monitoring board meets monthly to assess the social, economic, and environmental effects of the contract thinning. The board has contracted with scientists to conduct studies of wildlife species and their response to the habitat changes created by thinning. The board has also contracted with scientists from the University of Arizona and Arizona State University to study the social and economic effects of the project.

Recreation

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests offer a variety of recreation opportunities. The forests have over 100 developed recreation sites including campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, and two visitor centers, over 1,300 miles of hiking, equestrian, and off-highway vehicle trails, three wilderness areas, one primitive area, and numerous opportunities for dispersed recreation, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping.

The forests continue to make strides in providing improved opportunities for our visitors with disabilities, including new restrooms at Rocky Point Picnic Area and Rainbow and Luna Lake Campgrounds. Two new accessible day-

use sites with picnic facilities were completed along the Coronado Trail National Scenic Byway.

State and federal grants and local partnerships helped the forests maintain existing trails, construct the Rim Vista Trailhead, and renovate boating and parking facilities at Railroad Cove on Big Lake.

National Visitor Use Monitoring data was also collected during 2007. This data helps the forests understand recreation use patterns and trends and was first collected in 2001. This new visitor use information will be used in the on-going forest plan revision and travel management planning efforts.



Sheep Saddle Picnic/Day-Use Area

Transportation



Low water crossing on the Stone Creek Road prior to reconstruction

The ASNFs provide over 700 miles of roads designed for passenger vehicles and over 2,000 miles designed for high clearance vehicles.

One of the goals of the current Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests' land management plan is to "provide and manage a serviceable road transportation system that meets the need for public access, land management resource protection, and user safety".

The ASNFs provide over 700 miles of roads designed for passenger vehicles and over 2,000 miles designed for high clearance vehicles. The forests also contain more than 3,000 miles of roads (i.e. old logging roads) closed to public motorized use that are still available for administrative and emergency use. In 2007, maintenance work occurred on 1,350 miles.

Annual road maintenance needs are met using Forest Service staff and numerous local contractors. These local contractors complete road maintenance tasks and supply structures such as cattleguards, gates, and culverts.

In 2007, the forests were highly successful in obtaining additional funding to supplement the annual transportation

budget. These forests were able to accomplish additional road maintenance work that provides for user safety and enjoyment and protects natural resources by reducing the amount of sediment which flows into streams and lakes.

Some examples of projects that were implemented in 2007:

-Forest Road 275 (Stone Creek Road) was improved to reduce sediment entering Stone Creek. This route is popular with both hunters and tourists as it winds its way around the base of Escudilla Mountain.

-Forest Highway 43 (State Road 273) is undergoing major improvements aimed at providing a safer experience for the thousands of motorists that travel this route from Sunrise Ski Resort to Big Lake Recreation Area. This phase of the project is expected to be complete by the fall of 2008.



Low water crossing on the Stone Creek Road after reconstruction



New bridge construction along Forest Highway 43, the route between Sunrise Ski Resort and Big Lake Recreation Area

Travel Management Rule Implementation



Mobile rock crusher at work along Forest Road 275

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests are committed to providing recreational opportunities for the multitude of different publics, while sustaining National Forest System lands and resources.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests are committed to providing recreational opportunities for the multitude of different publics, while sustaining National Forest System lands and resources. Motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their National Forests - in the right places, at the right time, and with proper management.

On November 9, 2005, the Forest Service published final travel management regulations governing off-highway vehicle (OHV) and other motor vehicle use on National Forests and Grasslands. In order to comply with the new Travel Management Rule, the ASNFs initiated a forestwide Travel Analysis Process in 2006. The intent of this analysis was to help the forests determine the minimum transportation system necessary to provide safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands administered by the ASNFs.

Key to this process, the ASNFs hosted approximately 26 public collaboration meetings from 2005 to 2007 in order to collect ideas regarding motorized travel from local citizens, forest users, state, county, local, and tribal governments, and other federal agencies.

The National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council in cooperation with the ASNFs conducted OHV Route Designation Workshops during November 16-19, 2006 in Show Low, Arizona for agency personnel and the public. The purpose of these workshops was to assist the Forest Service and public in effective implementation of the Travel Management Rule. This preliminary, pre-NEPA public input was invaluable in helping the ASNFs develop the initial

proposed action.

On October 10, 2007, the ASNFs Travel Management Rule Proposed Action was available for public review and the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Motorized Travel Management Plan on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests was published in the Federal Register.

The Notice of Intent, among other things, identified the purpose and need for the action, the scoping process, and summarized the proposed action. The ASNFs then hosted five public meetings to introduce the initial proposed action for designating a public motorized transportation system that would take effect during the fall of 2009.

For more information on the process or to view the Travel Management Rule Proposed Action please visit the forests website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management.shtml>.



Relocating State Route 273 outside of the Burro Creek floodplain



1924—unloading cinders on a hill east of Fish Creek on the Springerville-Fort Apache road—the road had to be resurfaced here because of the grinding action of the loaded wagons on the down-hill grade

Wildlife



Second annual *Arizona Elk Society Fence Removal Work Weekend* in cooperation with the Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department—participants removed 5 miles of hazard fence

Partners and volunteers are VERY IMPORTANT to the ASNFs!

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests' biologists work with other resource specialists to evaluate habitat for wildlife, fish, and rare plants and to monitor the effects of actions taking place on the forests on those habitats.

There are currently 17 Management Indicator Species (MIS) used to monitor the effects of management actions on species. Population trends are stable for 16 species, while one is in decline (mule deer). In 2007, monitoring was conducted for the Abert's squirrel, Mexican spotted owl, northern goshawk, hairy woodpecker, juniper titmouse, and pygmy nuthatch. Four MIS species are considered game species, which are monitored by the Arizona Game and Fish Department: elk, mule deer, pronghorn, and turkey.

The ASNFs worked with 23 different partners on 15 wildlife projects and 11 threatened, endangered, and sensitive species projects. Past habitat evaluations indicated a need for projects that would

benefit wildlife.

Projects implemented in 2007 ranged from habitat improvement projects for wildlife (Mesa and Pigeon ecosystem restoration projects, Fairchild Meadow restoration, Mearn's quail habitat improvement) to structural maintenance, construction, and removal (Black Mesa wildlife guzzler reconstruction, adopt a ranch work day spring development, Black River conservation area fence removal) to inventory and monitoring projects (White Mountain stewardship bird monitoring, Merriam's turkey capture and monitoring).

Partners contributed over \$600,000 in funding and labor to these projects, which resulted in 21,700 acres of habitat improvement and 36 structural improvements. In comparison, the forests accomplished 390 acres of habitat improvement and 4,000 acres of surveys without partners. Partners and volunteers are VERY IMPORTANT to the ASNFs!

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species



Volunteers practicing their bird identification skills, prior to conducting bird surveys

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests includes habitat for nine federally listed species including the Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, Mexican wolf, Chiricahua leopard frog, Little Colorado spinedace, loach minnow, Gila chub, Gila trout, and Apache trout. The bald eagle was removed from the endangered species list in 2007 (with the exception of the southwestern bald eagle that nests in southern Arizona).

In 2007, the Regional Forester approved a new sensitive species list for the Southwestern Region of the Forest Ser-

vice. There is the potential for about 80 of these species to be found on the forests. Forest biologists are still evaluating some of these species for inclusion on the forests' list.

ASNFs' biologists conducted analyses of forest projects that resulted in 31 Biological Assessments and Evaluations in 2007. The forests requested concurrence for determinations of "not likely to adversely affect" threatened, endangered or sensitive species on 11 projects and requested formal consultation for another eight projects. Three of the

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Rangeland Management



Cattle grazing on Terry Flat

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests administered 96 active livestock grazing allotments on nearly two million National Forest System acres in 2007.

The ASNFs' rangeland management emphasis has been on maintaining satisfactory conditions of wildlife habitat, watershed, riparian and forage vegetation, while recovering from an extended drought.

In 2007, 13 allotments were not grazed by livestock and several allotments ran less livestock

than permitted. This total and partial non-use came about mostly as a strategy for resource protection during drought recovery.

Grazing capacity determinations were made on 16 grazing allotments and the Heber Wild Horse Territory in 2007. Range condition and trend studies were accomplished on six grazing allotments.

The Lakeside District Ranger signed a decision under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act for six grazing allotments in 2007. Preparatory work was accomplished on several other allotments to gather information for future allotment environmental analyses.

In 2007, the forests worked to reduce excess piñon and juniper trees that had encroached into rangelands, accomplishing about 30,500 acres of

canopy reduction. This work was done through mechanical treatment, prescribed burning and allowing wildfires to make beneficial reductions.

In 2007, the ASNFs treated 633 acres to fight noxious and undesired exotic weeds.

Number of Livestock Authorized on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in 2007 (head months of occupancy)	
Cattle	31,605
Sheep	27,460
Horses	1831
Burros (used in managing sheep allotments)	145

In 2007, the ASNFs treated 633 acres to fight noxious and undesired exotic weeds.

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species



Restocking spinedace into West Chevelon Canyon

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latter projects were for emergency actions to suppress wildfires.

Threatened, endangered, and sensitive species partnership projects focused on surveys (winter bald eagle surveys, native mussel surveys, Mexican spotted owl surveys, goshawk surveys), and species protection, reintroduction, and recovery (Bald Eagle Nest Watchers, Little Colorado spinedace stocking into West Chevelon Creek, Mexican wolf reintroduction support, Arizona and Bebb's Willow restoration and mainte-

nance, and Apache and Gila Trout Recovery).

Partners contributed around \$60,000 in funding and labor to restore 7 miles of stream habitat and 6 acres of terrestrial habitat, and to survey 16 miles of stream, 315 acres of lakes and ponds, and 24,000 acres of terrestrial habitat.

The forests enhanced an additional 1,100 acres of terrestrial habitat, and inventoried 7 miles of streams, 86 acres of lakes, and 88,000 acres of terrestrial habitat.

Forest Products



Logging equipment at work on the Lakeside Ranger District

In 2007, 76,500 CCF (hundred cubic feet) of merchantable tree products (including woody material from the White Mountain Stewardship Project) with a value of \$489,000 were removed from the forests. Sawlogs, timber larger than 9 inches in diameter measured 4.5 feet from the ground, accounted for 44,000 CCF and roundwood, timber 5 inches to 9 inches in diameter, totaled 32,600 CCF. If all the timber were measured in cords it would be approximately be 105,000 cords. This is a 50% increase in volume removed from 2006.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests provided fee and free-use permits for

the collection of 8,500 CCF of fuelwood for personal use and 1,200 CCF of fuelwood for commercial use. The total fuelwood sold measured in cords equals 12,200 cords.

Over 2,000 permits for Christmas trees were issued from the Black Mesa and Lakeside Ranger Districts in 2007 through the Arizona Sale-by-Mail permit system. Springerville, Alpine and Clifton Ranger Districts provided over 3,500 over-the-counter Christmas tree permits. Another 1,500 permits were issued forestwide for wildlings and other miscellaneous products like tree boughs or cones.

Over 5,500 permits for Christmas trees were issued in 2007.

Reforestation and Timber Stand Improvement

In 2007 the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests planted 520 acres, another 300 acres regenerated following site preparation, and 1,690 acres regenerated naturally for a reforestation total of 2,510 acres.

The forests accomplished 8,340 acres of precommercial thinning of small diameter trees. These are areas in which high tree densities are causing unhealthy forest conditions. By thinning the trees

and reducing competition the remaining trees are able to receive the amount of water, nutrients, and sunlight they require.

The forests also harvested 10,570 acres of timber stands infected by insects and disease. This type of harvest is referred to as a sanitation harvest. Typically the infected trees are felled and removed to prevent the infection from spreading to surrounding trees.



Ponderosa pine thinning near Pinetop-Lakeside, AZ

Insects and Disease

The annual insect and disease aerial detection survey showed that for the third straight year tree mortality related to western pine beetle and Douglas-fir beetle has returned to endemic levels at 340 acres compared to 26,640 acres in 2004.

However, ponderosa Ips beetle has increased to 2,290 acres of tree mortality after averaging 860 acres in 2005 and 2006. The largest increase in mortality is from true fir beetles with an increase

from 300 acres in 2006 to 4,470 acres in 2007.

New defoliators have been detected in 2007. Spruce aphid, looper, and ponderosa sawfly defoliated 1850 acres.

Aspen defoliation dropped dramatically to 2,660 acres in 2007 from 8,990 acres in 2006. Additionally, no drought defoliation was detected this past year. The defoliation total dropped from 9,120 acres in 2006 to 3,530 acres in 2007.

Watershed and Riparian



Riparian area along Stone Creek

Forest Plan Revision

Topics:

1. Maintenance & Improvement of Ecosystem Health
2. Managed Recreation, and
3. Community-Forest Interaction

Watershed and riparian conditions on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests continue to improve through implementation of projects with soil and water resource objectives and monitoring.

The second year of formal monitoring of best management practices (BMPs) on stewardship and salvage operations revealed that soils in some areas were highly disturbed, but little sediment reached streams.

Direct watershed improvement occurred on the Black Mesa and Clifton Ranger Districts, where encroaching woodland species were thinned to restore native grasslands. Other restoration treatments using fire or mechanical means to reduce tree density have reduced the risk of uncharacteristic wild-fire, which generally results in large amounts of soil loss and sedimentation to streams.

Livestock grazing levels were allowed to increase from previous years due to improved moisture and vegetation conditions as the long-term drought eased

slightly. Grazing levels and effects to vegetation, including riparian areas, were closely monitored showing maintenance and improvement of range and watershed conditions, especially where vegetation projects were implemented.

Weekly air quality monitoring at the Mt. Baldy IMPROVE (Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments) site continued in 2006 and 2007. Baseline levels of pollutants are still being characterized at this site. Smoke from prescribed fire projects forest-wide is monitored and regulated daily with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to reduce impacts within local and larger scale airsheds.



Example of moderate level soil disturbance associated with a thinning project near Greer, AZ

Revision of the Forest Plan

The current land management plan (forest plan) for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests provides instruction to forest managers on how to manage the natural resources of the ASNFs. The plan was published in August 1987 and needs to be revised to reflect the many changes that have occurred in the social, economic, and ecological character of the forests and surrounding areas.

In 2007, several meetings were conducted with a focus of identifying what needs to change in the current forest plan. Forest Service employees also de-

veloped scientifically based findings that describe conditions, trends, and the forests' contribution to sustainability.

Preliminary conclusions affirm that the revised forest plan needs to emphasize 1) Maintenance and Improvement of Ecosystem Health, 2) Managed Recreation, and 3) Community-Forest Interaction.

For more information on the revision process, please visit the forests' website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/plan-revision/> or call the Supervisor's Office at 928-333-4301.



Cover of the current forest plan



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New Phone Numbers

Several of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest' offices installed new phone systems this year. As a result, some of our phone numbers have changed (see the chart on the right).



If you have questions about the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests or would like more information, please contact your local office.

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