

# Four Forest Restoration Initiative

A Collaborative Effort to Restore Forest Ecosystems on Four National Forests in Arizona

<http://www.4fri.org>



**For Immediate Release**  
Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011

**Contact:** Ethan Aumack  
928-606-2128  
Steve Gatewood  
928-600-3858

## Historic Agreement Signed to Restore Northern Arizona Forests

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FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Today conservationists, scientists, industry representatives, community leaders and the U.S. Forest Service signed an historic agreement to restore ponderosa pine forests in four national forests in northern Arizona. More than 20 organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Four Forest Restoration Initiative Collaborative Stakeholder Group and the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab and Tonto National Forests.

"The MOU represents many long hours, days and months of work and collaboration between the Forest Service and stakeholders who are vested in restoring Arizona forests," said Coconino National Forest Supervisor Earl Stewart. "The signing of this document illustrates how different people and organizations with varying viewpoints can come together and work toward an extremely important and common goal."

Northern Arizona University President John Haeger said the vision of the MOU aligns with the university's goals of cultivating partnerships to advance renewable resources, sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.

"Through the Ecological Restoration Institute and ForestERA, Northern Arizona University's environmental and social research regarding these regional landscapes will continue to contribute to this ambitious effort," said Dr. Haeger. "As wildfires grow in magnitude and intensity, the need for restorative action on a level that matches the size of our southwestern fires is urgent."

The MOU is designed to accelerate large-scale restoration across the Mogollon Rim to support resilient, diverse stands that sustain native biodiversity; safely re-establish natural fire regimes; reduce fire threats to communities; create sustainable forest industries that strengthen local economies while conserving natural resources and aesthetic values; and engage the public through increased public outreach, education and support for this initiative.

"From a multitude of perspectives, be it rancher, recreationist, hunter, scientist and others, the restoration of our forests to a healthy condition is critical to the economic and physical well-being of our communities. Coconino County's experience this past summer with the Schultz Fire and flooding illustrates how an entire county suffers when a catastrophic fire occurs in a community's back yard," said Coconino County Supervisor Mandy Metzger. "Today's signing celebrates the collaborative process that supports the 4FRI. It also is a powerful public statement that demonstrates the broad-based commitment to move this critical process forward."

"Navajo County is proud to stand in partnership with the other members of the Four Forest Initiative stakeholder group and the U.S. Forest Service on this historic MOU. Never before in the history of our nation's forests has such a diverse group united in support of a project of such significant scale and importance," declared Navajo County Supervisor David Tenney. "The members of this stakeholder group understand what the residents of Navajo County have known for years: that preventing landscape-scale fires requires a landscape-scale solution that includes industry, science, and collaboration. The Initiative is Arizona's, and the country's, only hope for restoring our forests."

"The residents of Gila County have been waiting a long, long time for this day," said Gila County Supervisor Tommie Martin. "I'm honored to be part of this group, and very much look forward to seeing the restoration take place that we've all agreed on – it's long past overdue".

The MOU calls for the Forest Service and 4FRI members to work together through the process of framing the issues, developing a range of treatments, analyzing impacts and identifying preferred actions.

"The clock is ticking for Arizona's forests. Failure to make progress puts communities at risk and keeps people from new, much-needed jobs," said Patrick Graham, director of The Nature Conservancy in Arizona. "The bold plan and broad groups of supporters for this agreement is the way things will get done in the future, especially because there are going to be far fewer public dollars to support this kind of work. We are very excited about helping turn this into action on the ground to benefit people and nature."

"Today marks a turning point for northern Arizona's forests and the communities and species that call them home," said Todd Schulke, forest policy analyst at the Center for Biological Diversity. "After a century of ecosystem decline, the long-overdue restoration envisioned by the Four Forest Restoration Initiative will set forested landscapes on a path of recovery. We're excited to part of that endeavor."

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"If an effort of this scale is going to work anywhere, it's going to work here," said Ethan Aumack, Director of Restoration Programs for the Grand Canyon Trust. "From the science to the social license to the wood utilization capacity, we have all the necessary pieces in place - and now it's time to move them in unison forward."

"The MOU between the Forest Service and the 4FRI stakeholders, as well as other critical collaborative documents such as the Path Forward, materialize the best in collaboration" said Pascal Berlioux, president and CEO of Arizona Forest Restoration Products Inc. "It often felt over the last five years that landscape scale restoration in northern Arizona was about building bridges between people and bridging gaps between organizational perspectives. This MOU with the Forest Service completes the collaborative bridge started by the stakeholders in the 4FRI Charter." "But collaboration does not accomplish enough if it does not translate into action. It is now time to cross that last bridge and complete the planning and contracting processes that will allow appropriate scale industry to build a small diameter trees utilization infrastructure capable of offsetting treatment costs and funding landscape scale restoration in northern Arizona."

Signing on behalf of Arizona's loggers is the Northern Arizona Loggers Association. "It has been a long process with a great deal of effort on many, many fronts to get to this historic event," said NALA treasurer Allen Ribelin. "We look forward to the contracting opportunities for our members that 4FRI will bring to the forests of Northern Arizona."

Last month, the Forest Service released its Proposed Action for the first 750-thousand acres analyzed. The public comment period continues through March 14. For a look at the Proposed Action visit [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/kaibab/4fri](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/kaibab/4fri)

For more information about the 4FRI log onto [www.4FRI.org](http://www.4FRI.org).

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