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Media Contact: Adam Sarvana

(202) 225-2435 office

(202) 573-2562 cell

Grijalva Praises Deal Reached by Forest Service, Private Sector, Environmental Groups on Land Management Across Northern Arizona

Tucson, Ariz. – A wide range of groups including the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), timber companies and several conservation organizations yesterday announced their support for an agreement to restore 1.5 million acres of forest in Northern Arizona. Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva, ranking member of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, today applauded the agreement and announced his support for the Four Forest Restoration Initiative.

Grijalva had met with private companies, activists and USFS officials over the course of the past year encouraging finalization of the agreement, which began as a stakeholder-driven initiative.

“I congratulate the many stakeholders involved on coming together to strengthen forest protections across this important stretch of the Southwest,” Grijalva said after the deal was announced. “Allowing local input has led to a stronger management plan that will provide economic benefits for communities in and around our forests. This is a great collaborative model for future conservation efforts to follow.”

The Four Forest Restoration Initiative will include portions of the Coconino, Kaibab, Apache-Sitgreaves and Tonto National Forests in one of the largest forest restoration projects in the region. The project’s primary long-term goals include promoting forest health, conserving wildlife and plant diversity, and restoring sustainable forest ecosystems.

Among other strategies, the plan will use commercial thinning to promote old growth conservation and is expected to provide economic benefits for small businesses in the region. The USFS says in public materials that the project is “designed to restore forest health, reduce the risk of fire to communities, reduce the cost of forest thinning to taxpayers, support local economies, and encourage new wood product industries and uses for the thinned wood fiber.”

“This is an excellent opportunity to promote the conservation of an immense amount of Arizona’s natural heritage, create jobs, and advance the sustainable management of all our forest lands,” Grijalva said. “I applaud the openness of the USFS and the Obama administration to a multi-stakeholder approach to forest management planning. I look forward to seeing this project implemented and sincerely hope the planning process can be a model for future efforts.”

The next stakeholder group meeting will be held on Wed., April 27, at the Coconino Supervisor's Office, 1824 S. Thompson Rd in Flagstaff, AZ. The official draft proposal and public meeting schedule is online at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/Kaibab/fri.

For more information, call Forest Service Environmental Policy Specialist Paula Cote at (928) 226-4686.