FRIENDS OF
NORTHERN
ARIZONA FORESTS

NEWSLETTER

July 2018

Aspen Team News

Fence Building and Repairs

The mild winter of 2017-18 meant two things for the Aspen Team – we could actually build new fences during the winter and the snowpack damage to existing fences was minimal.

Crew loading material for T-six project

In February we began the construction of a two acre aspen exclosure at Sheep Spring which is southwest of Mormon Lake. We finished it in April and then spent three days at T-Six Spring (between Lake Mary Road and I-17) building a large exclosure to protect a meadow that had been badly damaged by erosion and ungulates and that had just been professionally repaired. It represented the largest exclosure the team has built and needed more than 200 man hours of team commitment to complete. In June we built a new three-acre aspen exclosure in an area off FR 193 west of US180 and began a larger one to its north.

The following photos are from T-Six (left two), Sheep Springs (top right), and pronghorn friendly modifications to a fence off 89A north of Flagstaff (lower right):

2018 looks to be an excellent year for the building of new exclosures to protect aspen and riparian areas. But due to recent forest closures several planned new fence builds have been postponed until the monsoon rains begin.

Forest Closure Information Stations

Shortly before the Memorial Day weekend, the Coconino National Forest announced the closure of several popular areas of the forest around Flagstaff due to fire danger.

To help mitigate travel into the forests by unaware folks the Forest Service asked FoNAF if we could help staff the Snowbowl road entrance and Buffalo Park trail head. We gladly accepted the opportunity, particularly since our field work was simultaneously reduced due to the closures. Our function included interacting with visitors and offering them alternatives when the closure meant their original plans were no longer possible.

Mea Stees explaining hiking options

The Aspen Team contributed 242 hours to the stations as of July 11th when the forests reopened. Our experience was very positive with many of the visitors recognizing us as volunteers and appreciating our willingness to spend hours in the sun.

We have received kudos from all the Forest Service personnel including Laura Jo West, the Forest Supervisor.

Power T-Post Driver

The fence building Aspen Team has recently tested a power T-post driver, and the initial test results are impressive. Currently on loan from the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the unit is powered by a dependable Honda 4 stroke gas engine. Weighing about the same as our current large manual pounder, it requires much less human exertion and avoids the stress and strain on some senior members' shoulders.

During a recent comparison test using three teams consisting of three volunteers each, the power pounder installed the same amount of t-posts as the two other teams in the same time. We were pleasantly surprised because it was almost twice as fast as conventional pounding and without near the fatigue experienced by the two other teams.

Tom Mackin's test run

This tool could be very effective when building new exclosures that frequently need 100 or more posts installed. Ladders, safety helmets and hearing protection are still required as is the three man team made up of the operator, ladder supporter and operator assistant.

If the testing continues to be successful, we will likely purchase our own unit and have it available for future projects.

Kachina Peaks Wilderness Access Permits

Our volunteers issued over three hundred permits and contributed two hundred ten hours to the FS mission during the 2017-18 season. The total number of permits was somewhat lower than in past years primarily due to the lack of natural snow. We will however be back next year, snow or no.

Agassiz Lodge

Each winter the USFS requires recreationists entering the Kachina Peaks Wilderness from Snowbowl Road or Snowbowl Ski Resort to have a permit. FONAF volunteers issue permits on weekend mornings during the winter at Agassiz Lodge.

The permit is free and is intended to inform visitors of the risks inherent in backcountry travel in the winter. A log is kept of each permit holder listing an emergency phone contact.

"Oystershell Scale" Killing Aspen Trees

Feature article submitted by Bob Dyer, Secretary

The Aspen Team builds exclosures to protect aspen saplings from external threats like elk and deer, but within the exclosure there's a very invasive disease we are finding all too often: oystershell scales. Since I have also found this disease on my own trees around our home, I thought it might be useful to provide more details about the scales and most importantly understand how to remove them.

A short definition of oystershell scales is "tiny insects that feed on the bark and branches of aspen trees." Large populations can reduce affect the health of the trees and make them susceptible to other problems. These insects may be scraped off the trees by hand or water spray. If heavily infested, pruning branches might be best.

The insects overwinter in eggs beneath the female scale covering. Upon hatching in May or June, the young insects crawl all over the bark and begin feeding. Some may be carried by the wind to other trees at this time. This stage is called the "crawler stage," and they are active for only a few days.

I contacted Mark Nabel, silviculturist for the Coconino National Forest, Flagstaff Ranger District, to provide a professional understanding of the subject. He also asked Amanda M. Grady, entomologist in Forest Health Protection agency, to provide an overview of her research and recommendations. Below is a short summary of their collective thoughts and references on the disease and treatments:

Description

- Developing oystershell scales feed by sucking the fluids of cells underlying the bark, often killing the cells at the feeding site. In high populations, oystershell scales may cause limb dieback and ultimately the tree dying.

- As "crawlers" the oystershell scale is highly vulnerable. There is one generation of oystershell scale produced per year in May or June. The newly emerging crawlers are generally pale yellow and visible to the naked eye.

Removal

- **Manual removal**. Wipe the scales down with a cloth or sponge, if the infested areas are small and within reach. Or if out of reach, spray with a strong jet stream of water from your hose. Do this once a week during May/June while the crawlers are emerging and vulnerable.

- **Crawler sprays**. As stated above, the crawler period in the life history of the oystershell scale is highly vulnerable, as it lacks the waxy protective cover. A great many insecticides commonly used on trees and shrubs can be effectively used to control oystershell scale if they are applied to coincide with the egg hatch/crawler period.

Thanks to Mark and Amanda for their input and suggestions. I'm sure they'd be able to answer any of your questions, especially about effective types/brands of insecticides to use on your trees. Give me a call at 928-380-5717 and I'll forward your question to them.

SOMEONE TO KNOW…..

Cary Thompson

Wildlife Biologist, Flagstaff Ranger District

If you've been participating in most of our fence modification projects during the past 2-3 years you've probably met this issue's featured Forest Service employee, Cary Thompson. Cary is a tenured Wildlife Biologist on the Flagstaff Ranger District and a 29 year employee of the Forest Service. Cary attended Northern Arizona University and graduated with a degree in Wildlife Biology with an emphasis on fish and wildlife management. During

her career she's worked on the Prescott and Helena National Forests as well as the Coconino and had responsibilities in timber, fire prevention and of course most recently wildlife.

When not at work, like many of us Cary enjoys the out of doors, downhill skiing, biking, hiking and river running. She also enjoys travel and when asked about one of her favorite locations she spoke about a trip to Costa Rica where she enjoyed the diverse and numerous wildlife species found in this tropical setting.

While working as a wildlife biologist Cary has had the opportunity to work with employees from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department and other interested agency and NGO folks. Responsible for many planning documents over the years Cary indicated that one of the more important tasks is incorporating wildlife values in other activities, such as planning prescribed fires or other thinning projects. Achieving a balance that meets multiple objectives can be challenging but not insurmountable.

Cary also stated that she enjoys working with FoNAF on many of our different projects and she appreciates the work that FoNAF is able to get done for the forest.

Public Relations News

- On June 6, 2018, **Jim McGeorge** was recognized at the Forest Service's annual "National Volunteer and Service Awards" program. Jim received regional recognition under the *Enduring Service* category for his many years of giving his time and expertise to the Coconino National Forest.

  As Paul Dawson, recreation forestry technician for the Flagstaff Ranger District said,

  > *"Jim is our most dedicated volunteer—always reliable and willing to lend a hand. He has dedicated over 15 years of service to this forest."*

  Jim is a charter member of FoNAF and is currently a board member.

  Congratulations to Jim from all of the FoNAF members.

- FoNAF has a new website that you should check out. Our website has been redesigned for a fresher look and to provide current information about our mission, areas of focus, membership, as well as access to all our past newsletters. It can quickly be found by Googling our name.

- Remember we also have a Facebook account that is refreshed frequently. Save our site as a favorite and it's always available. You do not need a Facebook account to view our Facebook pages and photos.

About "Friends of Northern Arizona Forests"

Mission Statement:
Friends of Northern Arizona Forests is dedicated to assisting the United States 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. We are a solution-oriented volunteer group that works in partnership with the Forest Service to assist the Service in tasks it does not have the staff or the funds to accomplish on its own. In addition, we seek to connect the community and the Forest Service to the benefit of both parties and of the forest itself.

FoNAF Board of Directors

Tom Mackin, President	Ed Clark	Curt Knight
Bruce Belman, Vice President	Tony DeCou	Marty Lee
Bob Dyer, Secretary	Jim Hoyne	Jim McGeorge
Dave Downes, Treasurer	Bill Kluwin	Bill Waters

Coconino National Forest information:

District Rangers: http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/coconino/about-forest/offices
Website address: http://www.fs.usda.gov/coconino/