





As we begin our 25th year of service, and as I take on the role of President of Friends of the Forest, I can't help but imagine what it would be like in the greater Sedona area if we didn't have a group like the Friends.

Our beautiful Red Rock Country would suffer the blight of graffiti, making our hikes more like walks in a big city. Our trails would be eroded, with unofficial social trails calling out to hikers. Trailhead signage would be old, or perhaps non-existent.

Residents and visitors alike would not be able to enjoy our cultural heritage sites as they now do. Without our volunteer docents, the only way to protect them might be to close them. Guests to the Visitor Center might have an unacceptably long wait for the limited number of Forest Service personnel available to assist them. We would miss the continuing education we enjoy from our interpretive programs.

Important historic buildings like Crescent Moon Ranch, the van Deren Cabin and the Apache Maid Cabin would be in disrepair. We would have precious little photo documentation of our unique cultural heritage. I could go on.

Fortunately, Friends of the Forest IS here, and IS working every day to help preserve and enhance the natural and cultural resources on the Red Rock District.

Thank you for the invaluable role you play in improving the quality of life for all of us!

At our most recent meeting of the Board of Directors we elected officers: **Tom Cloonan** will continue as Treasurer, **Lynn Zonakis** was elected Secretary, and I have succeeded **Manny Romero** as President. The role of Vice President is currently unfilled.

Over the past two years under **Manny's** leadership, Friends of the Forest continued to grow, received important accolades for our work, and implemented important and innovative new tools and processes.

In 2017, we received the U.S. Forest Service Chief's Award for fostering volunteerism and service, and in 2018 the U.S Department of Agriculture bestowed upon us the Under -Secretary's Award for Volunteer Innovation.

Volunteer hours have increased from 33,454 in 2016 to 36, 127 in 2018. During FY 2018, a total of 258 members contributed their time and effort, with 102 members contributing over 100 hours. Our membership roles have also increased, from 477 in 2016 to the current total of 575.

Also, in 2017, Manny formed a Technical Team consisting of Jennifer Young, Marilyn Painchaud, Peg Kern, Mike Ward, Bob Haizmann and Tom Cloonan. Their efforts have resulted in implementation of NEON, our new administrative and communications tool, and in deployment of a pair of mobile applications for reporting on trail conditions and

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for managing repairs. We also now enjoy a beautifully reimagined web site that presents our best foot forward to the public.

Jean Ober has completed four years of service as Secretary, but will continue as editor of Branching Out. Thank you Jean, for your service. Thanks also to retiring Board members Elaine Julian, Mark Munsell, Betty Parker, Paul Ward, Veronica Ward, and Debbie Wych who have completed their terms. We welcome new Board members Terry Orlick, Deneise Piepiora,

and **Bob Wych** as well as returning Board members **Ernie DiMillo**, **Ed Hodges**, **Peg Kern**, **Garry Neil**, **Jean Ober**, **Mike Ober**, **Jerry Piepiora**, and **Manny Romero**.

In celebration of our 25 years of service, we'll be holding a potluck social at the Mystic Hills clubhouse on Saturday March 30, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. I look forward to seeing you there.



FOF 25th Anniversary Potluck Social

On Saturday March 30 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm we'll be celebrating our 25th Anniversary with a potluck social. This is our first FOF-hosted organization-wide get-together, and will be held at the Mystic Hills clubhouse, 108 E Mallard Drive, off of Hwy 179, 2 miles south of the Y. The Mystic Hills subdivision is not gated, so you can drive right in, although car-pooling is encouraged.

FOF will supply burgers, brats and veggie burgers, non-alcoholic drinks, condiments, and utensils. Attendees are encouraged to sign up to bring appetizers, side dishes or deserts.

You can RSVP for the event online at <u>friendsoftheforestsedona.org/potluck</u>. You can also RSVP by emailing potluck@fofsedona.org, letting us know how many in your party, and if you'll be bringing something. Finally, you can give Craig Swanson a call at 928-274-0027 if you'd prefer.

Please feel free to bring a spouse, partner or friend, and spread the word to other FOFers. Hope to see you there!

Impact of the Recent Shutdown

Now that the dust is finally settling from the record 35-day government shutdown of 2018-2019, we can take a deep breath and reflect on events.

As all of you who volunteer to work on our various committees are aware, Friends activities came to a halt. Our agreement with the Forest Service requires us to work under their direction, a key aspect of the FS workers compensation insurance that we fall under. At the start of the shutdown, our Volunteer Coordinator, Justin Loxley, informed us that we would need to suspend activities for the duration of the shutdown.

I have since learned from District Ranger **Nicole Branton** that each government shutdown can be unique. She receives communications from the Agriculture Department providing direction on what is essentially the severity of the shutdown.

And of course, as any shutdown begins, there's no way of knowing how long it will last. The shutdown in January 2018 lasted only 3 days, so its impact was significantly less than the recent 35-day shutdown. This ambiguity makes it challenging to plan a response, and tremendously frustrating, particularly for Forest Service employees.

As this latest shutdown progressed, the Forest Service and the Arizona Natural History Association (ANHA) determined that due to their agreement, ANHA could in fact open the Visitor Center. FOF VIS volunteers could sign an ANHA Volunteer Agreement and provide services to visitors, as long as FOF volunteers did not wear anything FOF-related. They were functioning as ANHA volunteers, not as members of Friends of the Forest.

ANHA and the Forest Service believe that this same process may be used in a future shutdown to staff docents at V Bar V and Palatki, since ANHA merchandise is offered at both sites.

While trash accumulated at trailheads, individual citizens acted on their own initiative to remove much of it, and we applaud those efforts. The contractor who empties toilets was able to continue cleaning them, as their contract is long-term. Even though checks could not be cut to them for their work, they knew they would be paid as soon as the shutdown ended.

Trail Maintenance and Graffiti crews were sidelined. The impact on trail maintenance was less severe, in that important projects could be rescheduled. The impact on graffiti was more significant, as the shutdown implied to vandals that no one was watching, and they could act with impunity. FOF will be working with the Forest Service to determine if there is a mechanism that will allow graffiti remediation to continue during a future shutdown.

FOF is also working with the Forest Service, ANHA and the Chamber of Commerce to develop a plan for responding to the next shutdown. That plan is expected to have trigger points, depending on the duration of the shutdown: actions to take immediately, steps that are triggered after 7 days (for example), contingency plans if the shutdown drags in to a third week (for example). Key to this plan will be a way to communicate to residents and visitors what is being impacted: is the Visitor Center open, is Grasshopper Point available, can National Monuments be visited?

Internally, FOF has convened a working group to evaluate what happened in this latest long shutdown, and how we can be as effective as possible during the next one. We will communicate the results of that effort.

To end on a positive note, the strong negative reaction to the shutdown suggests to me that at least in the short to medium term, future shutdowns are less likely to happen, particularly long ones.

If you have any specific ideas about how FOF should respond during future shutdowns, don't hesitate to email or phone me.

Craig Swanson president@fofsedona.org 928-274-0027



Volunteer Hours

With the government shutdown in December/January, followed by some rather inclement weather, it looks like our current streak of ever-increasing hours has come to an end. Kudos to Graffiti Removal, River Rangers, and TM&C for actually increasing their hours in spite of this! For the first 4 months of the new fiscal year, we are about 3,500 hours behind where we were for last year. Here's the recap of the hours by committee through January, compared to last year's totals:

Committee	FY19 Hrs. thru Jan	FY18 Same Pe- riod	Change in Hours	% Change
Air Quality	124	200	-76	-38.0%
Cultural Re- sources	2,752	3,871	-1,119	-28.9%
Graffiti Removal	472	465	+7	+1.4%
Interpretive Pgm	62	139	-77	-55.4%
River Rangers	173	148	+25	+16.9%
Special Projects	418	1,556	-1,137	-73.1%
Trail Maint&Const	1,175	1,152	+23	+2.0%
Trail Patrol	2,805	3,129	-324	-10.4%
VIS	1,121	1,628	-508	-31.2%
Water Sampling	0	0	0	0%
Admin/Meetings	848	1,160	-313	-26.9%
Total	9,948	13,448	-3,499	-26.0%

As a reminder, please report ALL hours (including Admin hours for Committee chairs and all Trail Patrol hours by individual members) as soon as possible at the end of each month, but no later than the 7th of the next month. This allows us to consolidate and update the hours in each member's NEON profile in a timely fashion.

NEON (Member Information Software)

Our administrative software for managing all our member information (NEON – **N**onprofit **E**nterprise **O**nline **N**etwork) continues to be a valuable tool. Remember that you can log in to your own profile at any time to update your contact information, as well as your seasonal dates, skills/knowledge, and the expiration date of your Government Driver's License (for drivers of Forest Service vehicles). Renewing your annual membership (or making an additional donation at any time) is easy – just click on the "Renew/Donate/View" option, then click on "Donate Now" and complete the required information. You can pay on-line using a credit card via PayPal (you don't need a PayPal account), or you can select to "Pay Later" and mail in a check. You can also view your total FOF hours by fiscal year from 2014 forward, with the current year updated on a monthly basis.

To log in, go to the Friends website (friendsoftheforestsedona.org), click on "Members", then scroll down and click on "Member Login". Instructions are provided directly below the Member Login link.

Peg Kern

Membership

Since our board meeting in December, this current reporting period - (12/1/2018 through 2/16/2019), has seen yet another increase in membership. 37 new members have just joined - this already is one more than during the previous quarter.

All are individual members and include - Ed White. Todd Stell, Alan Kropiewnicki, Janet Kropiewnicki, Bill Schuller, Lori Schuller, Taylor Payne, Peggy Spencer-Coen, Richard Spencer-Coen, Bob Emley, Luann Johnson, John Lacriola, Peter Bruce, Peter Smith, Martha Smith, Tod Young, Robbin Meyer, Lyle Grohn, Sue Grohn, Gary Barrette, Cynthia Malowitz, Mark Malowitz, Jessica Baldischwiler, Bill Logan, Bea Logan, Rod Cashin, Mary M. Wilson Clubb, Curtis Clubb, Dour Barnshaw, Roger Mansoldo, Janet Mansoldo, Kathleen Lovell, Barry Mallis, Melanie Vuicich-Mallis, Rosalie O'Donnell, Glen Jones, and Margie Jones. We hope you enjoy volunteering in all the areas you chose. Thank you for joining and supporting Friends of the Forest. Membership has now reached 575 and we continue to grow!

Another highlight of this past period was the annual Welcome Event on February 7th. It was a complete sell out - standing room only. The conference room in the Visitors Center holds approximately 45 people. 62 registered for meeting and presentations! Of that total approximately 17 were existing members, 25 perspective members, 15 speakers, and 2 support staff. It looks like of the perspective members, 13 joined the same day.

A special thank you to all the other presenters — District Ranger Nicole Branton, President Craig Swanson, Jerry Checchia, Jerry Walters, Spence Gustav, Al Cornell, Bob Wych, Bob Haizmann, Brian Painchaud, Jon Pretescu, Beverly Jackson, Mike Ober, and Terry Orlick. The quality of your comments obviously piqued the interest of the attendees. Manny Romero ran the electronics, with Deneise Piepiora and Jean Ober handling the registration. Peg Kern and Marilyn Painchaud assisted with getting the word out.

To everyone involved – you made this event a huge success!

As everyone should know, the Friends of the Forest will be celebrating our <u>25th Anniversary</u>. Our President, Craig Swanson has announced that there will be a celebration on March 30th, held at Mystic Hills clubhouse from 4:00-6:00 PM. All members are welcome. Please consider being a part of this celebration.

AND - ONE LAST TIME — it looks like 38 members have not renewed their membership as of today. The grace period ends the end of March. If you have not renewed by that time, you will be dropped as members. Please remember your funds will be dedicated to maintaining, protecting, and restoring the scenic beauty of our National Forest lands in the Sedona area.

You can go online to

www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org, select "Join Us," and follow the steps to renew, using PayPal or Credit Card. You can also use the same form, shown at the bottom of this report, and mail in your renewal.

Jerry Piepiora,
Membership Chair (443.324.1360)
Email: membership@fofsedona.org



Graffiti Removal ===

The amount of work this past quarter, like that of Trail Patrol and TM&C has been minimal, but the trails are beginning to dry out, so we've a lot catching up to do.

The Government shutdown of December and January kept us from doing almost all clean ups. However, it did not deter many of our Good Samaritan members from hiking and making a number of observations. Once we were OK to start again, that list allowed us a few weeks to catch up before the snow.

Unlike the shutdown, the snows kept many of our visitors off the trails as well, so we're noticing that the more popular sites are in reasonably good shape. From the attached photos, however, it's not all good news. Obviously this recent "artwork" was not confined to the rocks. Removing paint is not easy work, so I really appreciate the help by Jerry Checchia, Ernie DiMillo, Pete Malmgren, Matt Nicholls, and Jim White. The restrooms were cleaned using a spray, and we just painted over the bridge abutment mess. Les and Barb Heffner joined us on Bell Trail, and lastly, Tim Fogarty, Deneise Piepiora, and Mike Boyd helped removed paint at Stoneman Lake, where the temps were below freezing.

As a last reminder, the previously canceled advanced graffiti training class will now be held on Thursday morning, March 14, 2019. We are calling this a <u>level II class</u>, as we will be reviewing our latest techniques, which have been developed by our own team. In addition, several guest speakers have committed to be there, including our District Ranger, Nicole Branton, Justin Loxley, and our own Nori Thorne, Bob Haizmann, and Spence Gustav. This class is now sold out. We have 42 students committed. If this is something that slipped your mind, please let me know. Cancellations are always possible.

The timing of this class is significant. With the warmer weather, the number of festivals now upon us, and the approaching Spring Break, we're going to need multiple teams at the most popular sites. One of the key elements of this training will be the upgrade in smart phone software and a trail classification

description. If successful, we will have the ability to respond to reports quicker than ever.

As always, we encourage graffiti reporting, regardless of the source or type. That is the single most important tool we have in making a difference in the Forest.

The entire graffiti team looks forward to seeing you on the trails.

Jerry Piepiora, Chairman





Graffiti defacing public restroom at trail head.

Here **Jerry Checchia** is working on paint removal. Below you can see the great work our team does.



Tom and Peggy Likens working with the team at Bell Trail





Jim White and Matt Nicholls paint over graffiti left on a bridge abutment.

Photos by J. Piepiora



Tim Fogarty, Mike Boyd and Deneise Piepiora working in the freezing temps at Stoneman Lake.



Merchandise



Friends of the Forest merchandise is available at Board Meetings and on-line purchase from our website www. friends of the forest sed on a. or gTerry Orlick

Wildlife Projects =

Summary of Arizona Toad Inventory Effort



Due to the decline of Arizona toads and extirpation from some of its range, Fish and Wildlife is preparing to list

this species on the endangered species list. They have asked for survey data. Since surveys for this early spring breeder have not been conducted on the Red Rock Ranger district for decades and I became aware of an easier methodology, we decided to propose this to volunteers in 2018.

Short-sited plans for FY2018 were to conduct walking and vehicular surveys in March and April in the hopes of detecting singing AZ toads at 19 high priority sites accessible by vehicle and 13 high priority sites accessible by hiking. A total of \$10,000 of appropriated funds were approved for my time to train and organize volunteers, analyze and report results. The response by volunteers was amazing and as a result survey efforts in FY2018 far exceeded preliminary goals.

On February 16th 2018, 21 volunteers and employees were trained on the life history of Arizona toads, visual and aural identification compared to other spring calling amphibians, survey methodology, and reporting requirements. After the training, volunteers signed up for survey locations and received maps. At later dates, several additional volunteers were trained.

A total of 21 volunteers and 4 FS personnel participated in the 2018 survey effort for Arizona Toads in the Verde Valley. A whopping 194 visits to 93 distinct sites (most sites with multiple survey points) were made between 3 and 8 times. Surveys occurred along 9 perennial rivers/streams, 7 sites with perennial pools, 15 springs, 1 lake, and 10 locations on private lands (either with access permission or heard from a nearby call point). Without the 21 volunteers, the majority of 93 sites would not have been surveyed. The value of the volunteer hours exceeds \$19,700!

While no Arizona toads were detected at any of the sites surveyed, other amphibian species were detected, useful information on their distribution and their breeding season dates. A total of eight sites had Woodhouse toads. A total of three sites had redspotted toads. One site had canyon tree calling in April and another site had canyon tree frog tadpoles.

Another outcome of the volunteer effort was documentation of a before-unknown population of the non-native Pacific treefrog in the Verde Valley.



Pam Milavec, detected and recorded an unknown species of amphibian calling at Red Rock Crossing on Oak Creek in early April. Volunteer Rita Faruki and Janie subsequently surveyed and caught a Pacific treefrog at Red Rock Crossing and heard three additional individuals calling. Volunteer Pete Malmgren conducted survevs upstream and downstream of the original detection site at Red Rock Crossing. He detected Pacific treefrogs at Wind River Caves, but not downstream of Red Rock Crossing. Subsequently volunteer Rita Faruki and Janie visited various sites upstream of the Wind River Cave and detected Pacific treefrogs in ponds at the Poco Diablo Resort and on Oak Creek at Tlaguepague. In 2018, Pacific treefrogs have been detected at four locations spanning a three mile stretch of Oak Creek (from Red Rock Crossing upstream to Tlaquepaque).

On April 4, 2018, volunteer **Don McClimans** and Janie attended a National Park Service training on using their prototype of autonomous recording units (ARU) to passively record acoustic animal calls. Mark Szydlo, NPS bio from the Flagstaff monuments taught the class. Training included how to set up and deploy the ARUs, and how to download, and analyzing sound files using a three step process ending with using free Raven software. During this training Mark Szydlo

offered to lend the Forest Service some recording units for 2019.

Arizona Game and Fish Department and Fish and Wildlife Service were very impressed with the volunteer effort. AZGFD recommended that since the 2018 spring was dry, that we (volunteers) resurvey the 2018 sites in 2019. I didn't think volunteers would be too keen on that idea, but once again was I surprised!

This last Wednesday, another toad training session for volunteers was held. Twelve volunteers attended and signed up to monitor around 50 sites (most sites having more than one survey point). A new component to this year's survey is to install acoustic recorders at remote headwater streams. These recorders can operate around 20 days on one set of batteries. Twelve volunteers signed up to hike to remote areas to deploy and later change out recording units at 14 sites. Four of those volunteers even stayed for arduous training on how to download and analyze the acoustic data. We are very optimistic that with this year's re-survey effort in a wetter spring and recorders

deployed in headwater sites that weren't surveyed last year, we will detected Arizona toads somewhere in the Verde Valley. Even if we don't, that information is critical and may further support Fish and Wildlife's decision to list the species.

Stay tuned for 2019 results!

Janie Agyagos Wildlife Biologist

Forest Service

Coconino National Forest, Red Rock Ranger District

Interpretive Programs

Bob Wych is away enjoying the beautiful scenery and history of Peru and requested a reminder be added to the newsletter. All of our members and visitors to Coconino National Forest should check out the FOF Interpretive Program website:

www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org/events/

for all the wonderful activities that are being offered. These programs are presented by local experts in our area as volunteers for the Coconino National Forest Service in conjunction with the Arizona Natural History Association (AHNA) and Friends of the Forest.

Check out the Birding Walks led by naturalist and birder **Kevin Harding**. Kevin will be leading walks in March and April searching for nesting and singing on territory hoping to see Bushtit, Western Scrub Jay, and Western Bluebirds. The walks may turn up Acorn Woodpeckers or Red-naped Sapsuckers who may be in the area as well as a few Ruddy Ducks, Northern Pintails or Cinnamon Teals. Join Keven on March 12, March 29 and April 9 for some interesting finds.

On March 20, Kevin will be leading a Nature Hike focused on the varied plant and animal life in and around the Sedona area.

On April 23, the Geology Hike will be led by earth science specialist **Chris Weld**. If you are interested in finding out more about how the red rocks have evolved over millions of years, as the wind and water shaped and sculpted the land, please consider attending this informative talk.

To sign up for any of these programs, contact 928-203-2903 to register and for location information.

Jean Ober

Trail Maintenance & Construction

Greetings Fellow Volunteers,

In spite of a 5-week Gov't shutdown and a Snowmageddon. We still managed to install seven new kiosks and do a pretty good amount of trail maintenance. With many of our trails damaged from all the rain and melting snow we will surely have our work "cut out" for us this spring, pun intended.

But seriously, I really want to thank all the hardworking volunteers that come out week after week and give it their all.

We just got a special request from the Forest Service to help out at V-V which sustained a good amount of washed out areas on the trail leading to the rock art panel, and of course I got a great response of people wanting to help.

I look forward to our group assisting the FS in getting our beautiful trails back in shape & keeping them that way.

Hope to see you out on the trails:)

Jerry Checchia



TM&C team at Cathedral Rock kiosk

Pictures by J. Checchia



Weather-damaged trail repair work by our team members Ernie DiMillo, Rich Spinelli, Jeff Maust and David Murrill above and Tim Fogarty below removing broken tree limbs from the trail.



Cultural Resources =

Due to the government shutdown, site closures due to the frequent and heavy rains/flooding at V-Bar-V, and record snow fall all activities for this committee have been minimal.

V-Bar-V Update

We are not having the large 2 day "V-Bar-V Days" this year. Instead there will have special exhibits every week at the Visitor Information Center in VOC and/or outdoor exhibits at V-Bar-V.

The heavy rains on February 14th resulted in major flooding along Wet Beaver Creek. This damage included the Beaver Creek Day Use areas and V-Bar-V itself.



Several hundred feet of trail was washed out from the edge of the meadow to the Docent shed. Aside from washing away the decomposed granite and some of the base rocks, debris was piled up around the Docent shed and interpretive sign as well as depositing mud in the shed. On top of that, several hundred yards of fencing that bordered the creek was washed away.

Site Recording Project

The team has begun activities for this season and has already recorded four sites not previously known to the Forest Service. There are still enough currently known unrecorded sites for this project to continue for several more years.

Between the end of the shutdown and the inclement weather, the team managed to record two sites. At the Forest Service' request continuing activity on this project is taking a hiatus until the Forest Service can get caught up on processing the 24 sites that have already been recorded. The team is continuing to look for new sites and hopes that recording activities resume soon.

If you are interested in helping with this project, or would like more information, please contact **Scott Newth** at rsnewth@msn.com. (928-274-7773)

Cultural Site Photo Documentation Project

The site photography project still has several years of work ahead. The current list of ongoing projects includes re-photographing major prehistoric sites using conventional, RTI, and 3-D technologies, similar photography for newly recorded sites, and periodic monitoring of the dust study images at Palatki and Honanki. The team has also been busy creating 3-D images of selected historical Forest Service structures in the Red Rock and Peaks districts. If you are interested in helping with this project, or would like more information, please contact **Spence Gustav** at spencehg@yahoo.com.

Docent Program

We are always in need of new docents, particularly if you spend all or part of the summer months in the Verde Valley!

If you are interested in helping protect our cultural heritage sites and learning more about the **Palatki, Honanki** and **V-Bar-V** sites, consider joining the Cultural Resource and Protection Committee. Please call or email (docents@fofsedona.org) for more information.

Jerry Walters 284-1339

River Patro

The Government Shutdown and winter weather have made the river support trips quite the adventure this year. On the February 7 trip the drivers, reported challenging road conditions causing issues for multiple visitors cars (one vehicle with four people had been stuck there for four days).





They also reported rock slides on the road as shown above with **Rick Baldauf**. Pictures taken by **Chuck Boyle**.

There were 12 drivers that provided 220 hours to assist the Forest Service with the river trips. I would like to thank all of them.

Mike Ober

Forest Service News ===



Outgoing Friends of the Forest President, **Manny Romero** was thanked for his two years of service to the Coconino National Forest with a plaque presented by District Ranger **Nichole Branton** and Volunteer Coordinator **Justin Loxley. Annemari Romero** was on hand to congratulate her father.

Sedona Friends of the Forest Calendar 2019

March 13, 9:00 am - 11:00 am Board of Directors Meeting

March 30, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm Potluck Social

May 8, 9:00 am - 11:00 am Board of Directors Meeting

September 11, 9:00 am ~ 11:00 am Board of Directors Meeting

November Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition (TBD)

December 11, 9:00 am - 11:00 am Board of Directors Meeting

The Friends of the Forest, Inc. is dedicated to assisting the U.S. Forest Service in maintaining, protecting, and restoring the scenic beauty, and natural and cultural resources of forest lands for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. The objective of this nonprofit, volunteer group is to work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service in tasks it does not have the manpower or the funds to accomplish on its own.