



From the President

In this issue

President's Message

Since mid-April, all Friends of the Forest activities have been cancelled, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The only exceptions we're making are for solo outings or outings by a couple who live together. For example, some graffiti removal work has been accomplished by individuals or couples.

As with last years' government shutdown, it's difficult for our volunteers to sit idle, knowing that there is a body of valuable work to be done. This time, it's doubly difficult, because almost all activities in the Greater Sedona area have come to a halt.

Although our hiatus from work is frustrating to say the least, we need to remind ourselves, as the Forest Service rightly emphasizes, the primary responsibility of a volunteer is to be safe. Everything else is secondary. The best way to keep ourselves and others safe right now is to scrupulously follow the best medical advice on social distancing and on limiting our activities to the essentials.

Lynn and I are practicing what we preach. We shop at a store that takes online orders paid in advance. We pop our trunk open and an employee puts our groceries in. For items not available this way, I very infrequently shop in person in a local grocery store that has implemented excellent safety precautions. I wear a mask, sanitize my cart handle, keep social distance, sanitize my hands in the car before driving home, and wash my hands for at least 20 seconds when I get home. We order take out once a week to patronize the local restaurants that desperately need the business, but even then, I pay in advance and wear a mask when they deliver food to our car. And I wash my hands upon returning home.

As odd as it seems, these new realities have become habitual already, and have ceased to be a burden. I encourage all of you to scrupulously follow the simple [safe-practice guidelines recommended by the CDC](#).

The best scientific analysis suggests that while stay-at-home restrictions are likely to be eased as the initial wave of cases abates, there will almost certainly be subsequent waves that require restrictions being placed back on us, as Singapore has recently experienced.

While it may be some time until our volunteer activities resume in full, the Red Rock District of the Coconino National Forest will be there waiting for us to care for it. In the meantime, we need to care for ourselves and for each other so we're ready when the time comes.

Stay safe!

Craig Swanson

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Friends,

Your Forest Service family hopes that you and your loved ones are well, and we want to express our heartfelt care for each of you during these challenging times. Staff on the District are split between those that are working remotely from home, and those whose work must be done in the office or the field. All of us are missing that critical part of our workforce and the people that make working on the Red Rock so special – our volunteers.

Take care of yourselves and each other. We look forward to seeing you when it is safe for each of you to join us again in service to the people and the land.

Amy Tinderholt

District Ranger

Forest Service, Coconino National Forest

Friends,

I am so grateful for such a professional and dedicated volunteer organization. When most activities were shut down due to COVID-19, FOF volunteers were innovative in mitigating transmission risks and continued to get great field surveys completed. Since we started field work before the virus restrictions, it was important to continue surveys according to protocol. Otherwise, if we had been forced to stop surveys in the middle of the season, all the earlier surveys would have been moot. So, kudos to all those great volunteers out there who were able to continue field work, either alone or with someone with which they cohabitate!

There will be virtually no difference in this year's accomplishment for the wildlife, fish, and rare plant (WFRP) program on the Red Rock District, thanks to the dedication of a bunch of talented volunteers!

Janie Agyagos,

Wildlife Biologist

Forest Service, Coconino National Forest, Red Rock District

Vice President

GRANDMA GATEWAY'S WALK

Being an avid reader, books have enriched my days during these bizarre times. Marilyn and Cal Briggs-Harris, former site hosts at Palatki, suggested I read Grandma Gateway's Walk by Ben Montgomery which transported me to a fascinating, often perilous journey along the 2050-mile Appalachian Trail.

Emma Gateway was the first woman to walk straight through the entire length of the trail in 1955 at the age of 67. She had never been a hiker, but her inner strength propelled her with more fortitude than any physical strength could have. She was no stranger to pain. As a child her clothes accidentally caught on fire, and as an adult she was regularly beaten by her husband of 30 years. She also bore seven children at home. Toting a homemade drawstring bag with a sweater, jacket, matches, a few provisions and some nuts and dried fruit, off she went telling no one, not even her children. Other things she took with her were an overwhelming power of simple determination, courage, humility, optimism, faith in people, and a genuine marvel for the journey.

Things she did not take included hiking boots, a sleeping bag, a tarp, and fear. She often slept out in the open, and on heated rocks when it was cold. She walked when her feet were extraordinarily swollen and sore, wearing out 7 pairs of tennis shoes. She forded a torrential stream on a wet log, and she could not swim. She jumped across a deep crevice that had lost its bridge after throwing her bag across first. When asked why she did it, she answered: "Why? I wanted to. I read an article in a magazine about the beautiful trail, how well marked it was, that it was cleared out and that there were shelters at the end of a good day's hike. It was not. There were terrible blowdowns, burnt over areas, gravel and sand washouts, weeds and brush to your neck...This is no trail. This is a nightmare. I would never have started this trip if I had known how tough it was, but I couldn't and wouldn't quit."

Sounds like a few of the phenomenal people I know in Friends of the Forest.

Ruti Lovitt, Vice President

The vast bulk of activities for the Cultural Resources Committee have been shut down due to the pandemic. A few tasks that are either solitary in nature or involve just a spouse and/or hiking dog have managed to continue.

Site Recording Project

All activities have ceased for the season. We are at the end of your usual recording season and do not expect to resume until October.

Photo Digitization Project

This project began in 2011 and was essentially completed in 2018, but with a few loose ends left hanging. I am happy to say that the final updates (replacing initials with names for photographers) have been completed with no further hours anticipated for this project. You can review the March 2018 Branching Out for a recap.

Cultural Site Photo Documentation Project

We have several "couples" doing site "exploration" and monitoring on an ongoing basis. There have been several trips to Palatki, Honanki and other "easy access" sites to acquire new imagery or high-resolution 3D data for an ongoing project we are collaborating with the Forest Archaeologist and other researchers. Some of the required imagery was acquired early in the social distancing situation and processing and evaluation are ongoing. We continue to get reports of high visitation and occasional graffiti and vandalism at remote archaeological sites by volunteer couples who have been visiting various sites.

We also have several people, following the rules but going out to several locations to acquire site photo documentation including drone imagery. This effort is ongoing but at a much-reduced pace as we are limiting this activity to only easy access sites on a safety basis due to the 2-person team limit.

There is quite a bit of time being applied to review of various archaeological data sets that has been ongoing for a long time. We are finally sitting down at computers to do work that was continually put off due to the preference for working in the forest rather than at a computer. Part of this is to prioritize sites for future visits. Many "known" sites have little or no photographic documentation.

Jean Ober is all set to stay cool at the Honanki parking lot. The Forest Service requested assistance with monitoring of the Heritage Sites closure, Docents are taking turns at the parking lot duty. Photo by: **Mike Ober**

Spence continues to work on the cross checking of site location and description files to identify issues within the data sets. He is also spending a lot of computer time processing and editing 3D image sets for the lichen impact study in collaboration with ASU professor Frank Bungartz and the pre-historic rock art superposition study with Professor Peter Anick of Brandeis University. The idea is to have a large amount of processed data to work with when things open up again.

Among the projects revitalized is the Dust Impact Study at Palatki and Honanki. The processing and evaluation of almost two years' worth of periodic imagery acquired for the project is moving forward but still at a slow pace. The processing is a terribly slow, precise and frustrating activity even with significant computer resources. The break from field activities is providing an opportunity to try and catch up and be able to provide potentially valid information for the Forest Service to evaluate procedures to best protect the rock art at the heritage sites.

If you are interested in helping with this project, or would like more information, please contact **Spence Gustav** at spencehg@yahoo.com.

Docent Program

The Cultural Sites are closed through the end of June. The only activity to take advantage of is self/remote training (i.e. videos).

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@fosedona.org) for more information.

Jerry Walters 284-1339



Staying Safe and Healthy!

Now that hopefully we're all fully stocked up with the necessary paper products and still enjoying the company of our marriage partners... I hope you're getting out and enjoying beautiful spring weather on the trails that are still open.

The graffiti removal committee, like all other teams, has been extremely limited as to what we can do. Fortunately, although in a minimal capacity, we can still pursue our mission. We are allowed to work individually or in married couples. A number of our team members have been sending in reports and remediating those areas which can be accomplished by one person. A hearty "thank you" to **Annie and Alan Glickstein, Jeff Harvey, Nori Thorne, Jerry Checchia, Deneise Piepiora, Cynthia Malowitz, Brad Kincaid, Al Cornell, Pauline Rosen,** and probably a few others who forgot to send a report. We've even had two Sedona hikers (not FOF) who found a way to get messages to me about locations that needed some attention.

There are several sites which will require a group effort and must wait for this virus to take its course. These involve paint

which always means more people and resources. Except for these larger projects we have been able to keep up with the new reports. Thankfully, there seems to be a major reduction in new scratching – you can imagine why.

Just prior to the beginning of this shutdown, we held our annual graffiti removal class. It started out as being completely sold out, but by class time, several students felt it necessary to cancel. We ended up with 23 students and trust it was worth their time. In addition to having our President, Craig Swanson and District Ranger, Amy Tinderholt offer welcoming comments, Amy attended the full class. Lauren Browne, Director of Communications for the City of Sedona, was our guest speaker and provided us some insight on a number of issues facing the City.

Hopefully, next quarter will bring some normalcy to the Forest Service and Sedona Friends of the Forest. At some point, we will be providing field training to several of our new members.

Thank you all – keep the reports coming!

Jerry Piepiora, Chairman

All photos by J. Piepiora



3/12/20 Graffiti Class

Coming at the outset of the COVID-19 problem, the sold-out class became a little smaller, but received the full morning of training, including attendance from our District Ranger – **Amy Tinderholt**, who also offered comments. And again, many thanks to **Spence Gustav, Nori Thorne, and Bob Haizmann** for providing very professional instruction.



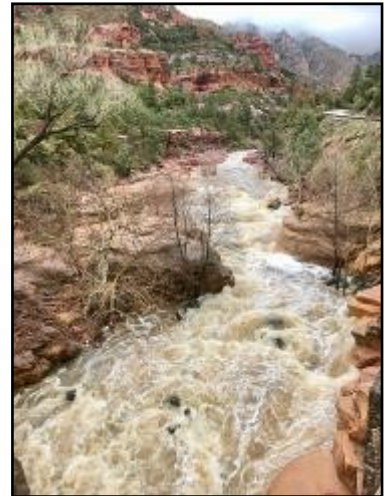
Graffiti Removal



3/14/20 Slide Rock State Park

Immediately after early March storms, Slide Rock takes on a completely different appearance.

NOTE: The wooden bridge going over to the restrooms has been washed downstream. Not too much graffiti removal going here!



Sugarloaf Loop

The only time we've been out as a group, more than one or married couple – Sugarloaf Loop. **Jerry Checchia** (with our mascot Chase) joined **Deneise** and me. We received reports of hate writings. We needed to respond to that immediately. We kept safe social distances.



Lastly – a glimpse of what awaits us when we are cleared to resume normal activities.

Interpretive Programs

Unfortunately, wildflower walks led by **Bob Beltz and Tori Marshall** had to be canceled, and I say unfortunately because there is an excellent wildflower display this spring (as you no doubt know)!

I am still helping out at the Sedona Food Bank weekly, handing out food to clients on Wednesday afternoon. At home I have been doing a lot of weeding - by hand and with the weed whacker - and my garden is started. Debbie has been working on a quilt and has made several cloth face masks for her and me to use when grocery shopping. Besides that, **Debbie and I** have hiked a couple times - part of Hot Loop Trail, and Woods Canyon Trail this past Monday with **Tana Allman**. I am attaching a few pictures of wildflowers and a "domesticated agave" (that we have learned about thru Janie's project) that we have seen on those two hikes.

Bob Wych



Photos by: **Bob Wych**





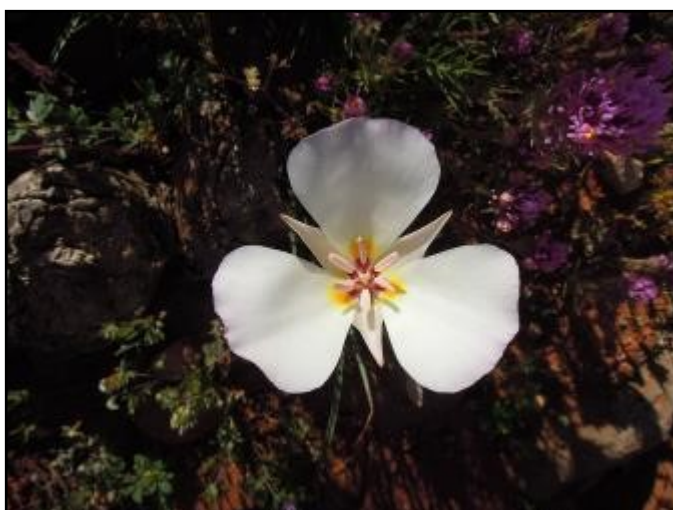
Lupine in the rain - Big Park Loop Trail



Firecracker Penstemon - Baldwin Trail



Black Foot Daisy - Turkey Creek



Mariposa – Jack's Canyon Trail (I love the variety of color, patterns and texture in the heart of the flowers. I have taken many photos of these over the years. They are just starting to bloom abundantly with the onset of warm weather)



Purple and White Owl's Clover – Jack's Canyon Trail



Colorado Four O'clock – Turkey Creek Trail

Photos on this page by: **Jerry Walters**



Waterfall on Courthouse Loop

When wildflowers are not catching Jerry Walters' photographic eye, it is the red rock landscape scene of a spring waterfall and lichen growing along the trails.



Lichen Boulder (AKA – Bio Glyphs) Big Park Loop (yea, I got a thing for Lichens)



Lichen on Macrobiotic Soil - Turkey Creek



Jack's Canyon - April 10, 2020 Photo by: **Brian Painchaud**

Membership

Membership Report:

It's certainly become a different world since we gathered for our last Board Meeting. But despite the turmoil and shutdown of activities, fifteen new members have joined the Friends since our last report (2/29-4/27). I'm sure they'll all be raring to go once we get the go-ahead from the Forest Service. And I'm sure there will be a lot of volunteer work to do.

A hearty welcome to our newest members:

Individual: **Marcus Crane, Carolee Hayler, Jennifer Stanley and Mary Zemansky.**

Family: **Dondi & John West.**

Lifetime Individual: **Gwen Griffin, Victoria Hall and Mary Lou Malek.**

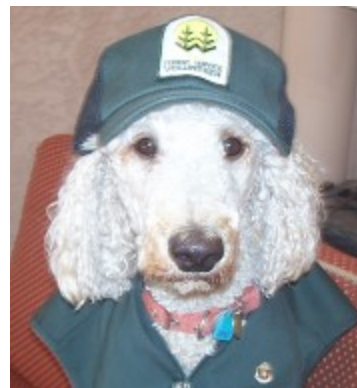
Lifetime Family: **Terry & Sandy Adair, Rob & Sharon Harrison, and Andrea & William Nelson.**

There were also 47 non-renewals for the membership year 2020, bringing our total current membership down to 572.

I hope all our members are in good health, staying safe, and

making the best of these unfortunate times. Hope to see you all again soon.

Noreen Lisowski



Curly says it's a doggone shame I can't volunteer for now!

Publicity

The May Board Meeting has been cancelled due to the social distancing concerns. Many of the activities that the Friends do on a routine basis have been curtailed such as Trail Maintenance Friday workday, Visitor Center Frontliners, Heritage Site Docents and Air Quality Monitoring. The Wildlife Committee have continued to go out in singles or co-habituating couples to complete on-going survey work. The Graffiti Removal members continue working as well. Our members have adapted to their new roles and as you can see from this newsletter, they have been out and about having fun in Red Rock Country. The wonderful spring flower show that mother nature put on in April, provided many photos for this issue.

In old news, the March Board Meeting was held on the 11th at the Forest Service Administration Building where information was presented by Mike O'Neil, Red Rock District Law Enforcement Officer who provided insight into the challenges faced on the District and Tom Runyon, Hydrologist, provided information on gully restoration work to mitigate accelerated land erosion. More information was covered in the Friends monthly article in Red Rock News and is available on the Friends Website <https://www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org/serving-sedona/what-is-gully-restoration/>.

Jennifer Young is looking for members who could assist with the writing of articles for the Red Rock News. If you have suggestions for or can write an article, please contact Jennifer at jennifer.young@fosedona.org.

The Friends received a donation for \$2000.00 from the Langston Family Foundation with a request that the funds be

applied to the vivarium project. This project was discussed and approved during the December 2019 Board Meeting. The Board Voted and approved a change to Friends Board Meeting dates from the second to the first Wednesday of the month. Please see the Calendar of Events on Page 12 for the new meeting dates. The date change was made to accommodate a conflict of the District Ranger's schedule. **Ruti Lovitt** was nominated and approved as Vice President and will assume the President role at the December 2020 meeting.

At the December Board Meeting, the board approved the use of the new Friends of the Forest Logo. **Terry Orlick** debuted the new logo on hats which are available for purchase. Merchandise can be ordered on-line or at Board meetings: <https://www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org/merchandise/>.

If you are wondering about forest closure information, the status of trails and campgrounds check out the Forest Service site <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/coconino/home/?cid=FSEPRD716281> for current information.

Our next Board Meeting will be held on September 2, and remember, all members are welcome at the Board Meetings. I hope to see you there.

Jean Ober

Branching Out Editor

Trail Maintenance & Construction

Greetings fellow Quarantiners – hope you are all staying safe, healthy and SANE! Before group activities were banned, the Trail Maintenance & Construction committee got a few trails groomed and several trees removed from North Wilson Mountain. Since no one is supposed to do any trail work by themselves, our group has been very quiet the past 6 weeks. When we are allowed to do trail work again, we will have plenty of work to keep us busy especially since all of the seasonal Forest Service Trail Maintenance Rangers left in April.

The desire to support our community, stay engaged, and continually give back hasn't gone away. Our members have continued to volunteer their time, talents and treasure to local

organizations during this unprecedented time. TM&C'ers have been busy fostering puppies, working at the food banks, hiking trails/reporting issues, delivering food, and financially supporting local businesses. And there have been more than a few Zoom Cocktail Hours!

Mike has been busy getting practice on the pottery wheel and Melissa has been out with her camera capturing some of the wildflowers. We can't wait to see everyone again bright and early on a Friday morning. Until then, please stay safe and healthy!

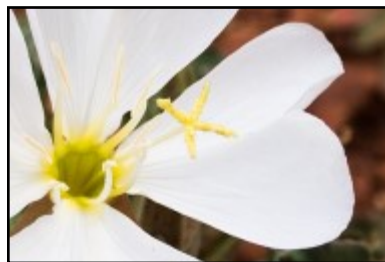
-Melissa Pontikes and Mike Boyd



Left to right— Tree Removal on North Wilson and general trail maintenance and rock cairn removal on Jordan



Mike practicing on the pottery wheel
(TM&C tools sharpened and ready to go!)



Spring
Flowers

Photos by M.
Pontikes



As of May 1, 2020, there are currently 144 Trail Patrol members.

Even with social distancing restrictions in place Trail Patrollers have been very active during March and April. The 509 trail patrols are equally split between March and April: 258 versus 251. The number for this year is only 10% lower than the same period last year. It appears from the logged patrols that where there has been more than one person on the patrol that they are related, spouse or significant other. Thank you for staying safe.

As the numbers reported below for March and April indicate, there are still many hikers and bikers on the trails. Based on

my visits to several trail heads over the last several weeks, parking lots are full; with overflow parked on the road. Several of the popular trails have been closed, but activity has moved to the open trails.

We are not offering group trail patrols at this time, but plan on offering them again when social distancing restrictions have been removed.

As a reminder, please be timely in reporting your trail hikes.

Here is the summary of trail patrols from March 1, 2020 through April 30, 2020.

Stats for March & April, 2020

Number of TP Members who hiked	60
Number of trails hiked	142
Number Trail Patrols	509
Total Hikers Observed	6,629
Total People Engaged	2,382
Total Bikers Observed	1,824
Total Equestrians Observed	25
Total Dogs Off Leash	346
Total Lbs Trash Removed	117

Please stay safe.

Jon and Terri Petrescu

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.

Volunteer Hours

While we were significantly ahead of last year's pace through February, as you might have guessed, we are now behind (by about 833 hours) due to the pandemic. Several committees have been completely shut down (most notably TM&C and VIS), while others have been able to proceed with limited activity. Due to the nature of their individual participation, both Trail Patrol and Wildlife Projects have been able to continue and are actually still significantly ahead of last year's pace. Here is the recap of the hours by committee, compared to last year's totals:

Committee	FY20 Hours Thru April- Prelim	FY19 Hours Same Period	Change in Hours	% Change
Air Quality	239	235	+4	+1.7%
Cultural Resources	4,588	5,166	-578	-11.2%
Graffiti Removal	936	1,027	-91	-8.9%
Interpretive Pgm	202	232	-29	-12.6%
River Rangers	229	221	+9	+3.9%
Special Projects	116	210	-94	-44.6%
Trail Maint&Const	1,572	2,483	-911	-36.7%
Trail Patrol	7,121	5,512	+1,609	+29.2%
VIS	2,006	2,379	-374	-15.7%
Water Sampling	0	53	-53	
Wildlife/Fish/Plants	2,478	2,122	+357	+16.8%
Admin/Meetings	1,130	1,813	-683	-37.7%
Total	20,617	21,450	-833	-3.9%

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.

Peg Kern

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR



Wednesday May 6, 2020 MEETING CANCELLED

Future FOF Quarterly Board of Directors and Members meeting

All Members are welcome

September 2, 2020

Annual Meeting - November (to be announced)

December 2, 2020

Please note date changes of the September and December meetings