



Branching Out

Sedona Friends of the Forest

March 2026

From the President

I know this will be difficult for many of you to believe – but I don't have a lot to say for this issue of *Branching Out*. Maybe I'm still in my post-Olympic binging fog or I'm just hunkering down to minimize my short fuse with spring break traffic. Who knows.

During our last Board Meeting, Red Rock District Ranger Alex Schlueter shared the good news that we'll be seeing seasonal workers again this spring/summer! Unfortunately, there is still an overall hiring freeze, so we may not see any new permanent Forest Service employees in the near future.

Do you remember when you joined FOF and received a laminated emergency contact card with important phone numbers if injured while volunteering? Personally, I don't remember receiving mine, but I dug it out of my backpack and it's obsolete. I also know that I'm one of dozens of volunteers that have a card with wrong information. Going forward, FOF will only be supplying this information electronically. [Click here](#) to download the file, take a screenshot for your phone, or print it. When there's an update, we'll send out a notification email. To help make things a bit easier, you'll find a copy of the emergency contact card at the end of the newsletter too.

Thanks to a large group of FOF volunteers, along with several Forest Service peeps, the Honanki Boundary Fence project was completed in one day!



Crew at Honanki building a boundary fence



Honanki Boundary Fence Crew

I'd also like to thank all the volunteers who have either already worked or are signed up for this year's Doe Mountain closure. If you want to volunteer for a shift [click here](#). Hopefully, this is the last trail closure over spring break, we'll see for several years.

Thank you to all our amazing volunteers that help visitors have a safe and incredible experience exploring the wonders of Sedona (Docents, Preventative Search & Rescue, Trail Ambassadors, and Visitor Center volunteers). Thank you to the amazing volunteers that help maintain the scenic beauty and stellar condition of our trails (Graffiti Removal, Trail Maintenance & Signs, and Trailhead Beautification volunteers). Thank you to the amazing volunteers that fill specialized roles directly supporting the Forest Service and their vast programs (Air/Water Monitoring, River Ranger Support, Special Projects, and Wildlife, Fish, Range and Plant volunteers). I'd be hugely remiss if I didn't also thank the amazing volunteers that maintain the infrastructure that keeps FOF running on a daily basis (Hospitality, Membership, Newsletter, and Technology volunteers). It takes every single one of our committees and volunteers to deliver FOF's mission and I am honored to be our current President.



Melissa Pontikes

Melissa Pontikes

Membership

We've increased membership to 765 members as of March 3, 2026. Since the last reported membership news, we've welcomed 66 new members, with 25 joining since the start of this year: Donna Sullivan, Alan Beaty, Geri Beaty, Lindsey Katherine, Cathy Malone, Denis Malone, Micayla Berglund, Bruce Anderson, Pat Hernandez, Susan Russell, Reuben Sanchez, Christine Whitney Sanchez, Austin Spinella, Heidi Spinella, Erika Tobias, Diana Vanek, Gary Weiner, Julie Perich, Janice Busco, Ray Culotta, Jill Tagudin, Walt Carr, Helen Jones, Barb Miller, Joe Miller, Petra St John, Mary Juliano, Maggie Russell, Sam Blom, Lori Lagorio, Brent Thielen, Kelly Thielen, Rob Johnson, Deanna Rodovsky, Tom Rodovsky, Valerie Wood, Dianna Daly, John Glaza, Jessie Lacy, Patti Goodrich, Judi Schulte, Steve Schulte, Amy Lin, David Lin, Harriette Shelly, Dan Myers, Susan Walter, Lori Feine, Dale Fiene, Suzanne Hubert, Rick Watts, Roberta Watts, Diana Malone, John Durack, Diane Seago, Hanna Flagg, David Loonsk, Jacquelyn Powers, Jourdan Powers, Janie Agyagos, Frank Agyagos, Tim Askelson, Cleo Duardo, Monica Bills and David Myers. Please give them a warm welcome when you see them out there.

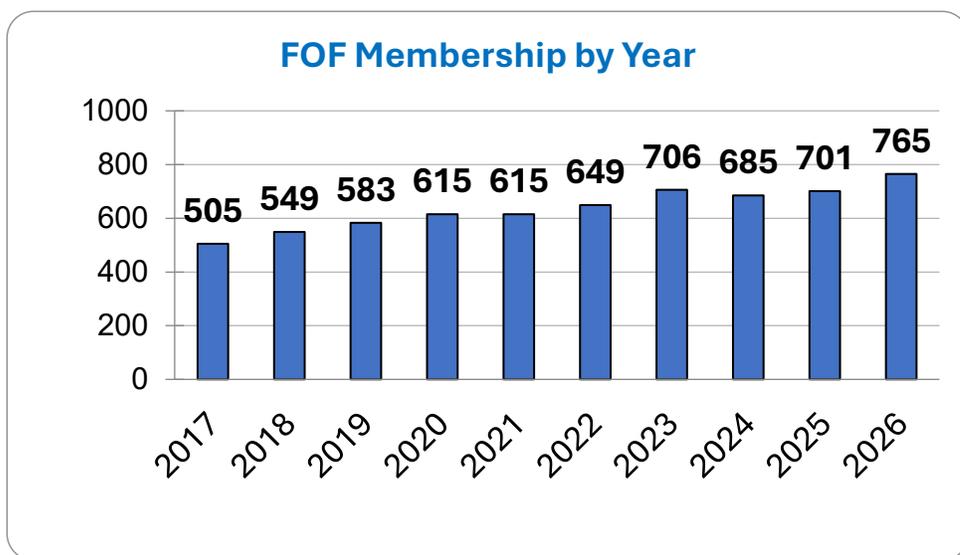
How to Request a Red Rock Pass

If you have volunteered 16 hours during the Forest Service's fiscal year, which runs from October 1st to September 30th, then you are eligible for a free Red Rock Park Pass. Better yet, if you have volunteered another 250 hours, you are eligible for a Volunteer National Park Pass. So, check your 2025 volunteer hours.

If your current pass will expire at the end of the month, send an email to membership@fosedona.org with your information and request for the pass BEFORE the 15th of the month. Verify your mailing address and phone number in *NEON*. It will be processed and the Forest Service will mail you the pass with an acknowledgment form. Make sure to sign the form and return it to Forest Service.

Passing the Baton

It's been an honor being your Membership Committee Chair. Many well wishes to **Lex Scanlan**, your new Chair!



Karen Yook

Trail Maintenance & Construction

Trail Maintenance and Construction is in full swing with new trail construction, fence construction, kiosk installations and general trail maintenance.

We adopted and improved an old social trail as the new Rowdy Trail which connects Ridge and Ramshead and installed several hundred feet of new crowd-control fencing on the Single-Track Bypass where it connects to the Bell Rock Vista parking area. We've also installed new kiosks at the trailheads for Woods Canyon, AZ Cypress, and Mystic.

There's always general trail maintenance to do and we've worked on Woods Canyon, AZ Cypress, Snake, Anaconda, and Chapel. Our kiosk projects will continue in the next weeks at Jim Thompson, Red Rock Loop, Encinosa, and Long Canyon at Wet Beaver Creek.



Completed project on the Single-Track Bypass



Starting work on the new fencing on the Single-Track Bypass at Bell Rock



The Single-Track Crew with Trail Foreman Samantha Braun



TM&C enjoying the view of Cathedral from the Chapel Trail



TM&C working on the new Rowdy Trail



Hoisting the new Kiosk at AZ Cypress



New Member Steve Schulte and TM&C Crew on Rowdy



Plumbing up the AZ Cypress Kiosk



Getting our Marching Orders from Trail Foreman Samantha

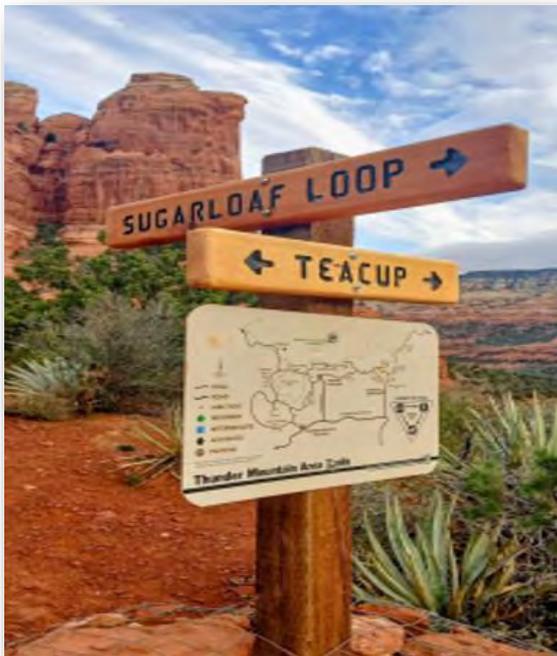


Preparing the Ground for a new Kiosk at the Mystic Trailhead

Glenn Kingsbury and Pat Quinn

SIGNAGE

The **Sign Crew** created and installed signs on newly opened trails including Third Rock and Rodeo in the Turkey Creek system, and Rowdy which runs from Ridge to Ramshead. New signs were installed on Sugarloaf Loop, as well as replacement signs for Big Park Loop and Herkenham. Blaze markings were refreshed on Little Horse and Mescal and new cairn baskets were installed on Lower Chimney Rock and Mystic.



New signs on Sugarloaf Loop



Del Sol and Third Rock



Rich Spinelli, Ernie DiMillo and Rod Cashin build new cairn basket on Lower Chimney Rock



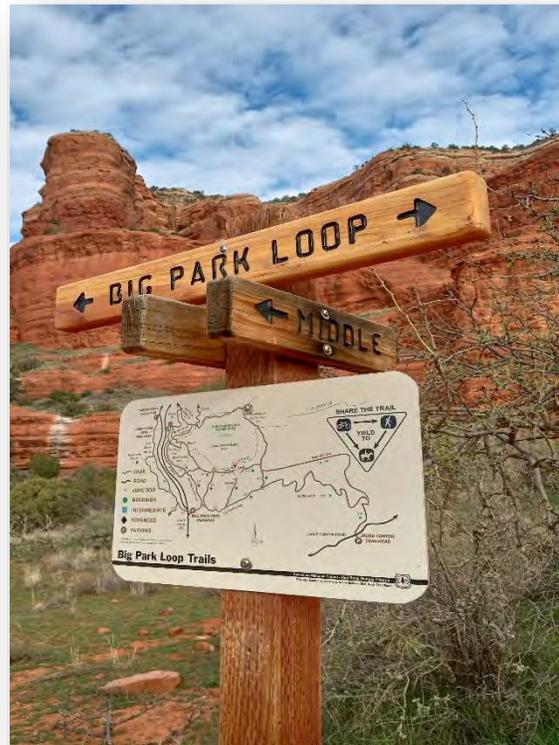
Steve Galginaitis at Third Rock and Rodeo



New sign at Herkenham and Old Post



Ridge and Rowdy



Replaced missing Big Park Loop sign

Wildlife, Fish, Range & Plants

The role of the **Wildlife, Fish, Range & Plants** (WFRP) Chairperson is to assist the Forest Service (FS) Wildlife Biologist, Kayla Long with coordinating volunteers. In addition, we have added assisting the FS Range Specialist, Noelle Resignolo. *Remember: Healthy Rangelands = Healthy Wildlife Habitat!*

It's a good thing there are two of us chairing this committee. **Janie Agyagos** has been instrumental in the training-side, and I've (**Annie Glickstein**) been trying to keep up with the scheduling side of things. We've already completed training on *Riparian & Exclosure Monitoring, Agave Training, Horse Round-Pen Exercising, Horse Health Care* and even an *Arizona Rangelands Diversity, Ecology and Management* program.

Our *Signup Genius* software is getting a workout! It's great to see FOF volunteers signing up for WFRP programs. The training is so valuable that we have had requests to allow non-FOF members to join in and of course, we welcome them.

Fence Work

All of this training has been going on in-between our fence work days! Thank you to our FOF members who come together to do good things for our wildlife.



Cattleguard Surveys

We've had our High-Clearance Vehicle Posse out surveying cattleguards and gates. They drive out on the craziest adventures to GPS and photograph the cattleguards and report whether or not they are damaged and if critters can get out if they fall in. The pictures they've captured are truly helpful!



Multi-purpose Trail Gates

During *Exclosure Monitoring* training, the walk-through gate at Woods Canyon was observed to be pedestrian-friendly but not particularly equestrian-friendly. Equestrians typically open and close gates while remaining on their horse. The further down a rider has to reach to open a gate, the more difficult the process for the rider and the horse.

In response, **Glenn Kingsbury** and **Mike Boyd** returned and retrofitted the Woods Canyon gate so that the chain lock is at the top of the gate, instead of below. Glenn has retrofitted seven additional gates as well.

Trail gates in the Coconino National Forest and Sedona are designed for equestrian access, often requiring riders to open, pass through, and immediately close them to keep livestock contained.

BEFORE



AFTER



Lichen

Let's not forget all the lichen work too! **Jan** and **Jerry Walters** and **Janie Agyagos** went down to Arizona State University (ASU) for a day of training. Jan and Jerry have been proofing database records and curating specimens. **Garry Neil** is back in town and back at it—working in his lab on lichen identification and weekly trips to ASU to work in the lichen lab (where there is much more sophisticated equipment than his \$5,000 microscope in his garage), with Dr. Frank Bungartz. FOF volunteers have been out collecting in under-surveyed soil types and habitats (riparian, grasslands, and limestone soils in desert scrub veg type).



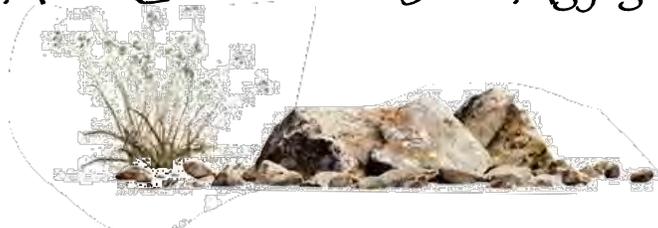
Lichen

Stay Tuned

We'll have more to share in the next issue of *Branching Out*. We can report about the agave training and surveys, colonial waterbird surveys, peregrines and kestrels, stream water temperatures, weeds, and so much more.



Annie Glickstein and Janie Agyagos



Water Sampling & Air Monitoring

We are fast approaching another exciting Water Sampling season! Starting in May, we will be actively sampling fourteen sites, which include eight sites along Oak Creek and six sites within the Fossil Creek recreation area.

In Oak Creek, we start at the scenic Midgley Bridge. We then work our way up through the canyon and back down to end at Munds Creek (which is across from Indian Gardens and an integral part of Oak Creek).

We also take samples at the Crescent Moon Recreation Area southwest of Sedona.

In the Fossil Creek area, we use an Aquatroll 500, a state-of-the-art piece of equipment, to gauge key measurement units of the flow systems. We then record everything on a form and place the actual water samples on ice. Within eight hours we process the samples at our lab located at the Red Rock Ranger Station. We follow processes that allow us to read and record for E. coli and turbidity. After 24 hours, we type the results into an app used by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. ADEQ comes by quarterly to collect the used E. coli bottles and trays. Our sampling is typically done monthly from May through October.



Aquatroll 500

Munds Creek

Oak Creek receives water from five main tributaries — Pumphouse Wash, West Fork, Dry Creek, Spring Creek and Munds Creek (via Munds Canyon). Munds Creek is an intermittent stream rather than perennial and flows reliably during snowmelt and after monsoon storms. The lower ½ to 1 mile of Munds Creek runs very near and roughly parallel to Oak Creek before the confluence upstream of Indian Gardens.



Jessica Baldischwiler sampling water at Oak Creek.



We discovered a Coati family within the Fossil Creek recreation area. Very unusual as they are typically seen in the southeastern area of the state.

Jessica Baldischwiler and Jerry Checchia

Trail Beautification

The **Trailhead Beautification** group worked on 122 trailheads over the past three months, with almost all the Forest Service trailheads getting some attention about once per month. We are an informal group; the volunteers decide which trailheads need the most attention and when.

With some new volunteers to the group, we have started trying to clean up some City of Sedona trailheads on a regular basis. There will be a meeting with the Forest Service soon to discuss how we can best interact and coordinate our activities with them.

Dale Smrz



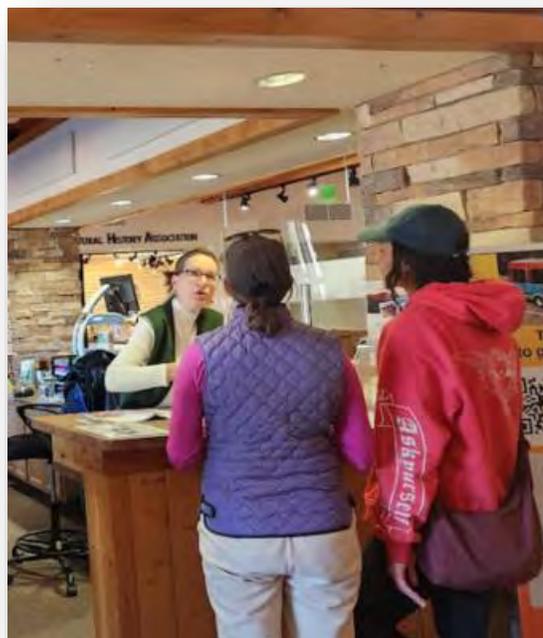
Visitor Information Services

The role of a VIS Chairperson is to facilitate and coordinate the training and scheduling of frontline volunteers for the Red Rock Ranger District Visitor Information Service Center (VIS).

Nick Kollios, VIS co-Chair and **Annie Glickstein**, Chair, split these duties. Nick is managing onboarding, training and distributing vests and name tags, while Annie does scheduling and manages the volunteers, accurately capturing hours and providing info on rescues, road closures, and other pertinent info. Nick has greatly improved the training process which makes for a good partnership.

New FOF volunteers interested in working at the Visitor Center now go through an improved standardized volunteer training program.

Forest Service staff help onboard FOF VIS volunteers as well. Currently Grant Cloud offers the initial FS training session. Kelly Harper acts as mentor during the shadowing process. They are both very knowledgeable, approachable, cheerful and professional. They are the perfect team to complement our FOF team.



Valerie Wood assisting visitors

Since the *New Member Open House* in October, we have had nine newly trained VIS volunteers. All of them have completed their shadow shifts and were released to roam about the Visitor Center.

Our FOF organization stays strong because of volunteers like Nick who step up and help out. If you are interested in helping out our organization in any manner, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the Chairpersons. You may only want to take on one particular task or a one-time project, but that can be a huge help.

Annie Glickstein and Nick Kollios

Trail Ambassadors

FoF Report Mobile App

If you use the *FoF Report mobile app* for trail reporting, please note we have had to make recent changes to fix a problem in the system. **Please sync the app before any use.** Syncing will allow your phone to have the latest upgrade. This should be done before heading out for each hike!

Trail Ambassador Co-Chair Needed

We are seeking a co-chair to work in collaboration with **Bob Dores**. The combined hours are estimated to be less than 85 hours per year.

The role includes:

- Monthly planning (October-May) of Trail Ambassador events (group hikes, educational events, new member training).
- Onboarding new committee members
- Communicate with membership via monthly email
- Write newsletter articles periodically
- Confirm that member JHA's are signed
- Attend FOF board meetings
- Respond to committee member questions and concerns

For more information or if you are interested, please email trailambassador@fosedona.org.

New Member Hike

The December new member hike at the Mystic-Hog Wash-Peccary loop was on a bluebird day. We enjoyed meeting people on the trail and getting to know one another better.



December new member hike at the Mystic-Hog Wash-Peccary trails

New: Social Hikes

We have started social hiking groups, where Trail Ambassadors can organize hikes. It's a great way to check out the trail conditions, help people on the trails, and get to know one another! December included a hike up Munds Wagon to Merry-Go-Round, and a hike on Mystic, Hog Wash and Peccary Trails.



December social group hike up to Merry-Go-Round



Another December social group hike on Mystic, Hog Wash and Peccary trails

continued next page

Geology Hike

The December educational event was a Geology hike, led by **Barry Mallis**. We observed the strata that comprise the Sedona region's paleo-geology. With views of West Sedona, the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness, and the Verde Valley, we stopped at an "outdoor classroom" to learn some of the finer points of geologic history.



Barry Mallis sharing about local geology

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January Hike

The January hike took us on Rabbit Ears, Big Park Loop and Little Rock trails. Nothing like a Sedona winter day!



Trail Ambassador hike in January

Carol and Bob Does

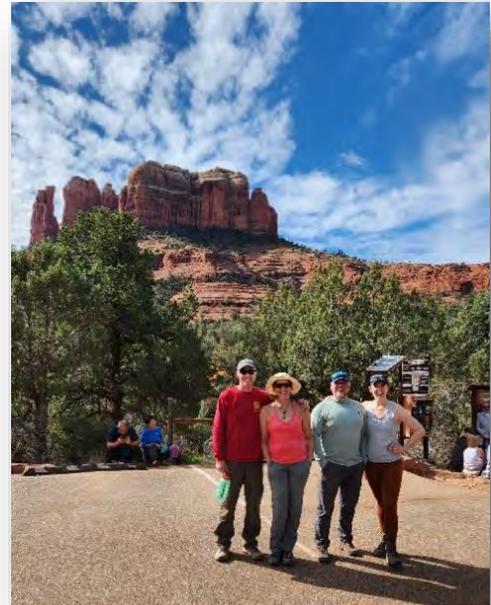
Graffiti Removal

Many hands make light work. For fiscal year 2025 the Graffiti Removal Committee logged 732 hours of work. So far this year we have logged 174 hours to clean dozens and dozens of graffiti sites reported. There were numerous group outings, but most of this work was done by independent efforts.

We've had two group outings at Cathedral Rock and one at Devil's Bridge. Each of these team outings allowed us to clean up dozens and dozens of instances of graffiti. Most of them were scratches. We also collected a significant amount of trash. More outings will follow after the spring break crowds start to thin out.



Group at Devil's Bridge



Group at Cathedral Rock

Graffiti Tip: When cleaning scratches from wooden trail signs, we used to use coarse sandpaper to sand out scratches. This took a lot of time and elbow grease. It is much easier and quicker to use a wire brush. Simply brush with the grain, and scratches disappear in seconds!

BEFORE



AFTER



Consider joining our team. The Friends provide all the training and tools. And once trained, you'll be able to remediate graffiti while you're out taking a hike. You just need to add about two pounds to your backpack: a spray bottle of water! We know that the quicker we can clean up graffiti, the less copycat graffiti is created. So come and join us! Everyone be careful out there and enjoy our forest.

Jim White

Cultural Resources / Docents

Docent Program

The *New Member Event* last October helped to kick off the largest number of new docents (10!) and training sessions (four at Crane & two at Palatki) that I have experienced as the committee chair. The majority of folks are brand new or quite recently new FOF members. Thanks to **Wayne Swart** and **Spence Gustav** for handling the Palatki training. Please join me in welcoming **Bart Bartlett, Ben Spencer, Dan Myers, Dianna Daly, Barb Miller, Joe Miller, Roberta Watts, Rick Watts, and Valerie Wood** to the docent team. If you have not seen them already at one of the Heritage Sites, you will be seeing them soon.

We are always in need of new docents, particularly if you spend all or part of the summer months in the Verde Valley! Seasonal residents are wholly welcomed (and needed) too. Training is scheduled whenever we have members interested in the program.

If you are interested in helping protect our cultural heritage sites and learning more about the Palatki, Honanki and Crane Petroglyph sites, consider joining the **Cultural Resource and Protection Committee**. Please call or email (928-284-1339/docents@fofsedona.org) for more information. Our [Docent FAQ](#) is also available online.

Cultural Site Photo Documentation Project

Project Teams have been supporting work at Honanki for the FS Site Assessment Project, ongoing Fracture evaluation and monitoring, and the FS Fence Line Project to replace damaged fencing and install new fencing where it was absent. Thanks to the TM&C team for their labor.

The fracture analysis and monitoring project continues at both Palatki and Honanki. Some new problem areas are being identified and validated, and several known areas are showing evidence of movement.

The Elden Pueblo project is expected to be completed in March. Future projects are still on the horizon.

If you cannot go out to the sites, computer-based support is always needed.

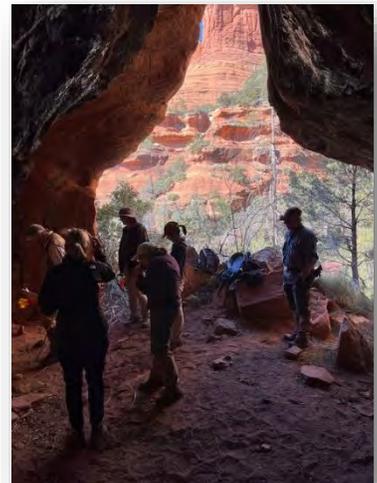
Please contact Spence Gustav at spencehg@yahoo.com if you have any questions or would like to join his team.

Site Recording Project (SRP)

The **Site Recording Team** continues to record new archaeology sites for the Coconino National Forest. Since August, we have recorded 13 new sites, which include Sinagua habitation alcoves with pictographs, petroglyphs along Oak Creek, and early (AD 800) habitation and agricultural sites. The team reached a milestone having recorded its 100th site in mid-January 2026. We go out as a team on alternate Tuesdays for most of the day.

A new member joined the SRP Team, **MunYee Aldrink**. She joined us in January and is already making an impact, finding surface artifacts that others missed. We are always delighted to have fresh eyes!

If you are interested in learning more about the SRP, please contact **Scott Newth** at SedonaExplorer3@gmail.com.



Jerry Walters

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

This year's Volunteer Appreciation hosted by the Forest Service was held on Saturday, March 7th at the Beaver Creek Work Station. Freshly popped corn, drinks and a buffet of gorgeous desserts were served. Raffles were held. Trix and Stanley, the FS horses, were also in attendance. Alex Schlueter, Red Rock District Ranger, gave an overview of volunteer contributions and their impact over the past year. Forest Service employees worked 80,000 hours last year and in comparison, volunteers worked 52,000 hours; a significant contribution.





Upcoming Events

Board Meetings

- May 7, Thursday
- September 17, Thursday
- December 3, Thursday

Friends of the Forest Committee Chair Roster

Cultural Resources/Docents	Jerry Walters	docents@fosedona.org
Graffiti Removal	Jim White	graffiti@fosedona.org
Membership	Lex Scanlan	membership@fosedona.org
Motorized Environmental Restoration	Mike Boyd	mer@fosedona.org
Preventative Search & Rescue	Glenn Kingsbury	psar@fosedona.org
River Ranger Support	Warren Holm	riverrangers@fosedona.org
Signs	Rod Cashin	rodcashin@gmail.com
Special Projects	Spence Gustav	spencehg@yahoo.com
Trail Ambassadors	Bob and Carol Dores	trailambassador@fosedona.org
Trail Maintenance & Construction	Glenn Kingsbury Pat Quinn	tmc@fosedona.org
Trailhead Beautification	Dale Smrz	thb@fosedona.org
Visitor Information Services	Annie Glickstein Nick Kollios	vis@fosedona.org nick.kollios@fosedona.org
Water Sampling & Air Monitoring	Jessica Baldischwiler Jerry Checchia	water-air-quality@fosedona.org
Wildlife/Fish/Range/Plants	Annie Glickstein Janie Agyagos	wildlife@fosedona.org

Our Mission

[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 the nonprofit, volunteer group is to work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service in tasks it does not have the workforce or the funds to accomplish on its own.



Emergency Contact Information

Going forward, FOF will only be supplying this information electronically. Please take a screenshot for your phone or print this page.

03 2026
All Life-Threatening Emergencies DIAL 911
Volunteer Coordinator - Toni Salazar - 530-604-7884
Flagstaff Dispatch - 928-527-3552
Hospital Liaison - Mark Goshorn - 928-310-6786
Forest Safety Officer - Geordie Beck - 928-699-2355
IN AN EMERGENCY IMMEDIATELY SEEK MEDICAL CARE FROM THE NEAREST EMERGENCY FACILITY
Provide following information to Volunteer Coordinator or FS Liaison when reporting an injury
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Volunteer's Name2. Date and Time of Injury3. Nature of Injury4. Location Where Injury Occurred5. Lead/Liaison, volunteer committee if known6. Any additional information about the injured volunteer