

From the President

Hello to the best volunteers. Everyone's commitment to giving their time and talents to Friends of the Forest (FOF), the Forest Service, and our overall community is invaluable ...THANK YOU! Welcome back to those that summered elsewhere, it was definitely a memorable summer here in Sedona. For all the volunteers that were in town, a special thanks for working in the heat and your willingness to adapt your work due to the Pocket Fire.

Our world-class volunteer leaders have submitted articles and pictures to highlight some of their committee's work since June. I really hope you take the time to read through this issue of *Branching Out* and feel the same sense of pride I feel when I talk about FOF's achievements.

Forest Service Updates

Susan Bierer is our current Acting Deputy District Ranger. She will be here until December and comes from the Coronado National Forest.

The Forest Service is hiring again, including seasonal workers.

The Forest Service is hiring again – WOOHOO! I don't think those words have come out of my mouth for the past two years. We don't have an exact timing for when hiring will happen, but fingers crossed it's sooner than later. Seasonals for winter, spring and summer are also being hired.

There is a lot of speculation on revised Travel Management rules. Unfortunately, there is no

concrete info and just assumptions. If asked about it, the best answer is, "We have no guidance right now."

Leadership Needs

Yes, this is my standard appeal for new volunteer leaders. Even if not specifically mentioned below, almost every committee could use additional volunteer leadership...whether as an official co-Chair or behind-the-scenes player. The current Committee Chairs are the best people to approach if interested in learning more.

As I mentioned during the recent Board Meeting, we are separating **Air Monitoring** and **Water Quality** back into two distinct committees. The Air Monitoring team is seeking a new Chair. Thank you to **Jerry Checchia** for leading this group for the past two years!



Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) is also seeking a new Chair. **Glenn Kingsbury** stepped in two years ago (thank you!), but he won't have the capacity to lead the committee while also filling the President's role (yes, I'm anticipating that he will have the full support of the Board during the Officer election in December).



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At the time I'm writing this, the Nominating Committee has a vacancy for the Vice President (again – December election). If you are interested, please reach out to me and we can chat.

FOF's continued growth and success is reliant upon strong volunteers, both leaders and "worker bees." We are always seeking new people to fill leadership shoes, and I thank you in advance for considering being one of those leaders.

During the upcoming *Annual Meeting*, we will celebrate accomplishments and elect new directors to the Board. All FOF members are eligible to vote for Directors, but you can only vote once – either in person or ahead of time.

If you won't be attending the *Annual Meeting*, you can [vote electronically](#) or print and mail the ballot on the last page of the newsletter. An email and flyer will be sent via email separately, but I hope to see you at the *Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Event*.

Upcoming Events

Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Event

Beaver Creek Work Center
Saturday, October 24th
10am – 11am – FOF Annual Meeting
11:30 – 1pm – Volunteer appreciation.

Light refreshments served

FOF's New Member Event

Wednesday, October 14th ~ 2:00 - 4 pm
Red Rock Ranger District Admin Building
Conference Room

This event is focused on FOF members and/or potential members who want to learn more about FOF and the depth & breadth of volunteer opportunities.

Oak Creek Collaborative Cleanup

Saturday, November 14th

This is the third annual Clean-up event. It is not an FOF-sponsored event, but a few of our volunteers are actively involved. [Click here](#) to get more information and register.

Final Thoughts

I'm truly in awe of all of you. The selflessness you display on a regular basis is humbling and heartwarming. I may carry the title of President, but YOU are the backbone, strength, heart, sweat, and pulse of Friends of the Forest. I've just had the privilege of riding your coattails and it's been an awesome ride! By time the next *Branching Out* is published, my term as President will be over and I appreciate the faith and trust you gave me over the past few years.



Melissa Pontikes

Melissa Pontikes

Membership

As of August 31st, 260 volunteers have been active during this fiscal year. This is up 19 volunteers from FY25's total, with one month to go in FY26. Thank you for everything you do to support our forest and community!

New Members Event

Do you have a friend, neighbor, or family member who has interest in joining Friends of the Forest, but hasn't made the leap yet? Invite them to our **New Members Informational Event** on **Wednesday, October 14**. The event will be from 2:00 to 4:00 PM at the Red Rock Ranger District's administrative building, next to the Visitor Center. This will be a great opportunity for them to meet members, learn about the work of all our subcommittees, and enjoy light snacks while socializing.

Name Tag Process

- New members receive one complimentary name tag.
- Replacement or additional name tags are available for \$10.
 - When requesting a name tag, please include:
 - The name you'd like displayed.
 - Whether you prefer a magnetic or pin backing.



Orders are submitted to our engraving company on the 1st and 15th of each month. Once your name tag is complete and ready to be picked up at the Visitor Center, you will receive an email notification.

Red Rock Pass/ America the Beautiful Volunteer Pass

Volunteers who complete:

- 16 hours during the fiscal year (October 1–September 30) are eligible for a complimentary one-year Red Rock Pass.
- 250 volunteer hours (in addition to the 16 hours required for the Red Rock Pass) are eligible for a one-year America the Beautiful Volunteer Pass.

Pass requests are submitted to the Forest Service on the 15th of each month. Please send your request by the 14th to ensure inclusion in the next submission. Email me: membership@fosedona.org



Lex Scanlan

Technology Team

Earlier this summer, *Neon* (the system that powers our membership, donations, and volunteer records) announced it was retiring several older tools and moving to an updated version. (When you log in to check your membership, giving history, or volunteer information, you are logging in to *Neon*, even though it looks like part of our website.) This update meant our member portal, the online forms, and their branding all had to be rebuilt. Rather than wait for the automatic switch, a small group of us took it on so we could shape the result ourselves.

It was a bigger job than the word "update" suggests. **Melissa Pontikes** oversaw the project, and I did the hands-on rebuild. **Alan Glickstein** was most involved on the review side, and **Melissa** and **Wade Winningham** weighed in along the way. Over the better part of a week in early August, the group rebuilt the forms, reconnected everything to the portal, restyled the pages to match our branding, and tested each piece so member data carried over cleanly.

If you log in, the new portal looks much like the one you remember, and that was intentional. It also

It is far more mobile friendly...

brings real improvements. It is far more mobile-friendly, so checking your membership, renewing, or reviewing your giving history now works smoothly on a phone or tablet. It also lets members update their information, manage email preferences, renew or donate, and, for volunteers, reach the tools they use for projects and hours.

The portal is not something most of us log into every day, and that is fine. But it is an important piece of how Friends of the Forest keeps its records accurate. Getting it moved over cleanly and ahead of the deadline means it will keep working quietly in the background, right where you need it, for the foreseeable future.

The screenshot shows the 'FOF Member Login Portal' with a clean, modern design. It features a grid of service tiles, each with a title and a list of available actions. The tiles are organized into four main sections: Volunteer, Membership Management, Reporting, and Donations. The interface is mobile-friendly, with clear typography and a logical flow of options for members.

FOF Member Login Portal	
Volunteer	- Review Forest Service requirements - View your active projects - Join a project team - Review safety information Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)
View My Membership	View your current membership details and history.
Renew My Membership	Renew your FOF membership.
Update My Information	Update your contact information, see your membership information, and more!
Change My Password	Update your login password.
Manage Email Subscriptions	Manage which member emails you receive, or add yourself back if you'd previously unsubscribed.
Submit Trail Reports	Trail Ambassador Members Only
Log VIS Hours	Visitor Information Services Members Only
Project Leads - enter hours, view signatures	Project Leads can enter hours and view JHA signature sheets.
Donate	Make a donation using PayPal (includes credit cards.)
My Donation History	View your payment history (aka "Donations" in Neon), from Jan 1, 2000 forward.

Rob Harrison

Preventative Search & Rescue

We had another busy year helping visitors survive their hot summer hikes.

Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) got off to an early start as extreme temperatures in March led to a spike in calls to emergency services. The Forest Service asked for our help, and **PSAR** responded by staffing both the Bell Trailhead and

Even with trailhead closures, we had a 39% increase in public interactions this year.

Dry Creek on short notice. The Pocket fire also had a major impact on **PSAR** as the Dry Creek\Devil's Bridge area was closed for six weeks. And the closure of Oak Creek and its swimming areas led to record numbers of visitors to Beaver Creek and the Crack. Despite the Dry Creek closure, 2026 was a record season for **PSAR** as we assisted 13,500 visitors with information, water, and a shaded spot to recover from their treks.

This was a 39% increase from 2025. Many thanks to the thirty-three FOF volunteers that worked 1,000 hours over 37 days in 2026. Their contributions were much appreciated by the Forest Service and first responders.

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Returning hiker cooling down



Ernie DiMillo, Rich Spinelli & Dale Smrz at Dry Creek



U of A Gymnastics team headed out to the Crack



A group of appreciative Kiwis returning safely from Devils Bridge



Mike Ober and Sam Serrill dispensing water to thirsty hikers



Crowd headed out to the Crack – all with sufficient water!



Jim Fleetwood looking on as First Responders prepare to head out for hikers in distress

Glenn Kingsbury and Melissa Pontikes

Trail Maintenance & Construction

They are big shoes to fill, but **Steve Galginaitis** is taking over from **Glenn Kingsbury** as co-chair of the **Trail Maintenance and Construction Committee** as of the 2026-2027 season. **Pat Quinn** is staying on as the “tool guy.”

I hope I can meet the high expectations set by Glenn. Thank you Glenn, for your great work as co-chair of **TM&C** and congratulations on your new roles in the organization!

The upcoming 2026-2027 season looks to be a busy one. We got started on September 4th by tackling the AZ Cypress and Dawa trails, both of which were damaged by flooding associated with the Pocket Fire. We also installed several carsonites to more clearly mark the trails where they crossed washes, replaced aging signs, and did the usual lopping and drain clearing.

Carsonites

refer to flexible, highly durable, trail markers.



We are already scheduled to work on several more trails, including Girdner, Harding Springs, West Fork, Bell, and Long Canyon. Much of the work will be general maintenance in nature – lopping, drain clearance, tread work – but we expect more repair work due to damage from the Pocket Fire.

Jim White and Pat Quinn delivered two huge tree trunks from the ski resort area in Flagstaff to an old ranch off Fossil Creek Rd. The tree trunks are going to be used in repairing a frog pond. (see photos next page)

I am sure there is more to come as the Forest Service fills out their trail maintenance schedule and their seasonal workers arrive later this fall.



After a long hard day in the forest



Samantha Braun of the NFS and Jim McCann install a carsonite



The FOF crew repairing the AZ Cypress Trail

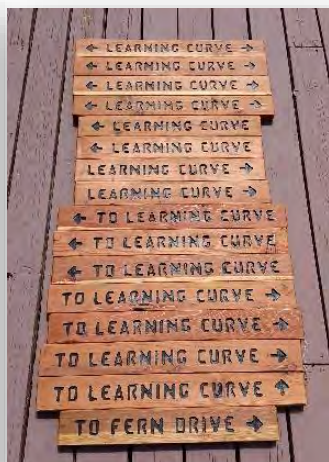
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Pat Quinn (not in photo) and Jim White moved two giant trunks for the Forest Service.

SIGNAGE

The **Trail Sign Committee** had an unusually large project making and installing 35 trail signs in the newly completed Willow Point trail system. The new system is in Cornville on East Willow right behind the Oak Creek Elementary School. It is a recreational biking trail system on Forest Service land built primarily to meet the needs of the kids in the area (notice the names of the trails!). The Wheelfun.org organization put a lot of money into its development and FOF supplied some of the peoplepower. **Ernie DiMillo** and **Bill Logan** made the signs, and they were installed by **Rod Cashin** and **Steve Galginaitis**.



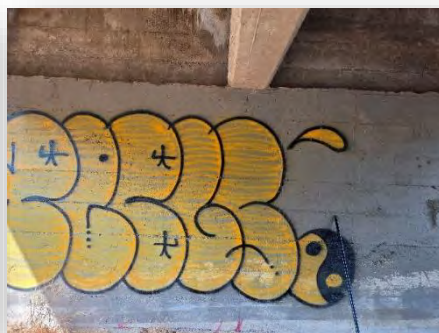
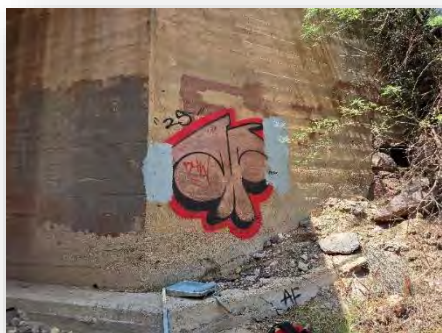
New signs were also installed at Schuerman Mountain, Fay Canyon, Templeton and Cathedral, Secret Slickrock and on a new spur trail from Hillside to Stirrup. Blaze markings were freshened up or newly installed at Made in the Shade, Soldier Pass, Broken Arrow, Cibola, Hog Wash, and Hilene, among others.

Steve Galginaitis, Pat Quinn & Rod Cashin

Graffiti Removal

The Pocket Fire caused us to cancel a couple of graffiti removal outings, but we still managed to get to Cathedral Rock in July during the closure. We cleaned dozens of graffiti occurrences and picked up lots of trash. Thanks to committee members **Laura Stewart, Cheryl McCann, Jim McCann, Bobbi Titter, and Diane Greathouse.**

A report was filed by the Forest Service for painted graffiti under a bridge over Fossil Creek. Thank you, **Jerry Checchia**, for joining me. It turns out we found graffiti at three separate crossings. Glad we brought plenty of paint with us that day!



Jim White

Air Monitoring

The **Air Sampling Committee** pretty much does the same thing week after week with a few minor exceptions, but last week was different. Two of our regular volunteers, **Steve** and **Christi Jacquay**, went to the air quality station in the Fossil Creek area to do a routine filter change, only to discover the computer was not working. They called UC Davis to try and

Possible lightning strike requiring multiple repair trips!

troubleshoot the problem but needed a small Phillips screwdriver to remove a computer board to swap out a microSD card. Steve and I returned Thursday with the tool but were still unable to get the computer to work. They determined the site might have been struck by lightning with all the monsoons we've been having. They shipped us a new computer to install but that didn't work either. We were able to get the Wi-Fi working but they now think a separate motherboard that runs the pumps was damaged. Replacement parts are being shipped, and we will hopefully have the site up and running by next week. Special thanks to Steve for going back with me twice to try and fix the problem. The roads have really deteriorated from the monsoons as well added to the excitement. Hopefully third time's a charm!



Jerry Checchia repairing equipment

Jerry Checchia

Wildlife, Fish, Range & Plants

2026 Firefly Inventory Efforts

This summer, **Wildlife, Fish, Range & Plants (WFRP)** volunteers embarked on a second year of camera deployment and a fourth year of in-person firefly surveys. These inventories are important because the Gila Southwest Spring firefly has declined to the point that it has been petitioned for protection under the Endangered Species Act. We have yet to understand what habitat parameters they need to thrive and where they persist in Arizona.

This year's camera effort was a collaboration with University of Arizona PhD candidate, Rachel Laura who is also the Deputy Executive Director of Friends of the Verde River. **Don McClimans** was instrumental in programming 21 cameras and training everyone on how to deploy them. Camera monitoring this year was an improved methodology – video only for 10 seconds each minute for about 2 hours each night in June and July. Camera deployment and retrieval not only required hiking into various springs during the hottest two months of the year (the award goes to **David** and **Margie Terrell** and **Johnny Johnson** for their monumental seven-mile trek into Towel Creek to retrieve a researcher's camera from Wet Prong Spring) but also required very technical driving (thanks to **Francesca Ziemba's** expert driving skills and her modified Bronco).

In addition to camera deployments, a few volunteers conducted in person surveys at a handful of locations on Red Rock Ranger District. This year, we finally detected fireflies along the Verde River at several locations.

After all the cameras were retrieved, Don was gracious enough to assess the cameras' functionality and process the camera footage. Besides one camera's batteries dying a few weeks too early and three cameras having been bumped out of view, all other cameras functioned properly! Don's stats are staggering: 21 cameras running for ten seconds every minute for two hours each evening in June and July yielded 126,862 videos, 352 hours of video, and 515 GB of video files.

The video footage was submitted to Rachel Laura to be analyzed by a newly developed program to detect firefly flashes. Stay tuned for those results!

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Diane Greathouse setting camera at Cottontail Spring



Surveys took place at the Confluence of Oak Creek and the Verde River

Spiffing Up Sandblasted Animal Tracks

Despite the blazing heat, **Cleo Duardo** and **Bobbi Titter** did an awesome job repainting the sandblasted animal tracks at the Visitor Center, Yavapai Vista, Courthouse, and Bell Rock trailheads.



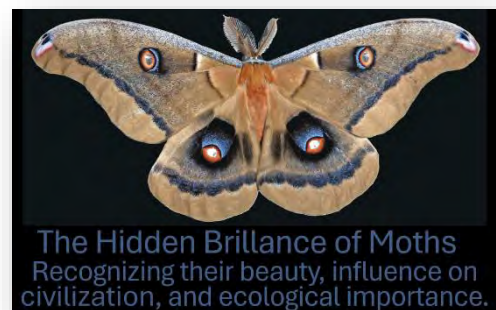
Faded footprints before....



...and after!

Moth Appreciation Event

On August 28th, **Janie Agyagos** gave a night-time *Moth Appreciation* presentation to volunteers and visitors, followed by black lighting on the back porch of the conference room of the Forest Service Night Admin building. Even though the lights only had an hour or so to draw in insects, the event was a big hit! Eighteen people attended; some came from as far as Flagstaff and the Phoenix area!

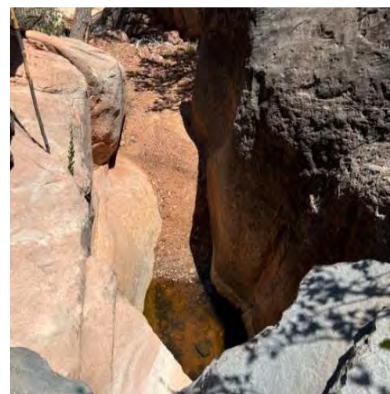
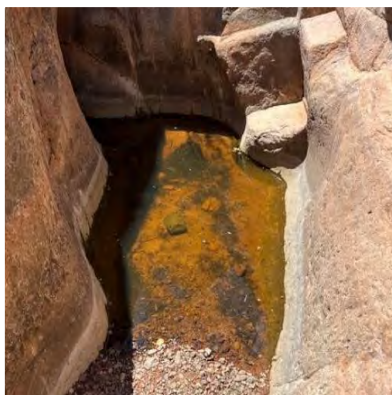


Moth Appreciation presentation at night

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Tinaja & Water Pocket Inventory

Volunteers have been reporting locations of tinajas and water pockets as they come across them on their outings. **Christine** and **Ruben Sanchez** documented a series of tinajas in Wilson Canyon this summer. The word 'tinaja' is Spanish for a clay or earthen jar used to store water and grains. But in the geologic sense, a tinaja is a scoured basin in a bedrock channel that holds water. When a drainage is scoured down to a length of bedrock, a series of tinajas can be further scoured into the bedrock channel. The most well-known series of tinajas are Seven Sacred Pools. Alternatively, water pockets are natural depressions in flat bedrock that capture and hold rainwater or snow. Water pockets are also called kissing wells—named so because indigenous peoples would kneel and sip from the water, appearing to be kissing the surface. The pools at Secret Slickrock are examples of water pockets. Tinajas and kissing wells are an important source of water for all kinds of wildlife, from large ungulates to garter snakes and tadpoles, all the way down to tiny aquatic invertebrates such as caddisflies, beetles, true bugs, damsel and dragonfly larvae, fairy shrimp, and more. In addition to providing water, habitat, and food for wildlife, they also serve as important corridors and dispersal routes for animals populating new areas. Even if these features don't hold water year-round, any water in such a dry landscape is life giving. A great book to read more about these features is Craig Child's book *The Secret Knowledge of Water*.



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Wildlife Trick Tank Monitoring

The Forest Service's responsibility for wildlife is managing habitat properly while the Arizona Game and Fish manages the actual wildlife. The end of June is our driest time of year and so WFRP volunteers (**Don McClimans, Francesca Ziemba, and Janie Agyogos**) were able to get out to check water levels and assess repair needs at eight trick tanks spread across Red Rock Ranger District. Fortunately, all had water, so there was no need to haul water. Maintenance is needed at several sites; perfect tasks for the cooler fall and winter season!



Frog Habitat Fencing Repairs

A handful of hardy volunteers assisted range and wildlife techs to fix frog habitat fencing that excludes livestock from a portion of the tank's perimeter. By protecting floating and emergent aquatic vegetation from grazing, frog egg masses have the appropriate structure to stick to and tadpoles and frogs have hiding cover. This tank is one of five that is listed as critical habitat for the threatened Chiricahua leopard frog. FOF volunteers hiked into the tank while FS techs drove an ATV with tools, materials, and waders down the rough road. Gaps were closed and fencing panels were arranged so they extended down into the tanks' water.



Jim White and Annie Glickstein



Ernie DiMillo, unidentified worker and
Annie Glickstein

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Marsh bird Surveys

Forest Service seasonals and FOF volunteers conducted marsh bird surveys at Stoneman Lake as part of an annual state-wide monitoring effort. While there were no rails or soras detected at Stoneman Lake due to rapidly receded water levels that left marsh vegetation (nesting cover) high and dry, there were oodles of pied-billed grebes and an amazing diversity of other fun species: ospreys, bald eagles, 27 white-faced ibises, yellow-headed blackbirds, 19 great blue herons, elk, and deer.



Stoneman Lake

Nightjar Surveys

WFRP volunteers and National Park Service employees participate in a national effort to monitor nightjars on moonlit evenings along established driving routes. Surveyors stopped and listened for six minutes for target species every mile for ten miles. Nightjars are the collective term for night hawks and poorwills. We have four species, but only lesser nighthawks were detected this year.

Agave inventory

Surveys to count and map domestic agave species in the Verde Valley are ongoing. Most **WFRP** volunteers survey during cooler months, but **Christine Crandall** braved the heat in June and reported photos and field forms for several populations she found in the Horse Mesa area.

Key Incidental Sightings

WFRP volunteers have reported many informative sightings of non-native invasive weeds, invertebrates, this year's first monarch observed on sunflowers at Crescent Moon Community Garden, garter snakes, bears, and mountain lions, a dead elk tangled in range fencing, tadpoles and red-spotted toads near Courthouse Butte.



Elk carcass

Miscellaneous WFRP Accomplishments

Other **WFRP** accomplishments this quarter included: collecting, bundling, and submitting acoustic data for the North American Bat Inventory program; checking visitor monitoring photos for bat activity; participating in an annual butterfly count; checking water levels at Chiricahua leopard frog sites; weed inventory and removal in various locations; and lots of administrative/office work to help Wildlife Biologist Kayla Long organize files and summarize existing data.



Red spotted toad



Annie Glickstein and Janie Agyagos



Cultural Resources / Docents

Docent Program

June through September, the heritage sites observe summer hours and a shorter week for Palatki. The Crane Petroglyph site is open from 8:00 AM until noon on the normal Friday-through-Monday schedule. Palatki is open from 8:30 AM until noon on Wednesday through Saturday (instead of seven days a week). If the temperature reaches 100 degrees before noon, the sites will close regardless. The abbreviated schedules are due to heat safety, fewer docents being available in the summer months, and difficulty securing site hosts for the summer months. We operate Palatki with only one set of site hosts instead of the usual two. We are looking forward to the return of the seasonal docents and a full complement of site hosts as we will have 8 slots per week to fill at Crane and 12-15 slots per week to fill at Palatki. Many thanks to the year-round stalwarts volunteering through the extended heat this summer!

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 email docents@fofsedona.org for more information or check our [Docent FAQ](#) available online:

Cultural Site Photo Documentation Project

Photo team efforts continue at Elden Pueblo in Flagstaff on behalf of the Flagstaff District of the Coconino Forest. Field work on this project was minimal due to weather and key team members travelling over the summer. The computer-based portion of the project is getting a slow start due to necessary prep work and required information from the Forest Service. We are in need of volunteers: to create 2D elevation (i.e. side view and face on) models of all wall features. The digital images (already created) need to have a text box added with information about the site and location of the feature as well as horizontal and vertical scales to indicate the size. This is accomplished using an online custom software "Ruler" app that was developed by Walter Van Roggen (co-author of the ARARA fine line the FLA App used for that work). The digital images are on a Google Drive for access from anywhere with an internet connection. No special PC/Mac software needed (other than a browser). Online training will be provided. The textual information will be provided. The fussy part is creating the scales extrapolated from small scales in the image itself. No archaeology experience required. Training will be provided via Zoom or locally if possible. A reasonable internet connection, computer screen and mouse will be required.



Updated current condition photo acquisition at Honanki was on hold for the summer as well. When data acquisition is complete at Honanki, the plan is to move on to Palatki.

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 project has been on hiatus over the hot summer months. If the daytime temperatures cool enough, the team will resume activities in late September or early October. If you are interested in learning more about the SRP, please contact Scott Newth at Sedonaexplorer3@gmail.com.

Jerry Walters

Trailhead Beautification

The closure of some trailheads due to the wildfires this summer has slowed down some activities, but the **Trailhead Beautification Committee** worked jointly with the Forest Service to clean up designated trailheads. We started with Bell Rock in June, Courthouse in July and Encinoso in August. The pictures are from Bell Rock and Encinoso projects. The Little Horse trailhead cleanup is scheduled for later this month.



Bell Rock trailhead



Encinoso trailhead volunteer crew

Dale Smrz

Forest Service Request



Stanley and Trix, the Forest Service's two resident horses, need volunteers to feed them! Due to unforeseen challenges, several feeding slots are open and need to be filled!

This volunteer position is simple, and the time commitment is minimal. Feedings happen early morning and early evening and take less than half an hour (plus travel time). Fill the water tanks, put out the feed, and you're done. No horse experience? No problem. Direct interaction can be kept at a minimum. If you are comfortable around horses and want to do more, there is plenty to do: clean the enclosures, grooming, etc. Training is provided.

If you're interested or have questions, please contact Noelle, Range Specialist, at Tara.Resignolo@usda.gov. Stan and Trix are hoping to hear from you!

Trail Ambassadors

Volunteering on public lands takes many forms, but few roles bridge the gap between stewardship and hospitality quite like a *Trail Ambassador*. Here in Sedona, our own Friends of the Forest **Trail Ambassador Committee** serves as the vital "eyes and ears" for the Red Rock Ranger District. Whether we are counting trail users, packing out trash, or gently educating visitors on *Leave No Trace* principles, our presence helps protect the fragile red rock ecosystem.

Looking across the United States, similar ambassador programs are thriving, each tailored to the unique challenges of their local National Forests.

In the Pacific Northwest, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest features the *Volunteer Wilderness Stewardship* program. Similar to our efforts, these ambassadors hike high-traffic alpine trails. They focus heavily on educating hikers about fragile meadows, proper waste disposal, and wilderness regulations to handle the massive influx of urban visitors from nearby Seattle.

Further east, the *White Mountain National Forest Trail Ambassadors* in New Hampshire tackle rugged terrain and unpredictable weather. Their program places a heavy emphasis on safety education at trailheads. They ensure hikers are properly equipped with the "Ten Essentials" before attempting grueling climbs into the alpine zones.

Down in Colorado, the *Friends of the Dillon Ranger District* operates a robust ranger program within the White River National Forest. These ambassadors balance heavy multi-use trail traffic by educating mountain bikers, hikers, and motorized users on proper trail etiquette and sharing the trail safely.

While the terrain changes from Sedona's desert canyons to New England's granite peaks, the core mission remains identical. Trail ambassadors everywhere turn routine hikes into opportunities for public education, ensuring our National Forests remain safe, welcoming, and pristine for generations to come.



Bob Dores and Peter Cross

Visitor Information Services

Pocket Fire



The Visitor Center staff and volunteers worked hard when the vegetation fire broke out just 7 miles north of Sedona in the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness area in June. The phones kept the paid staff busy with questions such as, “What’s open?” “Can I get through the canyon?” and “What about swimming holes?” You can imagine what people wanted to know during the fire. The FOF Volunteers answered all the questions from the guests, steering them skillfully to safe areas and giving them alternative options.

Weather Conditions in addition to Fire Closures

Arizona was hit with excessive heat warnings in July. That meant that Phoenix-area residents wanted to come north to swim and cool off. Well, it wasn’t that easy. When the road through Oak Creek Canyon finally opened for through traffic, the Creek remained off limits. Water access was limited to north of West Fork and east of I-17. FOF Volunteers were armed with a map showing the closure area and the status of trails listed on the back. Phones kept ringing non-stop and even now as closed day-use areas and campgrounds slowly open.

Oak Creek Sludge



Although we typically think of Oak Creek as a clear canyon stream the reality is, a major portion of the Creek has been closed due to flash flood danger as well as the health and safety issues of the water.

Dave Minor shared this photo of a jar of sludge composition from the bottom of Oak Creek. **Matt Boehm**, Conservation Education Coordinator, brought it in to share with the team.



Gift Shop Closed

The Arizona Natural History Association Gift Shop in the Visitor Center, sadly, has closed. One of our VIS volunteers, **Sam Blom**, saw an opportunity—he bought the carved bear that was in the store and sold it on eBay. Sam bought it for \$30 and sold it for \$100. He then donated the profits to the Visitor Center!

Rescue at the Visitor Center

In August, a very large tarantula decided to hang out in the entry area to the public restrooms. He was six inches across, black and well-camouflaged, but visible when exiting the restroom. He quickly became one of the highlights of people’s visit. A family from the Netherlands and a group of Italian visitors were thrilled to see the tarantula up close. However, a group of female visitors, tried to exit the restroom and started screaming! No one could coax them out. A chivalrous Italian man came to the rescue and carried each one out safely past the arachnid! I’m sure they’ll remember their visit to Sedona for a very long time.



Upcoming Events

Board Meetings

December 3, Thursday

New Members Informational Event

Wednesday, October 14. 2:00 to 4:00 PM
Red Rock Ranger District's Admin building

Annual Board Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Event

Saturday, October 24
Beaver Creek Work Center
10:00 AM Board Meeting
11:30 AM Volunteer Appreciation event

Friends of the Forest Committee Chair Roster

Air Monitoring	Jerry Checchia	water-air-quality@fosedona.org
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 Melissa Pontikes	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 Dore Peter Cross	trailambassador@fosedona.org
Trail Maintenance & Construction	Steve Galginaitis 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	Jessica Baldischwiler	water-air-quality@fosedona.org
Wildlife/Fish/Range/Plants	Annie Glickstein Janie Agyagos	wildlife@fosedona.org

(Note: Newsletter photos may be edited with AI)

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.





2026 Board of Directors Ballot

**Voting via ballot is only needed
if you are NOT attending the Annual Meeting**

Per FOF Bylaws, all ballots due no later than 5pm on Friday, October 23, 2026

If you will not be attending the Annual Meeting on October 24, 2026, you can vote either by mail or electronically. The link for electronic voting will be provided in a separate email. You can only vote once – either in person, electronically, or by mail.

Continuing on the Board – The Nominating Committee is pleased to nominate the following Board members who have agreed to serve another 3-year term:

- **Bob Beltz, Jerry Checchia, Bob Does, Annie Glickstein, Glenn Kingsbury, Melissa Pontikes, Margie Terrell, Jerry Walters, and Jim White**

New Board Members – The Nominating Committee is pleased to nominate the following members to serve a 3-year term:

- **Janie Aygayos, Jim Fleetwood, Dave Minor and Dale Smrz**

Retiring from the Board – On behalf of FOF, the Nominating Committee extends their sincere gratitude for their service:

- **Deneise Piepiora and Rich Spinelli**

The Directors' term in office begins immediately following the announcement of election results at the Annual Meeting. A very special THANK YOU to the Nominating Committee: *Rod Cashin, Glenn Kingsbury, Nick Kollios, Melissa Pontikes, Pat Quinn, and Sam Serrill*

MAIL-IN BALLOT

For members who prefer a paper ballot and/or cannot use the electronic ballot with write-in capability

Please **cast your vote** by placing a check next to the candidates of choice and/or by writing in the name(s) of another candidate.

☐ **I VOTE FOR ALL 13 CANDIDATES PRESENTED BELOW**

(if you check this box, no need to check boxes below and no write-in candidates allowed)

☐ Janie Aygayos

☐ Bob Beltz

☐ Jerry Checchia

☐ Bob Does

☐ Jim Fleetwood

☐ Annie Glickstein

☐ Glenn Kingsbury

☐ Dave Minor

☐ Melissa Pontikes

☐ Dale Smrz

☐ Margie Terrell

☐ Jerry Walters

☐ Jim White

Write-in Candidate(s):

Name(s) of FOF member(s) who is (are) voting:

Mail to: Friends of the Forest Sedona, P.O. Box 2391, Sedona, AZ 86339