



**4FRI Update**

*Response to Council Inquiry  
3 July 15*

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Paul Summerfelt  
Wildland Fire Management Officer  
4FRI Steering Committee member & Stakeholder

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Date

## **4FRI Goals**

- Plan and implement restoration treatments across 2.4 million acres of ponderosa pine forest.
- Treat 50,000 acres per year during a 20-year period.
- Allow for increased use of prescribed fire and management of natural fires for restoration objectives.
- Engage industry so the cost of restoration is covered by the value of the products removed.
- Assure that the science-based and socially-acceptable agreements forged during the last decade result in the implementation of long-term, landscape-scale restoration. Surround and support communities and provide wildlife habitat, recreational resources and ecosystem services.



## **4FRI Description**

The Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) is a collaborative effort to restore forest ecosystems on portions of four National Forests - Coconino, Kaibab, Apache-Sitgreaves, and Tonto - along the Mogollon Rim in northern Arizona.

Ponderosa pine forest stretches almost continuously from the south rim of the Grand Canyon, across the Mogollon Rim, to the White Mountains in eastern Arizona.

Unfortunately, these forests have been degraded by unsustainable historical land uses and fire exclusion. The result is overgrown forests with thin, unhealthy trees and the threat of unnaturally severe wildfire. The vision of 4FRI is restored forest ecosystems that support natural fire regimes, functioning populations of native plants and animals, and forests that pose little threat of destructive wildfire to thriving forest communities, as well as support sustainable forest industries that strengthen local economies while conserving natural resources and aesthetic values.

## **Background Information** - Largest Restoration Project in the American West

The 4 Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) has been created to launch an accelerated restoration program that will restore watershed health and function, improve wildlife habitat, conserve biodiversity, protect old-growth, reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildland fire and promote the reintroduction of natural fire, and restore natural forest structure and function so that forests are more resilient to climate change.

On a scale never attempted before, the 4FRI spans 2.4-million-acres on the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab and Tonto national forests. Appropriately scaled business and industry will likely play a key role in this effort by harvesting, processing, and selling wood products. This will reduce treatment costs and provide restoration-based work opportunities that will create jobs.

The first project stemming from the 4FRI encompasses an area of more than 750,000 acres on the Coconino and Kaibab national forests. The project will use a variety of tools, including mechanical thinning and prescribed fire, to achieve landscape-scale forest restoration. Expectations are to eventually treat as many as 30,000 acres per year during a 20-year period.

Reducing the threat of high-intensity, destructive wildfires has been the focus of National Forest managers in northern Arizona for years. While projects have been successful at local scales, the acres treated have not been sufficient to significantly prevent large-scale fires. At the same time, the general public has become increasingly aware of the importance of a restored and resilient forest ecosystem. There is wide-spread understanding that northern Arizona's forests are unnaturally dense, which sets the stage for high-intensity wildfires and subsequent insect and disease outbreaks.

In Flagstaff, the Flagstaff Fire Department's Wildland Fire Management Division was created in 1997 to address the wildfire threat to the City ([www.flagstaff.az.gov/wildlandfire](http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/wildlandfire)) The program is now considered a national model, has made significant contributions to public safety and community well-being, and has received several regional and national awards.

That same year, the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) was created to address these issues in the greater Flagstaff area ([www.gffp.org](http://www.gffp.org)). In the early 2000's, the White Mountain Stewardship group was formed to promote similar efforts in that area and to assist with implementation of the 10-year federally funded White Mountain Stewardship contract. During the same time-period, the Kaibab Forest Health Focus group was formed and operated on that forest. These efforts were very successful and led directly to the creation of 4FRI, with a goal to work not on 10,000 acre planning blocks, but to look at all of northern Arizona forests as one landscape needing a consistent planning, implementation, and monitoring efforts.

In 2003, the Arizona Governor's Forest Health Council (FHC) was formed to address these issues on a statewide scale. In 2007, the FHC completed *The Statewide Strategy for Restoring Northern Arizona's Forests*, a document that demonstrates broad support in Arizona to develop and implement landscape-scale restoration efforts that will protect communities and improve forest health and sustainability, and provide economic opportunities to local communities through the utilization of forest products.

The 4FRI has built upon these previous efforts and is aimed at collaboratively designing a multi-decade restoration program to treat, through mechanical thinning and prescribed burning, a significant number of additional acres of National Forest lands.

An analysis area of 2.4 million acres was identified within the consensus agreement of the collaborative [\*Analysis of Small Diameter Wood Supply in Northern Arizona\*](#), which was completed in early 2008. Because of the large-scale nature of the restoration, implementation could lead to as many as 50,000 acres per year being treated over a 10-year period. These acres are above and beyond acres already being treated on an annual basis on the four forests. The first environmental assessment will assess about 750,000 acres of ponderosa pine vegetation on the Coconino and Kaibab forests.

Currently, the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab and Tonto national forests are actively engaged in a collaborative, landscape-scale initiative designed to restore fire-adapted ecosystems in the Southwestern Region. Together with a broad group of stakeholders, including members of local, county and state governments, scientists, environmental groups, ranchers and industry representatives, the forest supervisors are working to determine how to collectively accelerate landscape-scale restoration of ponderosa pine forests in northern Arizona.

NOTE: The Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP) is within the landscape-scale footprint of 4FRI, but is a stand-alone separate effort designed to treat two key watersheds critical to the City of Flagstaff but excluded from 4FRI due to complexity and cost. Likewise, the CC Cragen Fuel Reduction Project, important to both the Salt River Project and the City of Payson, is a stand-alone separate planning effort that is now in the initial planning phase.

## **Stakeholders**

Embarking on a 20-year initiative to restore northern Arizona's ponderosa pine forests at the landscape scale requires substantial up-front commitment, investment, and assurance of direction. Some individuals and groups, including members of local, county and state governments, environmental groups, organizations, institutions, and industry representatives, have made that commitment. Collectively, these diverse stakeholders have come to be known as the 4FRI Stakeholder Group (SHG).

The SHG is not exclusive. New individuals and groups may join at any time, and members of the public have the same rights and opportunities for access to information and input into the process whether or not they choose to join the collaborative.

Individuals and groups who have signed the 4FRI Charter include:

Arizona Elk Society	Arizona Game and Fish Department	Arizona State Forestry
Arizona Wildlife Federation	Center for Biological Diversity	City of Flagstaff-Fire Department
Coconino County	Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District	Coconino Rural Environment Corps

Eastern Arizona Counties Organization	Ecological Restoration Institute, NAU	Empire Machinery
Forest Energy Corporation	Gila County	Grand Canyon Trust
Great Old Broads for Wilderness	Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership	Greenlee County
Mottek Consulting	National Wild Turkey Federation	The Natural Resources Working Group
Navajo County	Northern Arizona Logging Association	NAU Forest Ecosystem Restoration Analysis
Northern Arizona Wood Products Association	Northland Pioneer College	Pine Strawberry Fuel Reduction Inc.
Pioneer Association	Southwest Forestry Inc.	The Nature Conservancy
Town of Pinetop - Lakeside	Town of Snowflake	Trout Unlimited
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	White Mountain Conservation League	White Mountain Stewardship Multiparty Monitoring Board

NOTE:

- The USFS is NOT a stakeholder;
- Campbell Global is planning to sign the Charter in near future
- Salt River Project is not listed

The SHG Group:

- Is overseen by a Steering Committee (NOTE: FFD has been a long-time member of this group and remains in this role today);
- Is led by at-large co-chairs (2) selected by the SHG, who serve six month terms (NOTE: discussion currently underway to increase the number to 4, and rotate monthly leadership between each);
- Is steered during monthly meetings by a professional facilitator;
- Meets monthly, alternating between a west-side location (Flagstaff) and an east-side location (Lakeside-Pinetop, Showlow, Snowflake, or Heber). NOTE: /With conclusion of 1<sup>st</sup> EIS, discussion underway to reduce SHG meetings to once/qtr)
- Has created various Working Groups to focus on specific areas or topics: these ebb-and-flow depending upon the issues at-hand, but have included –
  - *Communications*
  - *Landscape Assessment and Monitoring*
  - *Economics and Utilization*

NOTE: Discussion underway to create a 2<sup>nd</sup> EIS Planning Work Group

## The Entire Suite of Restoration Efforts

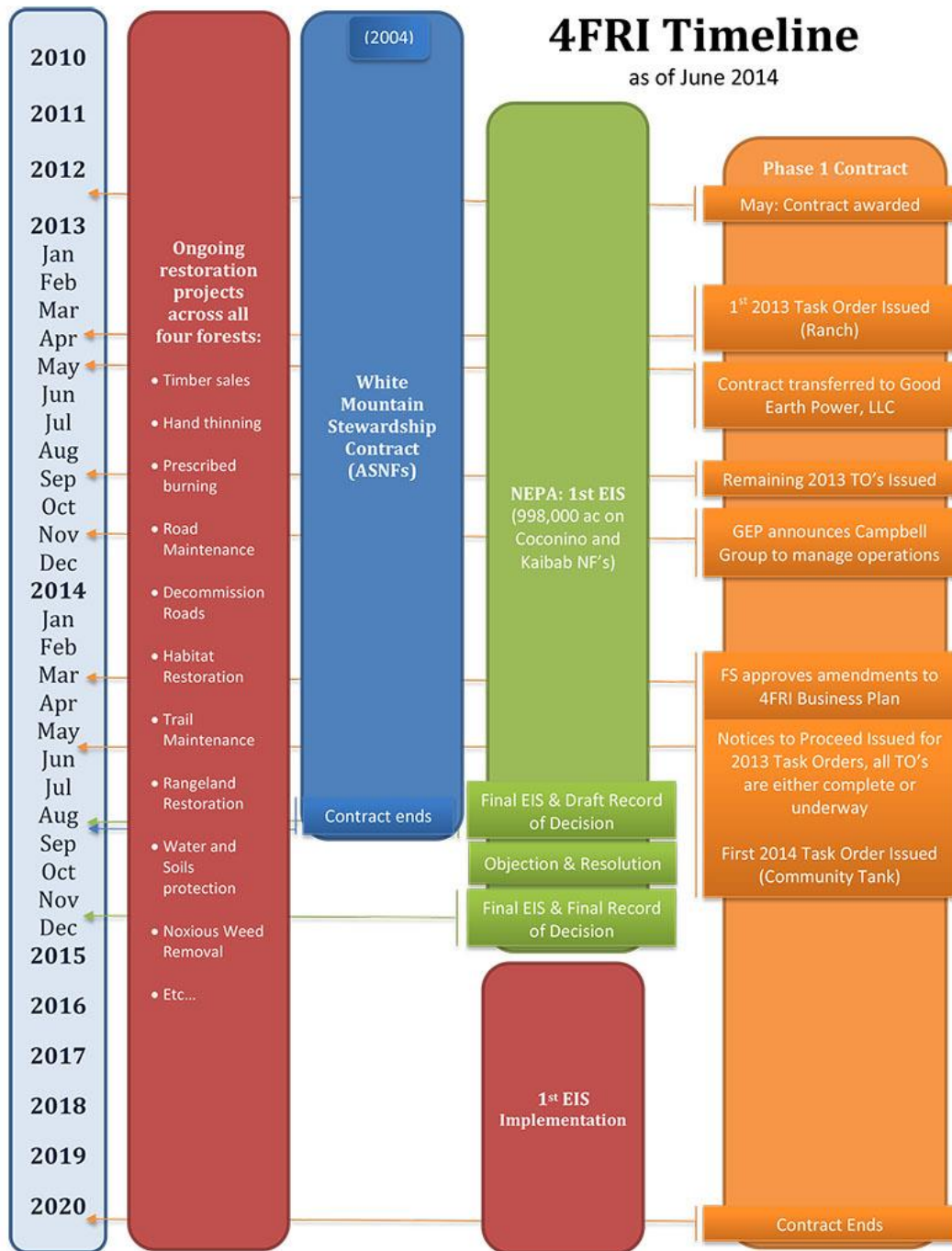
The 4FRI is commonly associated with the task orders included in the Phase 1 Stewardship Contract (held by Good Earth Power AZ LLC), but 4FRI isn't *just* a stewardship contract. In fact, it isn't even *just* about thinning. It includes all kinds of restoration work in addition to thinning and prescribed burning, to include:

- wildlife habitat improvement
- grassland restoration
- watershed maintenance
- spring restoration
- stream channel restoration
- trail and road maintenance
- road decommissioning



## 4FRI Planning Status

- [2<sup>nd</sup> 4FRI Environmental Impact Statement](#)
  - Planning (NEPA) Status: Underway
  - Location: Mogollon Rim Ranger District (Coconino NF), Payson and Pleasant Valley Ranger Districts (Tonto NF), Black Mesa Ranger District (Apache-Sitgreaves NF)
- [1<sup>st</sup> 4FRI Environmental Impact Statement](#)
  - Planning (NEPA) Status: Complete (2010 to 2015)
  - Location: Williams and Tusayan Ranger Districts (Kaibab NF) and Flagstaff Ranger District (Coconino NF)
  - Analyzed 1 million acres; approved restoration activities in 580,000 acres



**UPDATE:**

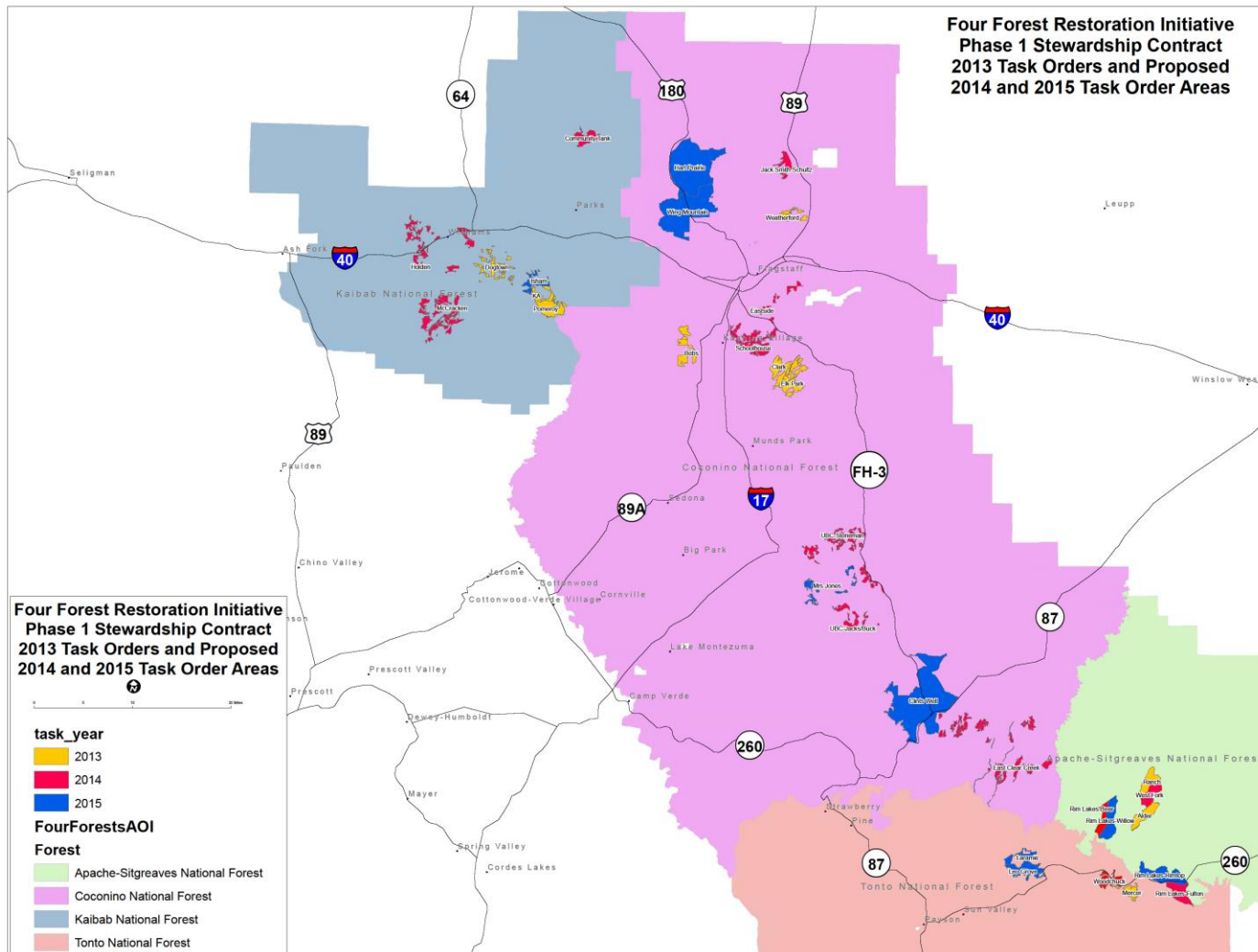
April 2015 – Initial discussions on location/development of 2<sup>nd</sup> EIS area

May 2015 - Final Record of Decision issued for 1<sup>st</sup> EIS area

2020 – a target, not an end-date

# Task Orders –

Overview map of Task Orders issued 2013 through 2015



Note: This document is for planning purposes only and does not imply an irrevocable commitment of resources. Task Orders in 2014 and 2015 are subject to change. All lines are approximate.

## **Process for Implementation:**

- Task Orders are issued in the Fiscal Year indicated.
- Then when conditions - including weather, fire danger, wildlife timing restrictions, and road suitability - are appropriate, the Forest Service issues a Notice To Proceed and the contractor begins implementation.

For the most recent information (June 2015), see the 4FRI Monthly Update on P. 12-21



## **QUESTIONS**

***Why does 4FRI include more than one project?*** Before any treatments can occur in a national forest, the Forest Service must conduct an in-depth examination of the existing forest conditions, the desired conditions, and the potential effects (beneficial and adverse) of any proposed activities. These analyses, guided by the National Environmental Policy Act, are often referred to as “NEPA projects” or “NEPA analyses,” and are documented in Categorical Exclusions (CEs), Environmental Assessments (EAs), and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs).

Forest restoration has been occurring in the four forests for many decades, but the projects analyzed relatively small areas. There are many of these smaller NEPA projects within the 4FRI footprint – some are complete and being implemented, and others are in different stages of the NEPA process. To “fill in the blanks,” the Forest Service is also conducting larger-scale NEPA analyses for 4FRI, such as the recently completed 1st EIS

***Where does the 4FRI Phase One Contract fit into all this?*** The Phase 1 Stewardship Contract, held by Good Earth Power AZ LLC (GEP), is one method being used to implement mechanical treatments decided upon in 4FRI projects. It is not the only mechanical thinning contract for 4FRI projects, but it is the largest. The task orders that make up this contract come from multiple 4FRI projects with completed NEPA.

***What are the terms of the contract between the USFS and GEP?*** This is best addressed directly by either the USFS and/or GEP.

***How long has GEP held the 4FRI contract?*** Since winter/spring 2014.

***How many acres have they completed?*** 3,964 acres as of June 2015. 28,420 acres remains to be completed (all issued Task Orders).

NOTE: Since 2010, the USFS is reporting that 241,109 acres have been completed - combination of Thinning/Harvesting and Prescribed/Managed Fire - by all contractors and agency personnel throughout the 4FRI area. In addition, another 49,503 acres of work (28,420 acres of Task Orders plus another 21,083 acres of non-Task Order work, has been awarded/released but has not been completed.)

***Are they in compliance with the terms of the contract?*** This is best addressed to, and answered by, the USFS, but it should be noted there has been no discussion about GEP being in default, or the need to terminate and reissue to a new party.

***Where can I find information about GEP, including monthly updates?*** Visit <http://www.az.goodearthpower.com/>

***Flagstaff has a rich history of forest industry: Will 4FRI reestablish forest industry in Flagstaff?*** It’s important to understand that “4FRI” is not synonymous with GEP, and that 4FRI-based operations are not the only forest activity occurring. Establishment of business(es) is not a 4FRI-directed action: that can only be done by the individual contractor(s) who are working on both 4FRI and non-4FRI activities. As for the intent of GEP to establish an operational/processing presence in Flagstaff (they do maintain an office here now), that is best addressed to, and answered directly by, GEP themselves. Currently, they have one mill in Heber and are building another in Williams.

It's important to remember that the first, unsuccessful contractor – Pioneer Industries – planned on one single large facility in Winslow, and that one unsuccessful bidder on the contract was quoted as saying it would take three years from issuance of the contract to have operational capacity and presence.

Regardless of the location of the process facility(s), Flagstaff will benefit from the forest treatments – both economically and from the standpoint of community well-being.

**Where can I find information about 4FRI?** Visit

SHG - <http://www.4fri.org/>

USFS - <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/4fri/home>

**Are there any FWPP bond funds being directed to 4FRI?** No, FWPP and 4FRI are two distinct and separate projects.

## **Supporting Documents & Reports**

### **The History of 4FRI: 1980s–2010**

- <http://nau.edu/eri/banner/the-history-of-the-four-forest-restoration-initiative/>

### **4FRI Foundational and Operational Documents**

- [The Path Forward](#) - Vision and Goals (PDF, 127 KB)
  - [Discussion and Stakeholder reservations](#) (PDF, 167 KB)
  - [Agreement characterization and written reservations](#) (PDF, 78 KB)
- [4FRI Stakeholder Group Charter](#) revised February 27 2013, (PDF, 190 KB)
- [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the 4FRI Stakeholder Group and the U.S. Forest Service (PDF, 98 KB)
- **Important Stakeholder Resolutions:**
  - [4FRI Resolution in Support of S. 1875 \(Wildfire Disaster Funding Act\)](#)
  - [Stakeholder Resolution in Support of Moving Ahead with Industry-Supported Forest Restoration](#) (PDF, 461 KB)
  - [Stakeholder Resolution in Support of Full Funding of the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program](#) (PDF, 361 KB)
  - [Stakeholder Resolution in Support of Industry](#) (PDF, 20KB)
  - [Stakeholder Resolution in Support of Navajo County's Fiscal Sponsorship](#) (PDF, 25 KB)
- [USDA Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program - Proposal for Funding](#) (PDF, 131 KB)

### **4FRI SHG Collaborative Planning Documents**

- [Socioeconomic Focus Group Study](#) (PDF, 2.7 MB)
- [Socioeconomic Monitoring Report 2012](#) (PDF, 322KB)
- [Old Growth Protection and Large Tree Retention Strategy](#), revised, August 2012 (PDF, 512 KB)
- [Economics and Utilization Analysis Report](#), November 2010 (PDF, 500 KB)
- [Science Needs Assessment Report](#), April 2011 (PDF, 1.2 MB)
- [Landscape Restoration Strategy for the First Analysis Area](#), November 2010 (PDF, 4.1 MB)
- [Management Guidance Recommendations for Firescape 3 of the First Analysis Area](#), February 2011 (PDF, 639 KB)

### **Effects of Forest Thinning Treatments on Fire Behavior**

- <http://nau.edu/eri/resources/for-policymakers/effects-of-thinning/>

### **Costs vs Benefits**

- <http://nau.edu/eri/resources/for-policymakers/costs-versus-benefits/>

### **Restoring Ecosystem Health in Ponderosa Pine Forests of the Southwest**

- <http://cpluhna.nau.edu/Research/pinerestoration.htm>

### **Logging History of Colorado Plateau**

- <http://cpluhna.nau.edu/Change/logging.htm>

### **Restoring Composition and Structure in Southwestern Frequent Fire Forests**

- [Part 1 of 6: The Impetus for Ecological Restoration](#)
- [Part 2 of 6: Expected Benefits and Outcomes of Restoration](#)
- [Part 3 of 6: Key Elements of Southwestern Frequent Fire Forests](#)
- [Part 4 of 6: Considerations for Implementation of the Management Framework](#)
- [Part 5 of 6: Ecological Restoration over Space and Time](#)
- [Part 6 of 6: Putting it all Together: The Bluewater Case Study](#)

### **Upcoming Events of Interest**

- ❖ June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, 9:00 – 10:15 am, Council Conference Room, Flagstaff City Hall:  
*A discussion and update on 4FRI and FWPP Implementation plans on the Flagstaff Ranger District, Coconino National Forest. Hosted by GFFP*
- ❖ Date TBD (if interested): *Presentation to Council by GEP and/or USFS regarding 4FRI status and plans. Sept-Oct time-period?*