



# The Centennial Forest Update

August 2003

*A Quarterly Update of Activities on NAU's Outdoor Research and Education Lab*

## From the Director

It appears that "the monsoons" are truly here and that we will survive another year without a major fire on the Centennial Forest; we get another year for constructing fuel breaks through these strategically located lands southwest of Flagstaff. Combining several grants made to Northern Arizona University and the State Land Department and some shared resources, we have been marking and treating **hundreds** of acres this summer -- the most current being in the Fisher Tank area of the Historic School Forest. This new harvest unit is a dramatic contrast to business as usual; it is a comprehensive treatment that provides significant improvement in fire behavior for at least 30 years, creates structural diversity for wildlife and aesthetics, and provides a sustainable arrangement of tree ages for future generations to enjoy. Besides these fundamental ecosystem services, we now have a demonstration area for years of education, outreach, and its related research projects. This, in a nutshell, is the mission of the Centennial Forest, and we will continue to provide such a range of land management treatments for the benefit of the State.-- John Bailey, Acting Director (while Dr. Mike Wagner is away)

## SFA Grant Funded

Recently, the Centennial Forest received a State Fire Assistance Grant for \$196,000. The objective of the proposed project is to reduce current stand density using mechanical thinning. Thinning will follow uneven-aged, group selection prescriptions developed in conjunction with Arizona State Land

Department staff. The project area is 4,000 acres of the Centennial Forest and is generally referred to as the Historic School Forest (HSF). The Historic School Forest lies within the Flagstaff wildland-urban interface and has been categorized by the Flagstaff Fire Risk Assessment as having a high potential for catastrophic fire, because it is southwest and upwind of Flagstaff.

## Centennial Forest Tours- a Huge Hit at Flagstaff Forest Festival

The 2003 Flagstaff Forest Festival kicked-off at Wheeler Park on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. This year's Festival was held in conjunction with the City of Flagstaff's Earth Day and Arbor Day celebrations. Throughout the day, the public gathered at Wheeler Park and the Orpheum Theater to learn about the forest surrounding Flagstaff. The NAU Centennial Forest conducted community tours of forest management activities, research projects and historical sites. Highlights of the tours included old-growth ponderosa pine pockets, wildland-urban interface areas, and bark beetle research sites.



The tours were well attended with nearly 60 members of the community joining us. Topics that received the most attention were fire, forest thinning, drought and of course, bark beetles. The tour guides, Kofi Cobbinah, Cami Fuller, Naomi Marcus, and Stephanie Smith, shared their forestry knowledge with the public while Cheryl Miller manned a booth in Wheeler Park to answer questions about the Centennial Forest.

### **Fisher-Rock Restoration Project Update**

As mentioned in the April Issue, four hundred acres of forest restoration research treatments were slated to begin. Since then, work has started with Phoenix-based Southwest Forest Products, Inc. In addition to the thinning small diameter trees, roads are being improved to reduce erosion and other damage to natural resources.

The treatments are part of the School of Forestry's Stand Treatment Impacts on Forest Health study and the Ecological Restoration Institute's Mogollon Rim study. For more information on the Fisher-Rock Project contact Cheryl.Miller@nau.edu.



### **The Master Plan Selection of Architects and Engineers**

The process for selecting an architectural and engineering firm for creation of the Centennial Forest Field Campus is coming to a close. The master plan will include building layout, trail and road design, utility sizing, and other elements that will help up create environmentally friendly, world class field facilities for researchers, educators,

students, and other visitors. Eventually, the field campus will include an environmental camp, research station, and a retreat center for scientific meetings among other uses. Several top notch firms are competing for the contract which will be awarded within the next few weeks. For more information on the Master Plan contact Jj.Smith@nau.edu

### **New Research Projects on the CF**

This summer began three new projects on the Centennial Forest although not new faces. Scott Abella and Wally Covington looking at how the vegetation responds to thinning and prescribed burning among five ecosystem types in the Ponderosa pine forest.

Tad Teimer and Lee Ann Compton, from NAU's biology department, are examining natural and managed fire and rodent seed-caching behavior. Their findings will help resources managers make decisions about restoring understory plants after burning.

Tom DeGomez, a forest health specialist from University of Arizona, stationed at NAU, will be determining the overall efficiency of five insecticides – Sevin, Biflex, Permethrin, Orthene, and Dinotefuran. The study will help urban foresters decide which, if any, chemicals should be used on high value trees that are being threatened by bark beetles.

### **Coming This Fall....**

The festival of science will take place in October. The festival of science is a time for the Flagstaff community to learn about science and how it applies to their lives. Many events are scheduled including Science in the Park, evening lectures, open houses, and more. A bark beetle mitigation project is planned to for September. This project would employ the skills of an undergraduate ERI student to identify, map, and assess the bark beetle outbreak on the Centennial Forest.