

Branching Out

Sedona Friends of the Forest

From the President

Living in these beautiful red rocks makes me want to keep it exactly the same as it is so that I can continue to enjoy it year after year. Unfortunately, I am only one person and cannot sustain the entire district all by myself. However, I have found myself among "Friends" who are just as engaged in sustaining the magic as I am. I also recognize that "friends" come in many forms and in many partnerships. I know that I volunteer for other organizations while I am fully engaged in Friends of the Forest (FOF) activities. We are stronger when we are cooperative and collaborative.

Service - FOF has a tremendous variety of volunteer activities ranging from interacting directly with visitors to solitary wilderness work. Whether you prefer helping our visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience or you enjoy getting out and working on the trails, there is something for everyone. I always get a chuckle when we get a strange request like making curtains for the bunkhouses of the seasonal Forest Service staff and someone comes through. Skills abound.

Fundraising for the Forest Service projects - As a general

policy, the Friends of the Forest is largely a service organization, not a fundraising organization.

We do not engage in aggressive fundraising techniques, such as soliciting membership for extra donations, soliciting businesses, or through email or other large-scale mailing campaigns.

We do not engage in political fundraising, lobbying, or other politically oriented fundraising activities.

Even though we do not fundraise; we do have monies through donations that we have applied to certain projects and equipment. For example, Ernie DiMillo is building a trail-signs display outside the Visitor Center and is funded through donations.

Partnerships – Yes, partnerships. Collaborating with other organizations to really get everyone involved in sustainability. Partnerships like Sedona Red Rock Trail Fund whose Mission is to "gather donations toward the maintenance and enhancement of non-motorized National Forest trails in, and around Sedona and the Village of Oak Creek." Their fund-raising allows us all to accomplish the expensive and rather important

March 2022

projects. Did you know that since 2014, they've raised in excess of \$1.5 Million Dollars to sustain our Red Rock Trails?

It doesn't go unnoticed that just like an FOF member might be in multiple committees, that same FOF member might also be in multiple organizations. There is strength in understanding how other groups work and finding ways for us to work together. So, I hope you continue volunteering with FOF while supporting our partners in whatever ways you find rewarding. Here are a few more of organizations working toward sustainability.

The Keep Sedona Beautiful Mission Statement is "committed to protect and sustain the scenic beauty and natural environment of Sedona and the Verde Valley". Our Adopt-A-Highway project was inspired in part by this group. They're so much more than litter-lifters, but I have to say that I enjoy driving to my hike without seeing trash on the side of the road.

The Verde Valley Cyclists Coalition Mission Statement is "is to improve the bicycling environment, facilities, quality of life in the region and encouraging bicycle use as an

energy-efficient, economical and nonpolluting healthful and enjoyable form of transportation and recreation.” How many trails have I worked on side-by-side with members of this coalition?

The Sedona Chamber of Commerce is working hard on our sustainability. Have you taken the pledge? Will you spread the pledge around?

The rocks are red and the silence is golden. I vow to respect the natural quiet of Sedona's open spaces and neighborhoods.

I will be mindful of Sedona's arid environment by minimizing my water and energy use and I will be extremely careful with fire.

I'll make my own memories, but not my own trails.

I won't risk life or limb (human or sapling) for more likes. I won't get killed for a killer photo.

When playing outside, I'll be ready for rapid changes in weather and random episodes of magic.

Leave No Trace and pack out trash — that includes TP and pup poo!

I will discover art in Sedona's galleries rather than making my own. Carving on trees or rocks, stacking stones, or defacing the environment diminishes nature's art.

If I can't find a parking spot, I will not invent my own. I will go with the traffic flow, using my turn signal often and my car horn seldom.

I'll be caring and considerate wherever I go, because that's the Sedona way.

When all of our initiatives have common ground (which of course they do), then it benefits us all to support each other and pull together. Thank you for volunteering with Friends of the Forest Sedona and supporting our collaborative partners whoever they may be.

Annie Glickstein

Graffiti Removal

Hello Everyone, The Graffiti committee has been pretty active the last few months as you can probably imagine. We could spend half a day at Bell Rock and go back in the afternoon just to find more graffiti. It does get frustrating but we try to keep smiling with

scrubbie & spray bottle in hand. We do also create awareness and try to educate the visitors about “Leave No Trace” while we are out there so I'd like to think we are making a difference. We were recently asked by Prescott National Forest to assist them at an old mining site off

Cherry Creek Rd. and what a great turn out there was. They were very impressed at the work we did and all the safety protocol that we followed, we ran out of time and batteries for the pressure washer so we will most likely be back there soon.



Bell Rock - Pat Quinn, Rod Cashin and Glenn Kingsbury



Prescott NF Mine Site Clean-up

Talkin' Trash

The first ADOT Adopt-A-Highway trash clean up went smooth. For those that might not know we recently sponsored a section of 89A up Oak Creek Canyon between mile markers 377-378. I had about 10 volunteers show up and we filled up 4 large trash bags and potentially kept that much trash

from going into Oak Creek. If you'd like to be on the that sub committee please let me know. We plan to do a quarterly clean up so the next one will be some time in April. Thank you all for volunteering and keeping this beautiful place we call home as pristine as possible.

Happy Hiking & Stay Safe
Contact me at:
graffiti@fosedona.org

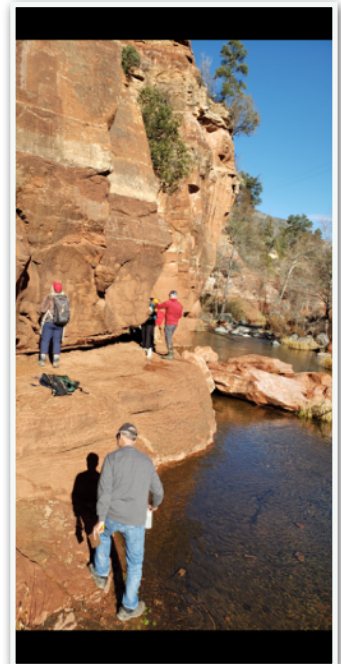


Trash Clean Up Crew

Jerry Checchia



ADOT sign on 89A Oak Creek Canyon



Slide Rock - Les & Barb Heffner, Terri Petrescu, Gary Cooper



New Team Member - Glenn Kingsbury



Weir Trail - Pat Quinn

Volunteer Hours

Finally, with the easing of restrictions, some of our core committees are once again able to volunteer on a more regular basis. Cultural Resources, River Rangers, Special Projects, Trail

Maintenance and Construction, VIS, and Wildlife/Fish/Rare Plants all had significant increases in volunteer hours compared to last year.

Here’s the recap of the hours by committee for FY22 thru January, compared to the same period last year:

Committee	FY22 Thru Jan	FY21 Thru Jan	Change in Hours	Percent Change	FY22 % of Total
Air Quality	0	0	0	0%	0.0%
Cultural Resources	2,607	1,416	+1,190	84.0%	27.6%
Graffiti Removal	464	619	-155	-25.1%	4.9%
Interpretive Pgm	2	22	-20	-89.8%	0.0%
River Rangers	232	53	+179	+337.4%	2.5%
Special Projects	231	16	+215	+1,321.5%	2.4%
Trail Maint&Const	903	539	+364	+67.4%	9.6%
Trail Patrol	3,242	4,227	-985	-23.3%	34.3%
VIS	367	0	+367		3.9%
Water Sampling	0	0	0	0%	0.0%
Wildlife/Fish/Plants	655	560	+95	+16.9%	6.9%
Admin/Meetings	741	454	+287	+63.3%	7.8%
Total	9,443	7,906	+1,537	+19.4%	100.0%

Neon News

I am pleased to announce that **Alan Glickstein** is now assisting with the NEON System Administration duties. Please feel free to reach out to either (or

both) of us for any questions on NEON, with a cc to the other as Alan is still learning the ins and outs of NEON administration.

Alan’s email address is alan.glickstein@fosedona.org.

Peg Kern

Trail Maintenance

After several starts and stops of working on the trails, the Trail Maintenance & Construction volunteers are making up for lost time. It's been a busy few months and we don't see that changing any time soon. Since September, our INCREDIBLE volunteers have provided more than 1,120 hours of free labor to trail maintenance and special projects.

The TM&C crew has done general trail maintenance on many of the well-traveled trails, such as Fay Canyon, Chuckwagon, Airport Loop, the Carroll Canyon trails, and the Western Gateway trails, to name a few. Trees have been removed, social trails closed and

rehabilitated, catclaw and branches trimmed back, trail tread repaired, and kiosks installed. As everyone who hikes or bikes knows, this is a never-ending cycle!

Our volunteers have also spent several weeks in a row working side-by-side with USFS rangers on their priority projects. If you've ever hiked Sugarloaf or Teacup, you know that there are an over-abundance of social trails weaving through the area. In an attempt to reduce the social trails while enhancing the "official" trails (thus minimizing environmental impact) crews removed almost two dozen old small rock cairns,

built 4 new cairns with improved signage, repaired tread, and closed some of the more well-traveled social trails. Closing social trails is more than just throwing sticks across the trail since that screams "Hey, come hike where we don't want you to hike!" Social trail rehab includes replanting prickly pear to make the path uninviting; breaking up the tread to remove traces of footprints/bike tires; and using rocks, branches, dirt, leaves, and pebbles throughout the social trail to minimize the visual cue of open space. This isn't a perfect solution but short of putting up fencing, this is a solid start.



Bob Bare, Rod Cashin, Ernie DiMillo, Pete Malmgrem, and David Terrell removing boulders from Jim Thompson Trail.



Bill Logan, Ernie DiMillo, and Rich Spinelli installing new signage on Vultee Arch



New rock cairn and sign installation by Matt (USFS), Rich Spinelli and Rod Cashin

Trail Maintenance

Talking about fencing, have you been to Cathedral lately? The USFS has a major rehab project going on there and TM&C has been able to lend a hand. Our amazing volunteers have hiked up Cathedral carrying pickaxes and rock cairn baskets to remove old & build new cairns and install better signage. The group has also done several small rock projects and assisted with fence installation that will enable USFS to better funnel tourists onto safe, well-marked and sustainable parts of the trail.

For the first time in years, TM&C is doing group trail maintenance on some of the more remote

wilderness trails in our district, such as Loy Canyon and Parsons. Small groups are going out 2-3 times per month and spending up to 8 hours at a time giving these trails some much-needed TLC. We've also participated in several special projects over the past few months, including:

- Installing logworm fencing in Oak Creek Canyon
- Moving and then removing scaffolding in Palatki (scaffolding was for photo documentation)
- GPS mapping of potential new trail on top of Doe Mountain
- Assisting with site prep/ installation of logworm

fencing on Diamond Back Gulch OHV (to reduce donuts and ATV roll-overs)

We can't thank our volunteers enough for all that they do week in and week out! Our trails wouldn't be world-class without this dedicated group of women and men...THANK YOU!



This is logworm fencing

Melissa Pontikes and Mike Boyd



General trail maintenance and rock work on Western Gateway trails.

This is my first report as River Rangers Support chairman. Not much I can copy and paste from the old graffiti reports, so from scratch...

The primary mission of this group is to support the Forest Service River Rangers in their efforts to monitor and maintain the health of the Verde River from Camp Verde to Horseshoe Lake down in the valley near Carefree. We take them and their equipment to wherever, assist in unloading, and pick them up some days later at their destination.

The qualifications are few – JHA's, of course, Government Drivers license and for most, a trailer certificate (only for those who wish to pull and backup a trailer).

We're fortunate to have several experienced members who have

been most gracious in teaching our newer members. Particularly, **Mike Vitek and Frank Wirkus** have gone on missions simply to help some of our newbies (me!!). Thank you guys! You have made my introduction nearly painless. And, of course, **Brian and Marilyn Painchaud** who always seem to be available when it looks like we might be short on drivers, or when I need advice or question answered. Rounding out the team are **Warren Holm, Dave Kennedy, Jerry Checchia (still JTY), Les Heffner, Jim Manning, Rhett Atkinson, Pat Quinn, and Bob Beltz**. Waiting for some final training are **Don McClimans and Barb Heffner**.

Under the direction of Francisca Adrian, both Brady Van Dragt and Andrew Giralt made sure we all got trained and certified in a most

efficient manner. Our season varies in dates, but normally we work from October through March. For now, our river season has ended as the Rangers are now on assignment on the Salt River.

Below are a few recent photos of our teams in action

Lastly, for anyone who likes driving a truck and enjoying the varied gorgeous scenery on the Coconino and Tonto Forests, these are really fun trips. We go in teams, so like the "old days" with graffiti, these are social outings with a little work thrown in. You can join us as a "ride along" and then become a trained member if you enjoy the experience.

Many thanks to the entire team for a most successful season.

Jerry Piepiora



It has been a busy and productive few months for Trail Patrol. We have added 18 new members and recorded 3,242 hours. Two hundred sixty-eight reports regarding observed field issues were submitted using “Appsheat” – an increase of 43% over the same period a year ago.

Six “New Member” hikes were conducted involving fifteen new members. These hikes, involving only 2-3 new members at a time, offered an opportunity to review the mission of Trail Patrol, the how and why of reporting hikes and trail issues (more on this later), model interactions with the public as well as address litter, graffiti and trail maintenance issues and our role in helping address those issues. During a lull in Covid, we did have two educational hikes led by Barry Mallis discussing the geology of the Red Rock region – 23 members participated. We then shifted to Zoom presentations by Janie Agyagos on wildlife in the Red Rocks and by Melissa Pontikes, Jerry Checchia and Bob Haizmann on Trail maintenance, graffiti and reporting/reporting tools respectively – 48 members participated in those presentations.

A Zoom presentation on Trail Patrol will round out our February activities. With the lull in Covid returning, we will have a group hike in March led by Kevin

Harding discussing birds of the Red Rocks. Mother Nature cooperating, we will have a group hike in April led by Bob Beltz discussing area wildflowers.

Planning is also underway with the Forest Service regarding Trail Patrols participation in Coconino National Forests “Preventative Search and Rescue” (PSAR) efforts in 2022. Trail Patrol took on the Trail Ambassador program working the Bruce Brockett trail head from Memorial Day weekend thru Labor Day weekend with plans to expand to also have a presence at the Dry Creek parking area/ Devil’s Bridge. The focus will remain on safety – engaging with the public regarding the nature of the hike, current weather conditions and what is considered adequate preparation. Leave No Trace (LNT) ethics will also be presented at our tents this coming year. Feedback from our first two years has been overwhelmingly positive from the public and from agencies having to respond to calls for assistance.

The Trail Ambassador program has been a productive and enjoyable opportunity for participants in the past – providing critical information to large numbers of the public over a short period of time, helping to reduce the numbers of

assistance calls by local first responders and spending time in the outdoors with fellow FoF members. With a potential 33 days to cover at two sites and a minimum staffing of two people at each site, we have plenty of opportunity for all Friends of the Forest to participate. Overview/ training sessions will be offered late April/early May. Anyone interested, please contact me at trailpatrol@fosedona.org.

And in closing, back to reporting trail issues. When Bob Haizmann put together our Appsheat tool for reporting trail maintenance, graffiti and other field issues I do not think he had in mind the issue Trail Patrol member Iris Yang put it to in January. Iris was patrolling in the Rabbit Ears trail system when she came upon a woman laying in the trail with a man on the phone calling for assistance. 911 was asking for their location which the man was unable to provide. To the rescue, Iris pulled out her phone, opened Appsheat and was able to relay exact GPS coordinates for the Sedona Fire crew. We all have the opportunity to make small, and sometimes large, differences every time we volunteer.

Dale Evans

Water Quality

The Water Quality program is back after a 2 year hiatus, due to COVID-19. The Forest Service will be adding more water sampling locations, so it looks like we're going to be busy.

In the past, we've collected and processed water samples weekly from Grasshopper Point, Midgley Bridge, Slide Rock, and Chavez Crossing; beginning the last week of May through the first week of September. We will more than likely continue sampling in those areas, but the plan is to add more locations around those sites. We have also collected water samples once monthly in 4 additional locations along Fossil Creek during that same timeframe. However, those sites may change due to the detrimental effects of the Backbone Fire.

The information we collect for the forestry service include weather

conditions, air temperature, water temperature, sample flow, flow type and turbidity. We also take pictures of each site. The samples are taken to a lab at the Ranger's Station and incubated for 24 hours, then the E. coli colony forming units (CFU) are counted. All this information is entered into an app, designed by Bob Haizmann (FOF volunteer), and sent to members of the Forest Service.

Additionally, our team may begin collecting extra samples for the environmental DNA (eDNA) work that is being performed by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) program. They will look for DNA markers to better understand the sources of E. coli (humans, dogs, livestock, wildlife, etc). All that would entail is filling and labeling another bottle at some of the E.

coli sites, then handing them off for processing later.

Please contact me if you're interested in volunteering for our Water Quality program. Please keep in mind that some of the locations may involve a short hike in hot weather, not to mention the steep inclines encountered along the way. Safety is of utmost importance, so it's recommended that our volunteers go to the locations early in the morning, and wear appropriate footwear.

Furthermore, Michael Campbell, one of our dedicated volunteers and my former FOF partner, recently lost his life in a tragic motorcycle accident. I've attached some pictures of him collecting water samples at Crescent Moon. He will be greatly missed.

Cynthia Malowitz (she/her/hers)



Michael



21 Jul 1947 - 3 Jan 2022



Campbell

On Sunday, February 22, 38 9th grade high school students from Cobb County Georgia accompanied by 6 teacher/parent chaperones arrived at Phoenix Airport on a trip organized by Education First, an organization based in Massachusetts. A request had been made to the Coconino Forest to arrange for a visit on their arrival day to, if possible, include a Public Service type project to introduce them to the issues of volunteerism, public service and the protection and preservation of cultural and natural resources. Due to very limited time and access constraints a group of 5 Cultural Resources docents, **Warren Holm, Stephen Helms, Bob**

Beltz, John Losse and Spence Gustav, supported by Heritage Site Manager Bruce Carlson introduced the students to the history and issues faced at sites like V bar V.

The students were shown how the one area has been used for thousands of years and how and why the Forest Service, aided by it's volunteers, manages to deal with issues of high volumes of visitation great variation of environment, flora, fauna and natural degradation. Following an initial introduction to leave no trace and site etiquette the students were shown many examples at the rock art panels and then asked to identify potential issues on

each of 6 rock art panels. Each group was guided by one of the docents or Bruce. After 15 minutes, each group was asked to show what they had found and how the issues could potentially be handled.

It is not very often that we have the opportunity, under such controlled and advantageous circumstances, to pass on the value and benefits of protection, preservation and volunteerism. The feedback from the students, chaperones and volunteers was that a high percentage of the students both enjoyed the visit and learned potentially valuable lessons on the world they are inheriting in the near future.

Spence Gustav



Cultural Site Photo Documentation Project

The “Fine Incised Petroglyph Study”, dust study, and site photography projects are continuing, but have been slowed down by weather and a variety of other factors.

If you are interested in helping with these project, or would like more information, please

contact Spence Gustav at spencehg@yahoo.com.

Docent Program

V-Bar-V is closed until mid-May to complete the final phase of the long-awaited viewing enclosure enlargement, level viewing tier, wheel chair ramp, and other grade and vegetation improvements.

We are always in need of new docents, particularly if you spend all or part of the summer months in the Verde Valley! 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 V-Bar-V sites, consider joining the Cultural Resource and Protection Committee. Please call or email (docents@fofsedona.org) for more information.

Jerry Walters



Membership

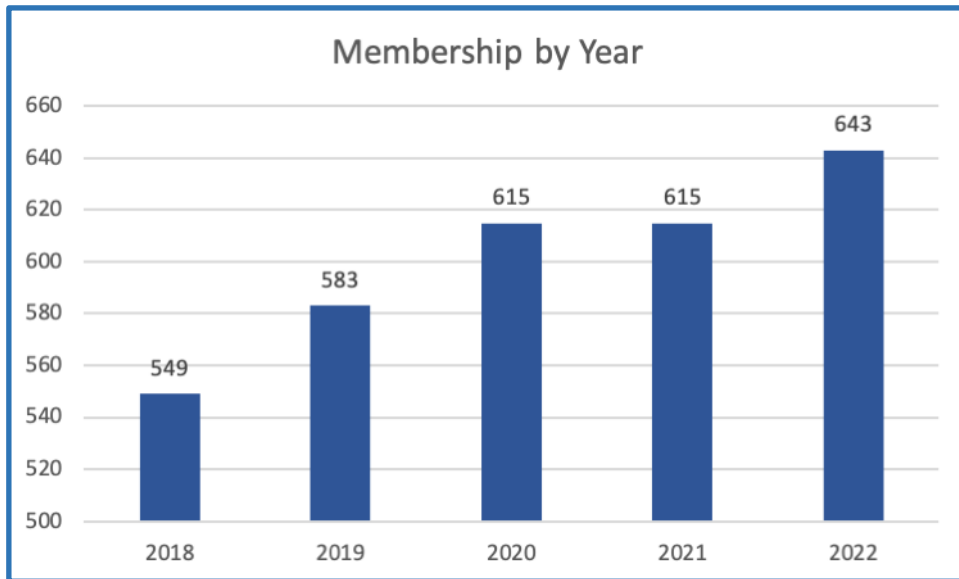
Our membership as of February 20, 2022 is 643. Since our last newsletter, the following new members have joined Friends of the Forest: **Peter Anick, Ed Bustya, Kimall Christensen, David Cox, Carol and Bob Dores, Alex Passos and Luisa Galindo, Amy Gordon, Catherine Hays, Rod & Ann Keller, Glenn Kingsbury, Kris Nichols, Dale Norris, Ashley Petefish, Gary and Erin Peterson, Leon Pitzen and Betsy Hanson, Jim Richards, Donald & Virginia Thompson and Iris Yang**

Although COVID is trending downward rapidly in the Sedona area, it seems inadvisable to have our new member event until we can safely and comfortably accommodate our usual overflow crowd. Thus, we're anticipating holding the event the second week of September. Sedonans who flee the hot weather will be back and activity on the Red Rock District will start to ramp up fully after the summer heat.

I'll be contacting Committee chairs in late July to begin planning for the event. In the past, each chair has given a short presentation (2-3 minutes) on their group's activities as a way to entice new members to participate. Attendees will also hear from District Ranger Tinderholt and from our President Annie Glickstein. Stay tuned for details.

Craig Swanson

FOF Membership Data as of 2/20/2022 (using calendar years)				
		Annual	Life	Total
2022	New Members Added since our last newsletter	23	1	24
	Past Members not Renewing for 2022 (yet)	39		
	Current Membership as of 2/20/2022	250	393	643
2021	New Members Added in 2021	46	14	60
	Past Members not Renewing for 2021	60		
	Membership at the end of 2021	224	391	615
2020	New Members Added in 2020	52	27	79
	Past Members not Renewing for 2020	47		47
	Membership at end of 2020			615



Joe and Sonia Landholm



We miss all of our FRIENDS and the volunteer work we did with you are among our best memories of Sedona. It is truly a remarkable organization!

Wire Wranglers

Friends of the Forest volunteers have been assisting Janie Agyagos, District Wildlife Biologist, in removing old range fencing that poses a hazard to wildlife. Pronghorn are particularly prone to becoming snagged in the bottom strands since they do not like to jump

fences. A recent workday was profiled in an article in the *Arizona Daily Sun*: "It's just essential": The volunteer front line of wildlife protection and range management" published on January 23, 2022. This work has also received recognition and appreciation from Arizona

Game and Fish and The Friends of the Verde River.

A big thank you to volunteers **Bob Bare, Ernie DiMillo, Peter Malmgren, Jim Manning, Bernadette Marriott, Bob Marriott, Jean Ober, Mike Ober, Jim Richards, David Terrell, Margie Terrell.**



Pronghorn



Wrangled Wire



Stealth Volunteer



Heron Nests



Heron

Heron Rookeries

Volunteers **Dave Kennedy and Judy Kennedy** surveyed two Camp Verde area locations for heron rookeries (trees with a bunch of heron nests). Having found several nests, they will be following up this spring with a count of nestlings. Again, along with FOF monitoring of kestrels and other species, our work is greatly appreciated by AZGFD.

Marilyn Painchaud

Dates to Remember

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 @ 9:00 AM Zoom Meeting
FOF Quarterly Board of Directors and Member meeting

All Members welcome

Future Board of Directors Meetings:

May 4, 2022

September 7, 2022

Annual Meeting - November (to be announced)

December 7, 2022

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 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.

Jean Ober, Branching Out Editor
newsletter@fosedona.org