



## **Draft Decision on Nation's Largest Forest Restoration Plan Released; Open House Scheduled**

A major milestone has been reached for the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), a partnership between over 30 stakeholders and the U.S. Forest Service. Currently, the U.S. Forest Service is offering an early preview of a draft Record of Decision (DROD) and the project's phase one environmental analysis—a decision that will guide and accelerate forest restoration treatments across one million acres of northern Arizona's forests over the next decade.

An open house hosted by the 4FRI stakeholder group and the U.S. Forest Service will take place from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., Thursday, December 4, at the Flagstaff Aquaplex (1702 N. 4th St.). From watershed health, prescribed fire management, and wildlife habitat to new jobs, this plan has the potential to impact the daily lives of northern Arizona residents and visitors for the next decade. All are invited to learn more about this plan and the 4FRI effort.

The draft decision and final environmental impact statement (FEIS) will be available at [www.fs.usda.gov/main/4fri/planning](http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/4fri/planning) by November 21. In accordance with federal regulations, the Forest Service will offer a 45-day formal objection period on the FEIS, which will begin with the publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register. The NOA is expected to be published in early December, 2014.

“The 4FRI Stakeholder Group is in the process of reviewing this draft decision. We have worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service in this planning effort, which began in 2012. It is the largest Environmental Impact Statement for forest restoration in the country,” stated Diane Vosick, current co-chair of the 4FRI stakeholder group and Director of Policy and Partnerships for the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University, adding “while we are currently undergoing review of the decision details, we are unified in our support of restoring our northern Arizona National Forests.”

“This plan will help guarantee a supply of wood for the businesses who are investing in wood manufacturing, as well as create much-needed jobs,” said Steve Gatewood, the other co-chair of the stakeholder group and a longstanding member of the Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership. “It is the first of at least two large plans that will eventually encompass 2.4 million acres of northern Arizona forests.”

The 4FRI landscape has been broken into two planning areas: this first plan encompasses much of the Coconino and South Kaibab forests (nearly one million acres), and the second plan, currently in the pre-planning stages, will incorporate 1.4 million acres of eastern Arizona pine forests on the Apache-Sitgreaves and the Tonto.

This draft decision summarizes the types of treatments that are intended to restore forests to a condition that protects communities and watersheds from unnatural catastrophic fire events; improve forest health; enhance wildlife habitat; and restore the beneficial role of managed and natural low-intensity ground fires. For more information on 4FRI, please visit [www.4fri.org](http://www.4fri.org). For more information on the December 4 open house, please call the Flagstaff Fire Department at 928-213-2500.