



December 2025

From the President

Happiest of holidays to all of Friends of the Forest! I don't know about you, but my stomach and taste buds love this time of year -- even if my clothing rebels! 🎅

As previously communicated, we've modified the timing of *Branching Out* publications to occur after our quarterly board meetings so highlights could be shared with those who didn't attend. Any member of FOF can attend board meetings, in person or on Zoom. Here's a recap of the December 2nd board meeting.

Forest Service Update

We had the opportunity to meet and hear from Kyle Byers, acting Deputy District Ranger for the Red Rock Ranger District. Kyle provided a brief overview of how the District managed the government shutdown and she expressed her gratitude for the extra efforts given by our volunteers during that stressful period. Kyle also shared that the proposed increases to the Forest's recreation fees is a "slow and bureaucratic process" (my words, not hers!) It will be months before a decision is made and any changes implemented. Haven't heard yet? Here's a link for a press release issued in May by the Coconino National Forest regarding [proposed fee increases](#).

FOF's Officers Election

Two of our Officers opted not to be on this year's ballot. A huge and heartfelt thank you to **Carol Does**, former Secretary, and **David Terrell**, former Vice President, for the additional time, attention, and commitment you gave FOF during your tenure! This year's Officers are as follows:

President – Melissa Pontikes

Vice President – Vacant! Are you interested? [Email me](#) and we'll chat!

Secretary – Cheryl McCann

Treasurer – Joe Pokorski

Assistant Treasurer – Jim White

Leadership Needed!

We continue to seek new leaders to fill either Chair or Co-Chair. Below is a list of the roles we need to fill, a brief blurb about each, and who to contact for more information. Every committee benefits from having a co-chair or even additional help, so don't be shy about talking to Chairs about taking on a larger role.

Membership Chair

This role maintains a proactive approach to attracting new members and keeping FOF officers and committee chairs informed of current and new member status. It is mostly administrative and typically requires less than 100 hours a year. Key responsibilities include managing membership renewals, overseeing process for Red Rock and National Park passes, managing annual new member event, and ordering nametags. Contact **Karen Yook** at membership@fosedona.org for additional information.

Technology Team Apps Leader

The Apps Leader specifically maintains current mobile applications and makes enhancements or adds new applications as requested. It is an administrative role that requires less than 100 hours a year. Contact **Steve Lakowske** at stevel95gm@gmail.com for additional information.

PSAR Co-Chair

The co-Chair works with the Chair to implement and manage the seasonal **Preventative Search and Rescue** program. Duties can range from administrative to restocking PSAR supplies and include working at a PSAR site. PSAR's goal is to educate hikers to reduce the number of first responder calls, minimize heat-related incidents, and provide information on alternative recreation opportunities. Role requires less than 30 hours a year during the spring and summer. Please contact **Glenn Kingsbury** at psar@fosedona.org.

Trail Ambassador Co-Chair

This co-chair position will open in Spring 2026. This role is in collaboration with the other co-chair, and the combined hours are estimated to be less than 85 hours a year. Some specific responsibilities include planning monthly **Trail Ambassador** events, on-boarding new committee members, and periodically writing articles for the *Red Rock News* and *Branching Out*. Please contact **Bob** and **Carol Dore** at trailambassador@fosedona.org.

New Member Event

A successful *New Member Event* was held October 15th at the Red Rock Ranger station. 56 people attended, of which 36 were new to the Friends. Of those 36, 29 joined our organization! Thanks to **Karen Yook** and all that helped to make this a successful event. And welcome to our newest members! Please check out the Leadership Roster listed on the last page if you have further questions about projects you are interested in. Committee Chairs are more than happy to match you up with your interests and answer questions.

Annual Volunteer Awards

Our annual Friends of the Forest Volunteer awards were presented at our November 4th Annual meeting this year. Typically, they are presented in conjunction with a Volunteer Appreciation event. Although not all who were acknowledged attended the November meeting, we truly appreciate our volunteers, newer members jumping in and willing to help as well as those who give their time and energy year in and year out. Don't forget to check out this year's annual award recipients in this issue!

Miscellaneous Tidbits

Keep your eyes open for future emails regarding emergencies, what to do if injured while volunteering, and a request to update your emergency contact information.



FOF created generic "business cards" that advertise our mission, goals, website and include a QR code. These are great to have handy when someone asks you about your volunteer activities and is interested in learning more about FOF. If you'd like a small supply, reach out to either me or one of your committee leaders.

Mark your calendars now for future FOF meetings:

Board MeetingThursday, February 5, 2026
 Volunteer Appreciation Event.....Saturday, March 7, 2026
 Board MeetingThursday, May 7, 2026
 Board MeetingThursday, September 17, 2026
 FOF's Annual MeetingSaturday, October 24, 2026
 Board MeetingThursday, December 3, 2026



Melissa Pontikes

Regardless of the holidays you celebrate or where those celebrations take place, I hope you have a wonderful time with your loved ones!! See you in 2026.

Melissa Pontikes

Trail Ambassadors

Photography Class

Bob Haizmann and **Steve Smith** taught a class in Nightscape Photography last spring. We learned how to select the best conditions for Milky Way views and how to enhance nearby features in low light environments.



Photo courtesy of Bob Haizmann

Controlled Burn Overview

In October, Juan Quiroga, Fuels AFMO, Forest Service Verde Zone Prescott and Coconino National Forest, shared an overview and specific examples of how we approach what burns to do, when, and how we think about safety and risk.

This was done as an educational program with **Trail Ambassadors** so we can better communicate accurate information when engaging with visitors on the trail. We learned that prescribed burns are done for community protection, restoration of grasslands, and that they help keep wildfires smaller. There is a significant amount of science in determining if a prescribed burn can and will be done, including temperature, relative humidity, and wind expected, and often the window is very narrow for when a burn can be done.



Juan Quiroga and Alex Schleuter talk about prescribed burns

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CPR Class

In November, a CPR course was offered to all Friends of the Forest members. It was conducted by Josh Wells and the Sedona Fire District, with certification through the American Heart Association. It covered basic CPR, use of AEDs (defibrillators) for adults and children, and basic first aid. Eighteen members took advantage of this opportunity. The Sedona Fire District is working to build a heart safe community, where bystanders can perform CPR until professional help can arrive.



New Member Orientation

In November, a new member orientation event was held at co-Chairs **Bob and Carol Dore's** home. Sixteen new members joined for education about being a **Trail Ambassador**, with lots of questions and laughs.



Carol and Bob Dore's

Water Sampling & Air Monitoring

The **Air Monitoring Committee** was asked by UC Davis (University of California in Davis, CA), to take a few photos of the site where we do air quality monitoring. The station is located at Ike's Backbone, near the Verde River and the old Childs powerplant, about 12 miles west of Strawberry.

UC Davis collects air quality data from hundreds of sites across the United States, which include rural and urban sites, as well as national parks. They selected Ike's Backbone as one of the sites to include in an upcoming virtual tour of nationwide testing sites. The goal is to foster a sense of community for all those who contribute data.



Drone shot of Ike's Backbone station by Brian Painchaud



Brian taking readings at Ike's Backbone

I reached out to **Brian Painchaud**, a longtime Air Monitoring volunteer, previous Committee Chair and drone owner, to see if he was available to take a few photos. Brian joined me on what turned out to be the last trip to the station before the government shut down. Thank you so much Brian; you took some awesome drone shots, and it was a fun morning.

Air quality stations require weekly filter changes. Considering "our site" is a half day drive on dirt roads every week and the Friends have been monitoring it for many years, it has added up to a significant saving of staff hours for the Red Rock District.

Water sampling is finished for the season, but it will resume again in May. Thank you to all those who collected and helped process the samples this past summer. Arizona Department of Environmental Quality is very grateful for all our support.

Please reach out to [Jessica Baldischwiler](#) for Water Monitoring or [Jerry Checchia](#) for Air Quality, if you have any questions or would like to get more involved. Be safe out there and enjoy these cooler temps.

Jerry Checchia and Jessica Baldischwiler

Visitor Information Services

After the Visitor Center was closed due to the government shutdown, I left the country for an adventurous vacation in New Zealand. Upon my return three weeks later, I was dumbfounded that the government was still closed. However, that gave me the opportunity to work with **Nick Kollios**, our new Visitor Center co-chair. Having the down time worked well for us. Nick is learning the tools (NEON, Signup Genius, emails) and getting a better understanding of the volunteers, Forest Service staff, chain of command, Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) forms, training and much more. Please help me welcome Nick as our official co-Chair!



Nick Kollios

Several people told me about going to the Forest Service Admin building during the shutdown. The gates at the entrance at SR179 were closed to prevent tourists from making the drive in and then having to go back out because the Visitor Center was closed. Every time an FOF volunteer or another authorized person pulled up at the gate to let themselves in, other vehicles would try to follow and had to be turned away. It's always been the first stop for visitors and totally understandable that they wanted in. At least the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Centers were still open. They saw an increased volume of visitors.

Did you all breathe a sigh of relief that the government opened back up? I certainly did. As soon as it was announced, a sign-up schedule for the Visitor Center was sent out. It went out for volunteers to sign up for shifts beginning on Thursday, Nov 13th. Of course, we had volunteers fill up shifts immediately, but as it turned out we weren't able to open until Saturday, November 15th. Finally!



Volunteers rolled in and were happy to be back to work with their Forest Service counterparts. Visitors were also very happy to be welcomed in. **Bart Bartlett**, texted me afterwards saying "Wow! What a cool time Saturday!"

Visitors know they can get accurate local information to make the most of their visit. We provide restrooms, recreation and travel information, guidebooks, gifts, map sales, and Federal Recreation Pass information and sales.

Through the rainy weather, we have been able to offer visitors "Rainy-Day Adventures" and "Rainy-Day Hike" options. These have been going over very well. Also, with families coming together for Thanksgiving, we've seen a lot of kids coming through the doors. Junior Rangers abound now. The kids are accompanied by their family and participate in fun, engaging activities presented in a free activity booklet. This helps them get to know the National Forest they are visiting.



Annie Glickstein and Nick Kollios



Wildlife, Fish, Range & Plants



I am pleased (and so happy) to be able to share that I have a new co-chair. **Janie Agyagos**, a very experienced recently retired wildlife biologist, will be partnering with me to advance our WFRP program. We will continue to focus on supporting our Forest Service Wildlife Biologist, Kayla Long.

Committee Name Change

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.” This is Juliet’s line when she is telling Romeo that a name is nothing but a name and it is hence a convention with no meaning behind it.

And yet there is meaning in names. Let’s look at the name for *this* committee. It began as Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plants (WFRP). Indeed, we take care of monitoring, surveying, and maintaining many things related to those three things. Yet, we do that on managed range land, and we also do more than just identify rare plants. We are “home on the range” and we painstakingly monitor much more than plants on the range. I hope you will embrace our adjustment to the new name of Wildlife, Fish, **Range** and Plants; still WFRP!

By the way, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines Range like this:

“Rangelands in the United States are diverse lands. They are the wet grasslands of Florida to the desert shrub ecosystems of Wyoming. They include the high mountain meadows of Utah to the desert floor of California.

The United States has about 770 million acres of rangelands. Private individuals own more than half of the Nation’s rangelands. The federal government manages 43 percent of the rangelands. State and local governments manage the remainder.

The Forest Service administers approximately 191 million acres of National Forest Systems lands. About half of this acreage, 96 million acres, is rangelands.

These diverse ecosystems produce an equally diverse array of tangible and intangible products. Tangible products include forage for grazing and browsing animals, wildlife habitat, water, minerals, energy, recreational opportunities, some wood products, and plant and animal genes.

We define it like this: Healthy Rangelands = Healthy Wildlife Habitat!

PROJECTS

WFRP is totally project based. Here are most of the ongoing projects; with some successfully completed:

Project	Brief Description of Wildlife / Fish / Range / Plants Projects
Agave Inventory	Searching for domesticated agave species. Training required, then individual and/or teams go out in designated areas of the Verde Valley with field forms in the event they discover more.
Bats Inventory, Monitoring & Habitat Protection	Use standardized protocols to gather data that allow us to assess population status and trends, inform responses to stressors, and sustain viable bat populations.
Birding	Kestrels, marsh birds, owls, peregrine falcons – having binoculars and surveying birds.

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Project	Brief Description of Wildlife / Fish / Range / Plants Projects
Exclosure Monitoring	<p>We work together on maintaining exclosures and protecting the riparian habitat that is so important to so many species of wildlife!</p> <p>Volunteers inspect riparian exclosures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks in fences that either cattle or OHV can get through. Livestock are not allowed in, so if there are, either a gate got left open or the fence got cut somewhere. • Signs of cattle (tracks, cowpies, mowed down grass and hedged riparian shrubs and trees), dead cattle. • Signs of OHV use – tire tracks of motorcycles, ATVs, side-by-sides • When is water present and approximately how much.
Fence Work (Maintenance & Modification)	Barbed wire fence modification as well as removing old fence and making repairs where needed.
Firefly Inventory	Setting up game cameras, observing video clips on a computer, going out in the field and doing live surveys
Frogs & Toads	Monitoring and observing or listening to recordings to determine what species are out there (native / invasive).
Invasive Weeds	Working with the Forest Service Botanist to contain invasives
Lichen Inventory	Individuals and/or teams get trained and go out to collect samples in predetermined locations to send to the Lichenologist for identification.
Maintenance	Installing signs, fixing things
Mapping	Various GIS mapping projects – bare soil, pronghorn habitat, powerlines, cattleguards
Planting	Milkweeds
Pollinators	Macro-photography of the pollinator and the plants they visit.
Scanning Wildlife Files	Always need old files to be scanned.
Stock Tanks	Drive to and document water in the stock tanks. Bumpy roads requiring high-clearance off-roading vehicles.
Stream Temp Monitoring	Monitoring stream temperatures
Range Projects	Horse care, cattle tank photography, trail counters, game cameras, fence work.

If any of these projects pique your interest and you might like to help out, please [contact me](#) and I would be happy to discuss the project more in depth.

Annie Glickstein and Janie Agyagos



Trail Maintenance & Construction

The 2025 trail season was another big one for **Trail Maintenance & Construction**. We held 18 group events, and 45 volunteers worked 1,245 hours. The Sign crew put in another 234 hours fabricating and installing new signs all over the Red Rock Ranger District (RRRD). All of those who volunteered deserve our appreciation but six of our members received Certificates of Appreciation at the FOF's annual meeting for working the most hours and events last season. They were **Rod Cashin, Ernie DiMillo, Pete Malmgren, Jim McCann, Sam Serrill, and Kurt Starbuck**.

Third Rock Trail Construction

We're off to a strong start again this season. We've been working on building the new Third Rock trail off Verde Valley School Road. This two-mile trail is part of the RRRD's trail plan to build over 20 miles of new trails and rehabilitate existing social trails in the Turkey Creek area.



USFS Trail Coordinator, Kevin Kuhl, giving the TM&C our marching orders before heading out.



Pam and Al Milavec with this year's USFS Trail Leader, Samantha Braun



Glenn Kingsbury with Sam Serrill



Jim McCann



Kurt Starbuck on Third Rock Trail



Rock clearing and trail armoring to prevent erosion



Sam Serrill and Grant Levitan take a break

Glenn Kingsbury and Pat Quinn

Trailhead Beautification

Trailhead Beautification continues to work at the Forest Service (and some City of Sedona) trailheads. We worked individually, or in small groups, more than 170 times in 2025 and logged more than 230 hours doing so. Forest Service interns joined us in cleaning up trailheads in October. These efforts help keep the trailheads looking great for all the visitors to the Sedona area.

Dale Smrz

SIGNAGE

The Sign crew made a trip up Schnebly Hill with **Jim McCann** to replace the metal signs at the Equestrian Bypass on Munds Wagon Trail with new wooden signs. Other missing, worn out or damaged signs have been installed on Allen's Bend, Jim Thompson and Bell Rock Pathway. **Steve Galginaitis** assisted in the installation of a new cairn basket, post and signs at the southern junction of Templeton and Easy Breezy.

At the recent Annual Meeting, **Ernie DeMillo** and **Rod Cashin** received Certificates of Appreciation for our efforts in making and installing trail signs. There is another individual who needs to be recognized. **Bill Logan** spent many hours creating trail signs, and his efforts have perhaps been overlooked but are greatly appreciated. Thanks go out to Bill for his many contributions to trail signs and FOF.



Steve Galginaitis



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Graffiti Removal

We continue to see lots of graffiti, even in the fall and winter months! So much for a non-busy season.

We've had many new members join our team. Welcome to our committee! We had a group training session on November 14th at Bell Rock Pathway for many of our new members. Materials were distributed. (Sorry about running out of a few items. They have been reordered.)

Review of the *Graffiti Report App* was first on the agenda. We then found some stickers and lots of scratches to facilitate on-the-job training. Within two hours everyone had mastered the basics. Several students even went out the very next day to independently remediate some graffiti: awesome!

Look for additional training opportunities at group outings. We're scheduled for an outing at Cathedral Rock on December 10th. That session is filled up, but there will be more after the holidays. Our plan is to go to Devil's Bridge in January. We'll need volunteers with high-clearance vehicles to drive.

There were multiple reports of "paint graffiti" in the Raven's Cave. It took a bit of Elephant Snot (paint remover) and our cordless power sprayer, but the end result was great!

Remember, only work on graffiti with an assigned status. Thanks to committee members that continue to work independently on reporting and remediating graffiti.

Everyone be careful out there and enjoy our forest.

Raven's Cave Before and After



Jim White

Cultural Resources / Docents

Year in Review

Our committee has very diverse activities under several categories. I thought that all of you might be interested in the volunteer statistics for FY2025 for ALL of **Cultural Resources**.

Project	Nbr of Volunteers	Total Hours FY2025	Avg Hrs per Volunteer
Docents	45	4,652	103.4
Site Photography Special Projects	27	2,356	87.3
Site Recording	11	642	58.4
Combined	83	7,650	92

Committee Recognition in 2025

For many years, annual awards were based strictly on total volunteer hours. That is unfair as there are multiple ways to provide value that do not always get recognized. The vast bulk of awards over the years have gone to docents who do a regular shift each week for most of the year. Those contributions are no less appreciated than before, it is just time to share the wealth. This year's focus is the Site Photography / Special Project team. They have done a lot of high quality and important work that has been under-recognized and under-appreciated. Their efforts are mostly behind the scenes and visible only to the archaeologists that they work on behalf of. Much has been learned scientifically from what that group has done over the last 8-plus years. Many thanks to all the recipients from both Spence and myself!!! Keep up the great work!

2025 Recipients

Jon Petrescu – Jon has been with the team from the start and is one of the key camera operators for the precision photography required. Jon also volunteers as a docent at Palatki.

Brian Panchaud – Brian has also been with the team from the start and is the other key camera operator. Brian also pioneered the use of a drone (where permitted)

Doug Key - After going out with the team a few times, he took it upon himself to purchase a drone and become a top gun drone pilot which has resulted in the thousands of photos that have gone into creation of full area 3D models of Honanki and other sites.

Todd & Mary Jane Stell - They dusted off their college geology training and have taken charge of heading up the high priority / high impact fracture study data gathering at Honanki and ultimately Palatki.

Mike Turner - Aside from being a seasonal Docent at Palatki. Mike was a key player in the Model Annotation Project that became an Emergency project in September 2024. Most of the work he was able to do from his home in Idaho and other places, but he also stopped enroute to Sedona for his annual pilgrimage.

MunYee Aldrink - MunYee responded to the call for volunteers that went to all of FOF for the Model Capture Project. Not only was she a big contributor to the success of the project, but she was also intrigued by the photos and signed on to be a docent too! During the summer months she continued to provide computer-based support for other photography projects currently underway. She did this remotely while traveling to the East Coast and Michigan to escape our summer heat.

Docent Program

Volunteer activities are back to normal after the shutdown. There were five folks who signed up for the docent program from the *New Member Welcome Event* in October. Training has been delayed due to the shutdown, weather, smoke, and mutual availability. This is the largest response that we have had from one of these events. Welcome to all!

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. Please [email](#) for more information or check our [Docent FAQ](#) online.

Photo Documentation Project

The Photo Team is slowly getting back to being busy after a long summer layoff. The exact scope of work for the heritage site assessment for Honanki was delayed due to the government shutdown. Team members have been recruited and are chomping at the bit.

The Fracture Analysis project is nearly completed for Honanki and will soon be moving to Palatki. Recent rockfalls at the Crane Petroglyph Heritage Site underscore the need for this project. Do not worry, no petroglyphs, docents, or visitors were damaged.

The Elden Pueblo project is progressing slowly pending the needed overcast conditions for photography. Recent 3-D models have set new records for processing time on the workstation computer, taking multiple days to complete.

If you cannot go out to the sites, computer-based support is always needed. Please contact **Spence Gustav** at spencehg@yahoo.com if you have any questions or would like to join his team.

Site Recording Project (SRP)

SRP has resumed with a flurry in September. There is a long list of sites that need to be recorded. As always, the team focuses on unknown archaeological sites that have lots of surface artifacts.

Some types of pottery sherds are deemed “diagnostic wares,” in that they define a time frame and culture of the people(s) that made the pottery. Unfortunately, these important diagnostic pottery wares can “walk away” (i.e. taken by visitors over years of visitation), so it is important to get these artifacts recorded into the archaeology record.

The SRP team has most recently been busy recording new sites; that per the diagnostic wares, suggest AD 700-800 use/occupation. These are unusually very early sites for the Verde Valley. The vast majority of new cultural heritage site recordings suggest a much later AD 1000-1300 use/occupation. Archaeologists call both cultural groups “Sinagua.” Peter Pilles, Jr. our long-time Forest Archeologist (retired from USFS in 2024), intrigued by the discoveries, recently joined us on a visit to a few of these newly recorded sites. In particular, Peter is intrigued by the extensive agricultural features suggesting organized community agriculture (i.e. farming) and thinks these could be some of the earliest communities in the Southwest practicing organized agriculture. The work continues!

The team has recently been directed by Dana Brown, our District Archaeologist, to record sites electronically using a tablet device. Admittedly, the new tablet system complicates the recording process and **Scott Newth**, is trying to get up to speed on the new system (i.e. the old adage of teaching an old dog new tricks is never easy). While this occurs, Dana has asked the SRP team to take a hiatus on new recordings. Hence, the team is standing by with a long list of new site recordings.

FOF members that are interested in cultural resources and enjoy working in the field are encouraged to join us. It is an excellent way to learn about local archaeology and how surface artifacts define who lived there (We never dig or collect artifacts. If artifacts are moved for analysis, they are returned to their original location). The only requirements for participating is good vision for recognizing artifacts on the ground, are able-bodied to traverse uneven terrain and have a curiosity to learn.

Please contact **Scott Newth** at rsnewth@msn.com if you have any questions or would like to join his team.

Jerry Walters

Annual Volunteer Awards

Typically, the annual volunteer awards are combined with the Forest Service Appreciation event. The government shutdown resulted in furloughed Forest Service staff, so their Appreciation event has been postponed to March 7th. It was decided the Friends of the Forest annual awards would continue ahead and be presented at the November 4th Annual meeting.

Due to the abbreviated nature of the meeting, not all award recipients were present. Thanks to **Pat Quinn** for taking photos of those that were available!

The awardees are chosen by Committee Chairs, the Board and/or the President. This year **Melissa Pontikes**, FOF President, explained a few parameters used for this year's awards; not all committees gave out awards for various reasons, the participants equally contribute and it's impossible to distinguish *one* volunteer, some participants prefer no acknowledgement, some have won multiple years in a row, etc.

Cultural Resources and Docents

Jerry Walters presented the following for being a valuable member of the Cultural Resources Photography Team:

Brian Painchaud
Doug Key
MunYee Aldrink
Mike Turner
Mary Jane Stell
Todd Stell



Melissa Pontikes, Jon Petrescu, Jerry Walters, Spence Gustav

Preventative Search & Rescue

Glen Kingsbury, presented the awards to the following for having the most PSAR hours in 2025:

Sam Serrill
Mike Ober
Annie Glickstein – Glenn also thanked Annie for the invaluable help she provided all year
David Terrell - Glenn also thanked David for his invaluable assistance during this 2025 PSAR season



David Terrell, Melissa Pontikes, Glenn Kingsbury, Annie Glickstein

Trail Ambassadors

Carol and Bob Does presented three categories of achievement.

More than 40 Trail Maintenance reports submitted:
Christine Nuez
Bob Haizmann
Martin Feder
Les Gerloff



Melissa Pontikes, Bob Haizmann, Jerry Walters, Bob and Carol Does

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Trail Ambassadors continued

Having the highest percentage of engagements with people on the trails and reported at least 10 hikes:

Michael Harris

John Crowley

Jerry Walters

Barb Heffner

Reporting over 400 hours on the trails:

Michael Harris

Janet Walters

Trail Maintenance & Construction

Glen Kingsbury, co-Chair, presented the awards to the following for dedicating extensive time to TM&C workdays and special outings:

Rod Cashin

Ernie DiMillo

Sam Serrill

Jim McCann

Pete Malmgren

Kurt Starbuck



Rod Cashin, Ernie DeMillo, Kurt Starbuck, Jim McCann (on screen), Glenn Kingsbury, Melissa Pontikes

Visitor Information Services

Annie Glickstein, described the three VIS awardees as being steady volunteers, knowing how to help a visitor and being the heart, soul, and backbone of the Visitor Information Center.

Bea Logan - 244 hours

Bart Bartlett - 372 hours

Judith Romero - 243 hours



Melissa Pontikes, Bea Logan, Annie Glickstein

Water Sampling and Air Monitoring (no photo)

Jerry Checchia, presented the Committee awards to:

Steve and Christi Jacquay

These two travel out to Ikes Backbone (about 12 miles west of Strawberry, AZ) to do a filter change almost every month.

Sherry MacDonald and Michelle Swahla

Another dynamic duo that goes out to do the filter change every month. Michelle sometimes goes out twice to do the water sampling too.

John Zieran

John also goes out to Fossil Creek regularly to do water sampling and help with the processing. He usually drives his own vehicle too.

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Special Project Awards:

Bob Haizmann and Wade Winningham

For the time and attention given to the Technology Systems Team. Bob's commitment to creating new tools or revamping existing tools to enhance FOF's technology infrastructure, increase productivity and improve the overall user experience has been invaluable. Thank you Bob!

Wade's commitment to creating new tools or revamping existing tools to enhance FOF's technology infrastructure, increase productivity and improve the overall user experience has been invaluable. That's in addition to being one of our Webmasters.



David Terrell, Bob Haizmann, Melissa Pontikes and Wade Winningham

New Volunteer of the Year: Nick Kollios

For diving right into Friends of the Forest and making an immediate impact across multiple committees. Nick joined FOF mid-way through 2025 and volunteered over 185 hours! Not only has Nick given his time to Trail Ambassadors, Graffiti Removal, and PSAR – he's been a fixture at the Visitors Center. In fact, he represented VIS at this year's New Member Event. Nick is the epitome of a valued volunteer and FOF is lucky to have him as member.



David Terrell, Nick Kollios, Melissa Pontikes

Volunteers of the Year: Cheryl and Jim McCann

For generously volunteering your time and talents across multiple committees and your willingness to jump in when needed. Since joining FOF a little more than a year ago, Cheryl and Jim have each given their time and talents to the tune of over 250 hours.

Jim has volunteered with the Graffiti Removal, Trail Ambassador, TM&C, Trailhead Beautification, and Special Projects teams. Not only has he helped install trail signs/paint blazes, but he's also offered to drive his Jeep on Schnebly and Dry Creek to make it easier to reach Cow Pies and Vultee Arch.

Saving the better half for last - Cheryl has spent time with the same teams as Jim, with the addition of working at the Visitor Center. She too has helped install new signs, paint blazes, and volunteered for the Doe closure. When FOF put out a call for new volunteer leadership, Cheryl responded and is exploring taking on a leadership role.



David Terrell, Melissa Pontikes, Jim McCann (on screen) and Cheryl McCann

Friends of the Forest is lucky to have both of you in our midst.

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Distinguished Award 2025: Pat Quinn

For continually being a valued volunteer across almost every committee and always willing to lend a hand, regardless of who asks. Since joining FOF five years ago, Pat has provided over 1500 hours of his time with numerous FOF committees, including serving as the co-chair of TM&C. Even if a request is made at the last minute, Pat graciously volunteers his time and does it with a laugh and a smile.



David Terrell, Melissa Pontikes, Pat Quinn

Heart of the Friends Award 2025: Diane Greathouse

For always embracing our mission and putting your heart into everything you do. Diane has been a reliable and dedicated volunteer since joining FOF in 2007. She received the New Volunteer of the Year Award in 2008 and hasn't slowed down. With an ever-present positive attitude and smile, Diane is quick to honor FOF's history while making improvements for the future – which can be seen with changes to *Branching Out*. In addition, Diane doesn't just point out something that can be improved or changed – she makes thoughtful suggestions for solutions.



David Terrell, Melissa Pontikes, Diane Greathouse

President's Award 2025: Glenn Kingsbury

For your exemplary leadership and willingness to take on whatever is needed within Friends of the Forest. For the past few years, Glenn has served on the Board, been our Auditor, co-chaired TM&C and continually gives his time and talent on numerous other committees – Graffiti Removal, VIS, and Trail Ambassador, to name a few. When May came around and we were short a leader for PSAR, Glenn graciously accepted my phone call and request to take on one more role – PSAR Chair. In a nutshell – Glenn makes my job a heck of a lot easier and he makes me look good...thank you Glenn!!



David Terrell, Glenn Kingsbury, Melissa Pontikes

Upcoming Events

Volunteer Appreciation Event

March 7, Saturday-USFS Volunteer Appreciation Event

Board Meetings

February 5, Thursday

May 7, Thursday

September 17, Thursday

December 3, Thursday

Benefit film at Mary Fisher Theatre

December 18, Thursday

[Buy tickets.](#) [View Trailer.](#)



Friends of the Forest Committee Chair Roster

Cultural Resources/Docents	Jerry Walters	docents@fosedona.org
Graffiti Removal	Jim White	graffiti@fosedona.org
Membership	Karen Yook	membership@fosedona.org
Motorized Environmental Restoration	Mike Boyd	mer@fosedona.org
Preventative Search & Rescue	Glenn Kingsbury	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 and Carol Dore	trailambassador@fosedona.org
Trail Maintenance & Construction	Glenn Kingsbury 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 & Air Monitoring	Jessica Baldischwiler Jerry Checchia	water-air-quality@fosedona.org
Wildlife/Fish/Range/Plants	Annie Glickstein Janie Agyagos	wildlife@fosedona.org

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 manpower or the funds to accomplish on its own.

