September 2025



From the President

Hello to our world-class volunteers! I don't know about you, but I can't believe we're in September already—where has the year gone? I know part of my disconnect is a combination of the tempo-shift we have in summer with lots of our volunteers traveling and the fact that we haven't published a newsletter since March. I love that we're now publishing *Branching Out* post-Board Meetings so we can incorporate important updates, but I also feel like it's been too long since we've celebrated and shared all of the incredible work you do.

Running the risk of sounding like a broken record, I'm once again putting out a request for new volunteer leaders to either lead or co-lead our vital Committees. EVERY Committee needs to have new leaders in the wings ready to backfill our current Chairs, but we have a few areas with more immediate needs. Specifically, our current Membership Chair is stepping down (THANK YOU Karen Yook!) Additionally, PSAR needs either a new leader or someone who will co-lead with Glenn (THANK YOU Glenn for stepping in at last minute to lead PSAR during the TM&C lull!) Don't be shy to reach out to either myself or your Committee Chairs to learn how you can become the next face of FOF leadership.

Summer was a hot and busy time for many of our volunteers and the thousands of hours you spent in the heat, and the sun is greatly appreciated. THANK YOU to our Cultural Resources team (docents, photographers, site recorders); Graffiti Remediators; PSAR peeps; Trail Ambassadors; Trailhead Beautifiers; Water/Air monitors; and Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plants team (bat, butterfly, kestrel, and firefly monitors, fence modifiers, horse caregivers, and lichen specialists to name a few of their varied projects).

Additionally, plenty of volunteers continued their work in air conditioning and their volunteer efforts are also immensely appreciated. THANK YOU to our Membership chair; newsletter editors; Special Projects peeps focused on technology

systems, nominating new directors, and administrative support at the Red Rock Ranger Station; Technology Team; and Visitor Information Specialists! Also, behind the scenes, our Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and VP contributed their time and talents to keep the infrastructure of FOF humming!

The Forest Service remains in a hiring freeze, but they will be hiring some seasonal workers thanks to funds coming from recreation fees (permits and parking) and external partners, such as Sedona *Red Rock Trail Fund* and *Wheel Fun*. Alex Schlueter, District Ranger, shared an overview of the Woods Fire and the incredible teamwork that went into fighting the fire. Luckily, we've received some rain and fire restrictions have been lifted.

Mark Your Calendars and know that more info will be forthcoming!

- October 15th New Member Event for new FOF members and/or potential members who want to learn more about FOF and the myriad of volunteer opportunities
- November 1st FOF Annual Meeting and USFS's Volunteer Appreciation Event
- November 8th Oak Creek Collaborative Clean-Up Event at Slide Rock State Park

I don't know about you, but I'm tired of hearing my voice as I type so I can only imagine how tired you are of reading all these words. BUT—take the time to go through this awesome issue of

Branching Out to learn what your fellow volunteers have been doing for the past several months. I can never say this enough, yet I will continue to voice my deep appreciation for your dedication and volunteerism - THANK YOU!!



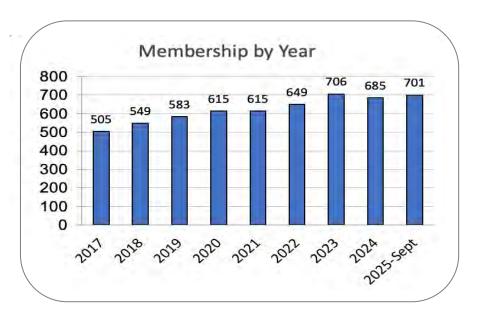


Save the Date! On October 15th *Friends of the Forest* is hosting our annual **New Member Welcome** event at the Red Rock Ranger Station on SR179. We look forward to seeing not only recently joined members, but also anyone interested in learning about and hopefully joining our organization. At this event, you'll learn about *Friends of the Forest* and the activities you can volunteer for. You'll hear from our New District Ranger Alex Schlueter about the value FOF brings to the Forest Service and learn about the benefits of membership.

Our membership this year now includes: Lori Dawson, Ted Dillman, Anjali Saraf, Ben Spencer, Francesca Ziemba, Linda Lupi, Memo Lupi, Jennifer Bowles, Paul Bowles, Carole Weinhardt, Michael Weinhardt, Tracey Bennett, Joe Delmonico, Linda Bonder, Dave Garten, Kate Fruth, Yota Fruth, Lara Gussoni, Eugenia M Greiner, Keith Greiner, Steve Beiser, Susanne McAllister, Lori Steinmetz, Thomas Ahlstrom, Nick Kollios, Ann Cosgrove, Dodd Cosgrove, Frank Hooper, Gerry Hooper, Chuck Langford, Abby Keller, John Sawyer, Shannon Nolan, Paul Schiminger, Kevin Floerke, Shania Molano, Ron Anderson, Cheryl Robertshaw, Rob Robertshaw, Katherine Losh, Joanne Johnson, Ray Johnson, Grant Levitan, and Kate Levitan. WELCOME!

FOF Membership Data as of Sept 5, 2025 (using calendar years)

_		Annual	Life	Total
2025	New Members Added in 2025 YTD	28	16	44
	Past Members not Renewing	73		
	Current Membership as of 09/04/2025	205	496	701
2024	New Members Added in 2024	30	6	37
	Past Members not Renewing for 2024	54		
	Current Membership as of 11/16/2024	228	457	685
2023	New Members Added in 2023	53	32	85
	Past Members not Renewing for 2023	61		
	Membership as of 12/31/2023	252	454	706
2022	New Members Added in 2022	18	5	27
	Past Members not Renewing for 2022	67		
	Membership as of 11/23/2022	238	411	649
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





Name Tags

As a reminder, Committee Chairs whose new members need FOF name tags should contact <u>Membership</u>, to arrange for new tags ordered through Sedona Engraving.

Red Rock Pass

Courtesy annual Red Rock passes are provided to FOF members in appreciation for your volunteer efforts.

- If you already have the America the Beautiful Pass, then you do **not** need a Red Rock Pass unless you want to display one on your vehicle rear view mirror when parked.
- Members who volunteer at least 16 hours during the Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 through September 30) are entitled to receive a free Red Rock Pass for the next 12 months.
- Members who volunteer at least **250 hours** during the Federal Fiscal Year are entitled to receive a free Federal Volunteer Pass for the next year.
- If you want both, then volunteer hours must be at least 266 hours.

The process for requesting a courtesy Red Rock Pass gives the Forest Service personnel (Rochelle) the opportunity to fulfill the requests in a streamlined manner.



- Verify your mailing address and phone number in NEON (the FOF website that you log into to sign JHAs – choose "Update My Information" to view what is on file for you.
- All hours will be verified and a request for the current month's Red Rock Passes will be sent to the Forest Service on the **15th** of each month.
- If you request a pass after the 15th of the month, your request will be processed the following month.
- If you and your partner both require passes, then you both have to check your NEON profiles (some people have two homes and forget to update both accounts).
- Make sure you provide the name of the person who wants the pass (for example, Morticia and Gomez Addams or just Gomez Addams)
- When you receive your Red Rock Pass, you MUST sign and return the acknowledgment form that will be mailed to you along with the Red Rock Pass.
- If you do not receive your pass by the end of the month that it was ordered, then email <u>Membership</u> and request a follow-up review to track it down. Occasionally passes get mailed to incorrect addresses, they were received a little late due to postal delays or just got missed. We'll figure it out.

Here is a sample request:





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Trail Ambassadors



Peter Cross led a well-attended hike in March to Cathedral Rock via the Hiline Trail. This hike accessed the saddle of Cathedral Rock and avoided the steep climb on Cathedral Rock Trail. The group hiked the newly created Hardline Trail from Hiline to Cathedral Rock.



A small group of Trail Ambassadors hiked the Munds Wagon-Cow Pies-Hangover trails in April. Hot and beautiful!



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Trail Ambassadors continued 🚃





Hiking Comfort and Safety Education Event - Charlie Schnudson gave an informative talk and hike in January, teaching about proper use of hiking equipment, the need for poles, helping others on challenging parts of the trail, and other hiking safety tips. We appreciate Charlie's wealth of knowledge and sharing his extensive experience!



Wendy Peterman, Deputy District
Ranger, led an educational hike in March
talking about things related to soil,
geology, and soil/plant/atmosphere
interactions and relationships to
disturbances like fire and insect
outbreaks. She also discussed how
disturbances of cryptobiotic soil
impacts plant growth in desert
environments.



In May, we hiked on the Boynton Canyon Trail. It was in the low 50's and drizzly, but a great hike despite the unusual weather! We learned that Ponderosa Pine bark smells like butterscotch, and some of us couldn't get enough!



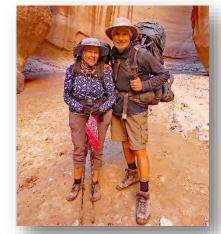
One of two hanging skeletons, probably left by a mountain lion, were spotted on a Woods Canyon Trail group hike in April.

Visitor Information Services :

Written by **Sharon and Doug Madison**, FOF volunteers since 2001

When the Visitor Center opened in 2008, we signed on as Frontliners because we know the trails and enjoy helping visitors find appropriate hikes. Some of those visitors have become friends and travel buddies! We have traveled with cattle ranchers from Willsal, Montana (pop 237), Canadians from Ontario, world travelers from Jackson, Wyoming, and snowbirds from Cleveland, Ohio. These relationships have prevailed over the years, but even "casual" friends we have met in the Visitor Center have left their mark. Doug occasionally hands out our contact information and we routinely get follow-up emails with pictures of them on trails we have recommended, both near and far.

Some of you may wonder why anyone would choose to answer the same questions over and over again and do it with a smile! It can be frustrating, but that same sense of frustration offers an amazing opportunity to connect



Sharon and Doug

with those from all over the world! Not to mention the opportunity to make new friends who share a love of nature and enthusiasm for the Red Rocks.

Plus, there are some really surprising questions that can make your day. Such as:

What supplies should I stockpile for emergency survival once the apocalypse hits us?

Will I need a filter for the creek water and how will I cook my food?

Can you refer me to your expert on General Custer?

If you are willing to take a deep breath and describe the Airport Vista one more time, you may be rewarded by an occasional domestic or international traveler who is genuinely eager for your suggestions and appreciative of the time and energy you put into helping them find the hike of a lifetime here in Red Rock Country. And you may also forge a new friendship!



Wildlife, Fish & Rare Plants

There is a dedicated group of **Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plants** volunteers who install and monitor Hobo Water Loggers in a variety of locations. Loggers are installed in April each year and retrieved in September. Timing is critical since the loggers are expensive and, during high water times, we don't want them in the streams.

Loggers (thermographs) are instruments used for monitoring physical conditions in aquatic systems. Temperature is an important component of water quality because it has several important effects on aquatic environments such as:

- It influences biological activity and growth.
- It affects water chemistry.
- It can impact water quantity measurements.
- It determines the kinds of organisms that live in water bodies.
- It affects the solubility of gases and chemicals in water testing.
- It is essential for understanding the overall quality and health of aquatic environments.
- It helps scientists study global warming, water cycles, and ecosystems.
- It defines growing seasons and dictates what species can survive in a particular body of water.

The location of those loggers are:

- Verde River where Sycamore Canyon comes in
- Call of the Canyon behind the bathrooms
- Oak Creek at Crescent Moon Ranch
- Spring Creek above the fish barrier
- Wet Beaver Creek downstream from Lawrence Crossing campground
- Walker Creek upstream from FR618
- West Clear Creek downstream from the campground off Hwy 260
- Fossil Springs (a major 4-mile hike one way to the actual site)

There is some legacy (baseline) data from the early 2000s from various Coconino Forest streams, and it will be interesting to see how temperatures may have changed over time. When the temperature of a body of water changes, either by natural or human-caused event, fish, insects, zooplankton, phytoplankton, and other aquatic species break out in a sweat (HA!!).

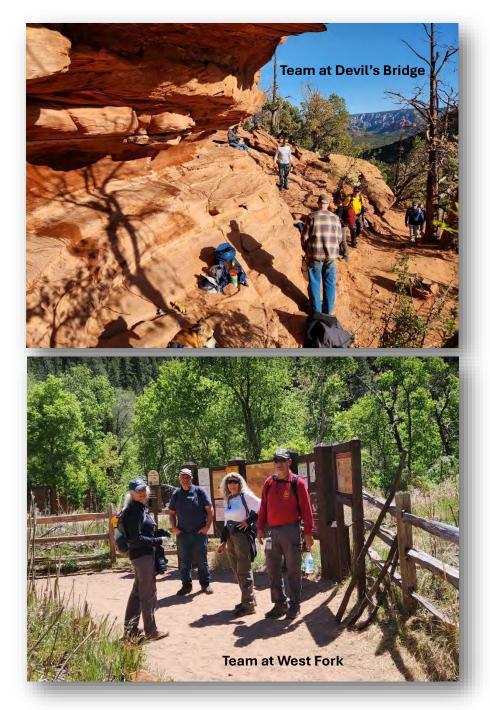
In addition to the ongoing drought, run-off from impervious surfaces such as streets and parking lots can also heat water, so the work that FOF volunteers do to accumulate more information is important and necessary.

Sources:

- FOF emails regarding Hobo Water Logging activities
- USGS Website
- USFS Website
- HOBO Data Loggers Website

Graffiti Removal Team _____

It has been a busy spring and summer for the **Graffiti Team**. We held an advanced training class in April. We've also had several group outings. Devil's Bridge just after spring break was a nightmare! Slide Rock State Park was not too bad. Not much graffiti, but we hiked out with lots of trash. West Fork was a nice cool hike in the warm temperature. We made it all the way to end of trail! Grasshopper Point was another massive trash pick-up day, with lots of graffiti too.



Thanks to committee members that continue to work independently on reporting and remediating graffiti. Everyone be careful out there and enjoy our forest.

Jim White

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Water Sampling & Air Monitoring

We are almost through another summer here in Arizona and I just wanted to give a shout out to all the volunteers on the **Water Sampling and Air Monitoring Committee**.

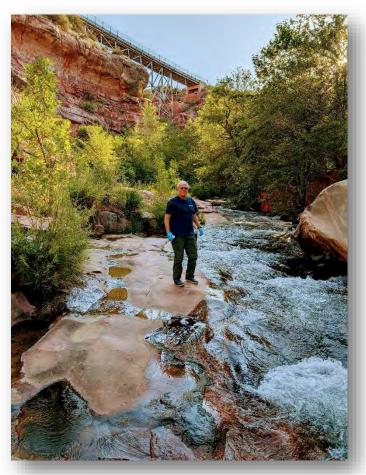
Volunteers currently sample Oak Creek in the summer months and Fossil Creek all year round. We couldn't do it without the dedication of the community scientists that grab samples, keep them cold, then get them heated up and go back to read the results the following day. It's a several step process that Jessica Baldischwiler, Cynthia Malowitz and a few other volunteers like Ron Anderson, Michelle Swahla, Gary Malat and John Hogsett have done this summer.

We are trained by ADEQ (Arizona Department of Environmental Quality) and also receive support from the Forest Service. We recently moved our lab to the Ranger Station from the Beaver Creek Work Center, with the help of Forest Service Volunteer Coordinator Toni Salazar. Thank you so much Toni!! She even hung a curtain for us so we could read the E.coli samples which need to be processed in the dark with a black light.

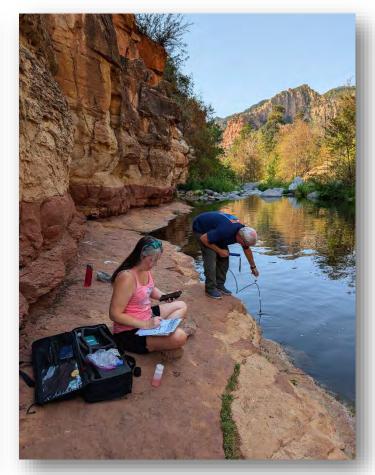
We are always looking for new volunteers to help out with the sampling, so if this sounds interesting to you, please reach out to <u>Jessica or myself</u>.

Thanks for all you do for the Friends, Forest Service and our environment.

"When the well is dry, we know the worth of water."—Benjamin Franklin



Ron sampling below Midgley Bridge



Ron & Jessica sampling above Slide Rock

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Trail Maintenance & Construction

In April, the **Trail Maintenance and Construction** crew said our farewells to our departing Forest Service Trail Foreman, Holly Cliché.

Last year, we ended our season working on two of the projects included in the Red Rock Trail Access Plan, Doe Mountain and Turkey Creek.

At Doe Mountain we helped close off a number of social trails on top of the mesa and constructed a new loop trail.

At Turkey Creek we worked on the new Del Sol Trail which connects the Transept Trail with Turkey Creek. We also installed a new kiosk at the Transept Trailhead. **Rod Chasin** and the Sign Crew fabricated and installed new signage at both locations.

Our new season is ready to kick off. We'll start with a Bell Trail cleanup on September 12th. The Bell Trail takes a beating each year from all the summertime partiers enjoying themselves out at the "Crack."

As the Forest Service seasonal workers start to come on board we'll turn to more traditional TM&C projects. We'll start with the Oak Creek Canyon trails as we've got standard trail maintenance scheduled for Cookstove on September 19th, Harding Springs on September 26th, and Telephone on October 3rd. We'll then turn our attention to the buildout of the 20 some miles of new system trails planned for Turkey Creek.

Saying goodbye to Holly, FS Trail Foreman



Construction of new Doe Mountain Loop Trail





Trail Maintenance & Construction continued _____

Construction of new Del Sol Trail







New kiosk at Transept Trailhead







Glenn Kingsbury and Pat Quinn

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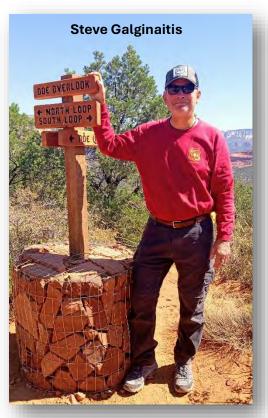


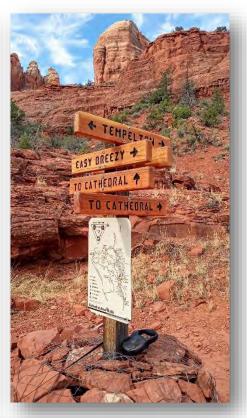
Trail Maintenance & Construction Signage

This spring the **TM&C Signage** crew was busy creating and installing signs for the newest trails in the system. This included the North and South Loop Trails on Doe Mountain to the Doe Overlook, Hardline on Cathedral Rock, Extra Credit linking Red Rock Loop Road to Scorpion, and Del Sol linking Transept to Turkey Creek. Signs were created and installed by **Bill Logan**, **Ernie Dimillo** and **Rod Cashin**.

Summer projects have included blaze markings on Del Sol, Submarine and Twin Buttes by **Steve Galginaitis** (see photo). **Ernie Dimillo** has created and installed new signage on Brewer at Coconino Loop with assistance from Steve.

This fall we will be updating worn and faded signs throughout the system.











Rod Cashin

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Preventative Search & Rescue

Preventative Search & Rescue (PSAR) had another busy year helping visitors survive their hot summer hikes. Over the course of 15 weekends, 35 volunteers spent over 1,000 hours at the Dry Creek and Bell trailheads providing advice, water, and assistance to nearly 10,000 visitors on their way to Devils Bridge and "The Crack." Developed to assist first responders deal with the multitude of the heat related emergencies during the summer, PSAR also provided water to 4,000 hikers and aid to over 200, most of which were overcome by the heat. Many of the those in need of aid would have required medical attention from first responders if we weren't there to assist.

Many thanks to the 35 FOF members who volunteered their time this season. Special thanks also go to my unofficial co-chairs; **Melissa Pontikes, Dave Terrill**, and **Annie Glickstein**. Their contributions were instrumental in making this year a success.



Nick Kollios pointing out how far it is to Devils Bridge



What PSAR aims to avoid



Dispensing water and advice at Dry Creek

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Preventative Search & Rescue continued ___



Alan Glickstein making sure visitors to Dry Creek have their parking pass



Hikers filling up on water before their trek to the Crack



Melissa Pontikes and Steve Galginaitis at Bell Trailhead



Sam Serrill waiting for customers at Bell

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Cultural Resources / Docents

Cultural Site Photo Documentation Project

The photogrammetry team has begun several more projects for the Kaibab and Prescott National Forests. These are not official FOF projects, but an assist to nearby affiliated agencies. Work has also begun on 3D photo documentation at Elden Pueblo in Flagstaff. Most project work has slowed considerably over the summer months as most team members are away for the summer. Even though team sizes are small, there is still a minimum number of people needed for each outing. Please contact Spence Gustav if you have any questions or would like to join his team.





Site Recording Project

The Site Recording Project (SRP) resumed activity in late February. after a several-year hiatus per USFS request (i.e. no permanent District Archaeologist). Once again, it is under the leadership of **Scott Newth**. For this iteration of the project the team is made up exclusively of FOF members. The objective of this project is to professionally record (to include surface artifact analysis, mapping, and site schematics) prehistoric sites in the Red Rock Ranger District that were previously unknown to the Coconino National Forest archaeologists. These sites are away from the main tourist areas and are relatively pristine and need to be documented before



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Cultural Resources / Docents continued

too much visitation. By analyzing the surface pottery sherds, we can identify culture and timeframe of occupation. There is a small team of six experienced individuals in archaeological site recording, and a few trainees. Seven sites were recorded-to-date in 2025 before hot weather and travel shut down the season until late October. Each site required multiple visits. One site yielded several pieces of St. Joseph black-on-white pottery which has never been recorded in the Verde Valley. Scott treated the team to a "fun field trip" to an extensive petroglyph site in the Prescott Forest to end the season.

Please contact <u>Scott Newth</u> if you have any questions or would like to join his team.





Docent Programs

The docent programs at the Crane, Palatki, & Honanki Heritage sites continue year-round. For the second year we have implemented shorter hours (earlier start times and shutting down at noon) at the sites to avoid the high afternoon heat. Palatki has also gone to a four-day week (Wednesday through Saturday) from June through September. This helps mitigate staffing issues for site hosts and docents, as many folks are out of town for all or most of the summer months. Many thanks to the stalwarts who have continued to volunteer throughout the heat!

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.

If you enjoy helping protect cultural heritage sites and want to learn more about the Palatki, Honanki and Crane Petroglyph sites, consider joining the **Cultural Resources and Protection Committee**. Please call or email <u>docents@fofsedona.org</u> for more information. Our FAQ is also <u>available online</u>. Click on link, scroll down and click on the *Docent FAQ* link.

Jerry Walters

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Upcoming Events

New Member Event

October 15, Wednesday – 2:00 to 4:00 PM - Red Rock Ranger District Administration Building

Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Event

November 1, Saturday-USFS Volunteer Appreciation Event - Beaver Creek Work Center

Board Meetings

December 2, Tuesday

Committee Contacts

 Cultural Resources/Docents
 docents@fofsedona.org

 Graffiti Removal
 graffiti@fofsedona.org

 Membership
 membership@fofsedona.org

 Preventative Search & Rescue
 psar@fofsedona.org

 River Rangers
 riverrangers@fofsedona.org

 Trail Ambassadors
 trailambassador@fofsedona.org

 Trail Maintenance & Construction
 tmc@fofsedona.org

 Trailhead Beautification
 thb@fofsedona.org

 Visitor Information Services
 vis@fofsedona.org

 Water Sampling & Air Monitoring
 water-air-quality@fofsedona.org

 Wildlife/Fish/Rare Plants
 wildlife@fofsedona.org

Our Mission

<u>Friends of the Forest, Inc.</u> 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.

<u>Friends of the Forest</u> provides the Red Rock Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service with thousands of hours of volunteer services annually. Our primary goals are:

- Help the Forest Service maintain its trails and cultural resources
- Reduce the environmental damage caused by increasing human impact
- Assist in education and improve communication with the community
- Enhance the forest experience for visitors and residents alike

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2025 Board of Directors Ballot

Voting by ballot is only needed if you are NOT attending the Annual Meeting

Per FOF bylaws, all ballots are due no later than 5:00 PM Friday, October 31, 2025

If you will <u>not</u> be attending the Annual Meeting on November 1, 2025, you can vote either by mail or electronically. The link for electronic voting will be provided in a separate email or you can <u>vote electronically</u> <u>here</u>. You can only vote <u>once</u> – either in person, electronically, or by mail.

<u>Continuing on the Board</u> – The Nominating Committee is pleased to nominate the following Board members who have agreed to serve another 3-year term: **Spence Gustav, Bob Haizmann, Bea Logan,** and **Pat Quinn**

<u>New Board Members</u> – The Nominating Committee is pleased to nominate the following members to serve a 3-year term: **Peter Cross, Steve Galginaitis, Nick Kollios,** and **Cheryl McCann**

<u>Retiring from the Board</u> – On behalf of FOF, the Nominating Committee extends their sincere gratitude for their service: **Cynthia Belowski, Peter Belowski, Cynthia Malowitz,** and **Adrienne Pichette**

The Directors' term in office begins immediately following the announcement of election results at the Annual Meeting. A very special THANK YOU to the Nominating Committee: Rod Cashin, Jerry Checchia, Ernie DiMillo, Bob Dores, Carol Dores, Kelly Gardner, Glenn Kingsbury, Joe Pokorski, Melissa Pontikes, David Terrell, and Jim White.

MAIL-IN BALLOT This is for members who prefer a paper ballot, or cannot use the electronic ballot, and/or need write-in capability.							
Please cast your vote by placing a check next to the candidates of choice and/or by writing in the name(s) of another candidate.							
☐ I VOTE FOR ALL 8 CANDIDATES PRESENTED BELOW (if you check this box, no need to check boxes below and no write-in candidates allowed)							
☐ Peter Cross	☐ Steve Galginaitis		Spence Gustav				
☐ Bob Haizmann	☐ Nick Kollios		☐ Bea Logan				
☐ Cheryl McCann	☐ Pat Quinn						
Write-in Candidate(s):							
Sign Your Name		Print Your Nam	ne				