



U.S. Forest Service
Kaibab National Forest
800 S. 6th St.
Williams, AZ 86046
Voice: (928) 635-8200
Email: mailroom_r3_kaibab@fs.fed.us
Web: www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

News Release

Media Contact: Jacqueline Banks
(928) 635-8314
jcbanks@fs.fed.us



Kaibab National Forest shares video of tribal partnership to restore springs

Williams, Ariz., May 12, 2016—For Immediate Release. The Kaibab National Forest has posted a video to its website showing the partnership between the Hopi Tribe and forest on an important spring restoration project.

The video, which is available at <http://bit.ly/Hopi-Kaibab>, was filmed during portions of the Big Springs and Castle Springs Restoration Project on the North Kaibab Ranger District, which was the first tribal-Forest Service collaborative project to be implemented after the 2014 publication of the new Land and Resources Management Plan for the Kaibab National Forest. This was significant because the project put into action two important goals of the newly revised forest plan.

First, it implemented desired conditions for seeps and springs that had been developed collaboratively and identified in the plan. Second, it provided a setting for exchanging information between tribal elders and youth about land stewardship and offered an opportunity for the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge between the tribe and forest, which will contribute to future management actions on seeps and springs.

Over the course of a week in 2014, Hopi elders and cultural advisors [Hopi Cultural Resource Advisory Task Team] worked with 18 tribal youth from the Hopi Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program, Hopi cultural and natural resources staff, Kaibab National Forest leadership, and representatives from a variety of other organizations and programs to conduct key restoration actions at two natural springs sites on the North Kaibab Ranger District. Since then, additional phased restoration work has been accomplished, and annual projects are planned for the coming years.

Partners have removed graffiti at Castle Springs and eliminated a decaying corral, rusted barbed wire fence and trash in the area. They have also removed invasive vegetation encroaching in an adjacent meadow, constructed water catchments using traditional techniques for both wildlife and cattle, and built a fence to protect the spring. At Big Springs, a more visible path has been constructed in order to deter visitors from making their own paths, alleviating the spider web effect of footpaths that was damaging fragile soils. And, throughout the project area, Hopi ancestral sites have been restored and protected against potential impacts from recreation and public use.

The video, which is about 10 minutes long, shows much of this work and also provides perspective on the importance of the project and its meaning to tribal members, Forest Service representatives and other

partners. It highlights the ecological importance of natural springs as well as their cultural significance to tribes.

“I hope people take the time to watch this video so that they understand the shared goals we have with our tribal partners and the work we have done and are continuing to do to achieve those goals,” said Mike Lyndon, tribal liaison for the Kaibab National Forest. “This project was originally the idea of a Hopi elder who said that we all needed to come together – elders and youth from the tribe and Forest Service employees – to do this work together on the ground and to learn from one another. That knowledge can be carried forward as we continue to work on our shared goals and shared vision for important places on the Kaibab National Forest.”

Several of the people involved in the Big Springs and Castle Springs Restoration Project and the production of the video will be traveling to Washington, D.C., next week to be honored with a national-level Forest Service award for their efforts. They will receive the 2015 “Rise to the Future” award for “Tribal Accomplishment” in the category of excellence and leadership in fisheries, hydrology, soil science and air programs.

“I feel humbled and grateful that the partnership would be recognized for its merits and acknowledge that it is but a starting point for continued collaborative efforts in the future,” said Everett Gomez, Reed/Bamboo Clan, Paaqavi Village, and a case manager for the Hopi Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program.

“This work is important in many ways such as bringing our youth and elders together to promote teaching and understanding; cultural identity and survival; preserving our environment encompassing land, air and water; strong partnerships and sharing of resources between the entities involved; education and employment pathways for our youth; and, understanding better the importance of the spiritual value surrounding all these things,” Gomez said.

Photos are available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kaibabnationalforest/albums/72157648171820197>.

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