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Four Forest Restoration Initiative  
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# News Release

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## Forest Service Issues Decision on Historic Effort to Restore Forests on a Half Million Acres; More than 30 Stakeholder Groups Joined the Project

**Flagstaff, Ariz., April 20, 2015 – For Immediate Release**

On Friday April 17 the Forest Service reached the next milestone in the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) when Coconino National Forest Supervisor Earl Stewart and Kaibab National Forest Supervisor Mike Williams signed the final decision. It results in accelerated forest restoration on more than a half million acres of national forests and grasslands.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell lauded the decision.

“This is exceptional work of Forest Service employees and stakeholders who joined together to support this historic endeavor,” he said. “This restoration work will contribute significantly to our efforts to sustain healthy, resilient landscapes. Support from these stakeholder groups will ensure we maintain this momentum for the long haul. That’s what it will take to make a difference.”

This achievement is the result of four national forests and more than 30 stakeholder groups joining together over five years to work on the largest landscape-scale restoration project ever analyzed in Forest Service history. 4FRI builds on many years of collaboration, research, and action since the mid-1990s. Over the past five years, the Forest Service has progressed toward accelerating restoration by implementing projects within the 4FRI landscape, using previous NEPA analyses. Progress continues with this final Record of Decision. It approves various restoration activities on over 586,000 acres of the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests. These activities include thinning; prescribed burning; watershed and road maintenance; grassland, spring, and stream channel restoration; and habitat improvements.

Forest Supervisors signed the document in front of representatives from the 4FRI Stakeholders Group Friday afternoon. One of the reasons 4FRI is unique, and has been such a success, is the unprecedented amount of stakeholder engagement and participation. The 4FRI Stakeholders Group consists of individuals and groups representing local, county, and state governments; environmental groups, organizations, and institutions; and industry representatives. Their commitment to seeing these forests restored, and their continual engagement and participation throughout this process has been invaluable.

This represents the first Forest Service project in which stakeholders were active participants in the formal objection process. Their opinions were solicited and provided in each of the resolution meetings with objectors. Their involvement contributed to a successful objection resolution process.

“When you think of how many people have been so deeply involved for so many years, it drives home just how significant this moment is. We’re celebrating a groundbreaking project as well as a groundbreaking collaborative effort,” says Earl Stewart, Forest Supervisor for the Coconino national Forest.

The Forest Service anticipates the first activities from this decision will be prescribed burning and installation of equipment to conduct watershed research, which could occur this spring and summer. The Record of Decision approved the following activities:

- Mechanically cut trees on approximately 430,261 acres. This includes mechanically treating trees up to 17.9 inches d.b.h. in 18 Mexican spotted owl PACs, and prescribed burning in 70 Mexican spotted owl PACs (including 54 core areas).
- Apply prescribed fire on approximately 430,261 acres where mechanical treatment occurs and use prescribed fire only (no mechanical treatment) on approximately 155,849 acres, for a total of 586,110 acres.
- Construct approximately 520 miles of temporary roads for haul access and decommission the roads when treatments are complete (no new permanent roads will be constructed).
- Reconstruct up to 40 miles of existing, open roads for resource and safety concerns. Of these, improve approximately 30 miles for hauling (primarily widening corners to improve turn radius), and relocate and rehabilitate about 10 miles currently located in stream bottoms.
- Decommission 726 miles of both unauthorized routes and existing system roads on the Coconino NF.
- Decommission 134 miles of unauthorized roads on the Kaibab NF.
- Restore 74 springs, construct up to 4 miles of protective fencing, and restore 39 miles of ephemeral channels.
- Construct up to 82 miles of protective fencing for aspen.
- Construct up to 12 flumes, and up to 12 weather stations and associated instrumentation, to support the paired watershed study research.

In addition to the 1<sup>st</sup> 4FRI EIS project area, 4FRI covers other restoration projects already approved in other NEPA analyses that are being implemented across the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Tonto, and Kaibab National Forests. To date, approximately 300,000 acres have received some sort of restoration treatment as part of the initiative.

For additional information on the Four Forest Restoration Initiative visit [www.fs.usda.gov/4fri](http://www.fs.usda.gov/4fri). The response letters to objectors, Final Record of Decision, Appendices, and list of errata will be available online by April 30. CDs and hard copies will also be available at that time.

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