



Media Contacts:

National Forest Foundation  
Wes Swaffar, Ecosystem Services Program Manager  
Email: [wswaffar@nationalforests.org](mailto:wswaffar@nationalforests.org)  
Phone: 406.830.3356

Salt River Project  
Patty Garcia-Likens  
Email: [Patty.Likens@srpnet.com](mailto:Patty.Likens@srpnet.com)  
Phone: 602-236-2588

**For Immediate Release**

**Salt River Project and National Forest Foundation address critical aspen restoration on the Kaibab National Forest.**

*Long-time partners expand restoration work to improve aspen forests on Northern Arizona's National Forest.*

**Missoula, MT – June 23, 2015** The National Forest Foundation (NFF) recently expanded its partnership with the Salt River Project (SRP) to restore imperiled aspen forests on the Kaibab National Forest in Northern Arizona. A leading partner of the NFF's reforestation efforts, SRP has been supporting landscape-scale reforestation in Northern Arizona through their Trees for Change program since 2009. This year, customer contributions collected through SRP's Trees for Change program will restore aspen stands, a unique and imperiled forest type in Northern Arizona.

Aspen forests currently comprise less than one percent of forests on the southern half of the Kaibab National forest. Aspens provide particularly high ecological value and diversity, but these important biodiversity hotspots have declined in recent years due to competition from ponderosa pine, browsing damage from elk and deer, and fire exclusion. To improve the health of these important ecosystems, the NFF and the Kaibab National Forest have partnered on an ambitious two-year long, comprehensive aspen

restoration project across 200 acres of the Kaibab National Forest. With funding from SRP, the NFF and the Kaibab National Forest are constructing temporary fencing to exclude elk and deer, which allows aspen forests to regenerate. Additionally, the partners are planting young aspen seedlings to expedite aspen stand restoration. The project, now halfway completed, is expected to regenerate approximately 200,000 young aspen seedlings.

“Last year, the Forest Service on the Williams Ranger District was successful in reforesting thousands of aspens with the Salt River Project’s contributions. The funding that SRP and the NFF provided was put towards work that would have taken many years to get completed with the regular budget,” said Richard Gonzalez of the Kaibab National Forest.

Since 2009, SRP has been a leading tree planting partner of the NFF, expanding the Forest Service’s capacity to accomplish critical reforestation projects following wildfire. To date, SRP has planted nearly one million trees on the Kaibab, Coconino and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Northern Arizona. Native seedlings planted through this unique partnership help re-establish wildlife habitat, sequester carbon dioxide and stabilize watersheds after wildfires.

“As a long-term partner of ours, the Salt River Project’s commitment to support important reforestation projects is helping restore *Treasured Landscapes* in Northern Arizona. We are proud to partner with SRP and admire their commitment to improving Northern Arizona’s National Forests through innovative partnerships,” said Bill Possiel, President of the National Forest Foundation.

Across the country, the forested headwaters of our National Forests and Grasslands provide water for 123 million Americans in more than 3,400 communities. The Phoenix metropolitan area is no exception, relying on water that is captured by National Forests in the Salt and Verde River watersheds. Recognizing the importance of these forested headwaters, SRP has invested in critical restoration projects on these National Forests. In addition to the Trees for Change program, SRP and the NFF developed the Northern Arizona Forest Fund. Dollars contributed through the Northern Arizona Forest Fund are invested in other important forest health projects on National Forests in the Salt and Verde River watersheds.

“Thanks to the generosity of our customers and their commitment to reforestation efforts, we are proud to support the efforts of the National Forest Foundation,” said Lori Singleton, Director of Emerging Customer Programs.

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### **About the Salt River Project**

SRP is the largest provider of water to the Valley, delivering about 800,000 acre feet of water annually. Most of the water in SRP’s system starts as snow in the forests of northern Arizona, and the health of the forests impacts the quality and sustainability of the Valley’s water supply. The

SRP Trees for Change program is an easy, personal way for SRP customers to take action against climate change while reforesting and beautifying the lands devastated by fires. Customers can volunteer to support the program by choosing to add a separate amount to their monthly energy bill. The amount paid will be invested in new reforestation projects in Arizona.

**About the National Forest Foundation**

Founded by Congress in 1991, the National Forest Foundation works to conserve, restore and enhance America's 193-million-acre National Forest System. Through community-based strategies and public-private partnerships, the NFF enhances wildlife habitat, revitalizes wildfire-damaged landscapes, restores watersheds, and improves recreational resources for the benefit of all Americans. The NFF's *Treasured Landscapes, Unforgettable Experiences* national conservation campaign is uniting public and private partners to conduct large-scale forest and watershed restoration and revitalize ecosystem resiliency in iconic National Forest System sites around the nation. To learn more, visit us at [www.nationalforests.org](http://www.nationalforests.org).