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**Friends of the Angeles
April 2011 Ranger District Sensing Sessions**

Hosted by the National Forest Foundation and the Angeles National Forest

Summary

In April 2011, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation held a series of meetings throughout the Angeles National Forest (see Appendix A for the agenda). Local organizations and supporters of the Angeles National Forest were convened in order to:

- Determine interest in forming a Friends of the Angeles organization; and
- Discuss what form a Friends organization might take, what supportive activities it might take on, and the steps involved in forming the organization.

Almost 100 people participated in the meetings from a variety of organizations and walks of life. On the whole, meeting participants agreed that a Friends of the Angeles organization was needed and discussed roles that a Friends organization could take to address current and long-term needs of the Forest and Forest Community. Key needs that appeared in discussions across the three Ranger Districts included:

- Improved volunteer coordination;
- Greater funding for existing groups and programs;
- Increased education and outreach to Forest users and the greater Los Angeles community; and
- Better information sharing and communication across the Angeles National Forest.

Meeting participants were eager to see a Friends of the Angeles organization launched in a timely, yet thoughtful manner, and provided feedback on what the next steps should be:

- Provide a summary of meeting notes for sensing session participants;
- Create an online tool to allow participants to continue to provide feedback and post ideas;
- Develop a timeline with target dates; and
- Convene another series of meetings that address issues like the role, goals and structure of the Friends organization.

The National Forest Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service are following up on these suggestions. The creation of an online portal for communication is currently underway, and a link will be sent to participants later this month. A second series of meetings will be scheduled for the summer of 2011 to continue moving the Friends of the Angeles organization forward.

Roles of a “Friends of the Angeles” Organization

Participants brainstormed possible activities, functions, and roles that a “Friends of the Angeles” organization might take on based on current needs of the Forest. Comments are in no particular order.

Volunteer Coordination

- A Friends Groups is needed to help coordinate volunteer activities and direct volunteers to where help is needed most
- A Friends Group is needed to help existing organizations coordinate volunteers
- A Friends Group could give structure to independent volunteers (i.e., volunteers not affiliated with a particular organization) and coordinate at an individual level
- A Friends Group could help get more volunteers on the ground
- More Forest Service rangers are needed to supervise volunteers
- More volunteers are needed for: graffiti cleanup, trash cleanup, trail maintenance, Pacific Crest Trail maintenance
- Don’t ignore volunteers from the OHV community
- Consider involving local correctional facility with volunteer activities

Fundraising and Financial Issues

- A Friends Group could raise money and apply for grants in order to funnel funding to existing groups and organizations
- A Friends Group could pursue large funding opportunities, including major corporate donors
- Funding is needed for a Forest-wide volunteer coordinator
- A Friends Group could act as a foundation for the Forest
- A Friends Group could raise money for existing groups’ projects
- Fundraising events could involve existing groups
- Funds received by a Friends Group need to be tracked
- All areas of the Forest need to receive a fair/equitable share of funding
- A Friends Group could help with fiscal transfer blocks (i.e., giving funds directly to the Forest Service)
- More funding is needed for urban outreach and education programs
- Funding is needed to open Big Pines Information Center to the public
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power could be a potential funding source
- Funding and goals are needed to restore historic sites

Education

- There is a need for education of the public (especially urban users) on appropriate uses of the Forest
- Education programs are needed for both adults and kids
- A Friends Group could coordinate education efforts and work with existing groups that do education and outreach
- A Friends Group needs to involve youth to create a sense of ownership among the next generation
- Forest-related training, guidelines, and education are needed for urban communities on a larger scale
- A Friends Group needs to reach underserved communities
- Transportation to the Forest is a barrier to reaching underserved communities
- Infrastructure, qualified leaders, and trainers are needed to work with underserved communities
- A Friends Group needs to identify what communities are being served by this group
- Mobile discovery centers could access schools and existing programs
- Mobile discovery centers should be staffed with people from the communities they serve
- Recovery of the landscape from the fire could be used as an educational and research opportunity

Communication and Information Exchange

- A Friends Group could serve as a network for communication
- A Friends Group could publicize success stories of existing groups
- A Friends Group could record, maintain, and disseminate knowledge about the Forest
- A Friends Group could improve communication about the distinction between the Angeles National Forest and the San Bernardino National Forest
- A Friends Group could improve communication about Angeles National Forest assets (e.g., the Pacific Crest Trail)
- A Friends Group needs to communicate how it is a value-added to existing organizations and groups
- The name of the Friends Group should include the word “Foundation” to emphasize a fund raising role
- The name of the Friends Group should not include the word “Foundation” because it might mislead people primarily interested in volunteer opportunities
- Concern: how to improve communication with people who do not have access to technology (i.e., internet, email, etc.)

Friends Group and Existing Organizations

- Further clarification is needed on how existing groups will fit with a new Friends Group
- A new Friends Group and existing groups could complement each other
- A Friends Group could help existing groups build skills and access tools/equipment (e.g., “Tool Bank”)
- A new Friends Group should not dominate existing groups
- A Friends Group needs to reach out beyond the same people who are always at the table to change the constituency
- A Friends Group should work with existing groups that serve underserved communities to get additional interest in the Forest
- A Friends Group needs to recognize and respond to individual forest communities
- A Friends Group needs to tap into existing assets/strengths of communities
- A Friends Group should involve and utilize groups like the California Conservation Corps, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, and the Student Conservation Association

Forest Service, Existing Organizations, and the Public

- A Friends Group could improve information flow and communication from the Forest Service to existing volunteer groups and the public
- A Friends Group could help groups get more timely communication from the Forest Service on projects that need volunteers
- A Friends Group could help existing groups stay informed about Forest Service project priorities
- A Friends Group could help foster trust between the Forest Service and volunteer groups
- A Friends Group could act as a forum for public input on the Master Plan process
- Existing groups need a Forest Service Master Plan to direct volunteer work
- Clarification is needed on how much the Forest Service can delegate volunteer coordination

Structure of the Friends Group

- A Friends Group could serve as an umbrella organization to guide groups to where they can be most useful
- An “advisory committee”, comprised of representatives from various volunteer/partner groups, could be formed to meet regularly with the Friends Group
- The Friends Group could have a board that represents interests of different locations on the Forest
- The Friends Group should consider a “council” model

- The Friends Group should consider an “incubator” model
- The Friends Group needs participatory decision-making and outside facilitators to assist
- The Friends Group needs board members from underserved communities
- Concern: Who will be the sparkplugs?

Other issues

- There is a Forest-wide need for support of enhanced and sustainable recreation opportunities (e.g., OHV’s, snow play)
- There is a need to deal with increased recreation pressure on other areas of the Forest due to the Station Fire area closures
- A Friends Group should generate interest in wilderness areas
- A successful, local model of a Friends Group is needed

Next Steps

Discuss potential next steps, concerns, barriers, or challenges to forming a “Friends of the Angeles” organization.

Communication

- Provide summary of meeting notes and follow-up information to meeting participants via mailing list, online forum, or other media
- Create an online tool for sensing session participants to provide input and post their ideas about the Friends Group (e.g., wiki, forum)
- Need electronic and non-electronic dissemination of meeting notes and announcements (e.g., use local newspapers, post at libraries)
- Conduct webinars for those who cannot attend the meetings in person
- Create a “Friends of” link to sensing meeting notes on the Angeles National Forest webpage

Friends Group Structure

- Draft some possible structures that address volunteer coordination and fundraising
- Seriously consider the role of this Group because the role will affect Group structure
- Form a strategy committee to develop mission, goals, objectives, and identify 3-4 most important things the Group wants to accomplish

Research

- Research other Friends Groups and how they work
- Develop a list of independent volunteers

Next Meeting

- The next meeting should be about developing a road map and people should come to next meeting with ideas for a road map
- Involve more people, including people who couldn’t make first meetings
- Concern: Location of next meeting(s)
- Do field trips
- Do a similar presentation for all Angeles National Forest volunteer organizations

Other issues

- Develop a timeline with target dates
- Anniversary of the Station Fire as some sort of deadline to announce the Friends Group
- Concern: physical location of the Friends Group – one location or multiple locations

Appendix A

Updated: April 26, 2011

Agenda

Friends of the Angeles: April 2011 Ranger District Sensing Sessions

Date	Time	Location/Contact
Tuesday April 26, 2011	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office 701 N. Santa Anita Avenue Arcadia, CA 91006
Wednesday April 27, 2011	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Big Pines Information Center Angeles Crest Highway (Hwy 2) Wrightwood, CA 92397
Thursday April 28, 2011	1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Southern California Consortium Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office 701 N. Santa Anita Avenue Arcadia, CA 91006
Thursday April 28, 2011	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	San Gabriel Canyon Gateway Center 1990 North San Gabriel Canyon Road (Hwy 39) Azusa, CA 91702

Meeting Facilitators: Kathy Peterson, Paige Van Riper

Meeting Host/Sponsor: National Forest Foundation

Meeting purpose

- To “test the waters” – To convene gatherings of existing and potential supporters of the Angeles National Forest on each of the ranger districts to determine interest in forming a Friends of the Angeles organization.
- If the interest exists, to discuss what form a Friends organization might take, what supportive activities it might take on, and the steps involved in forming the organization.

Desired outcomes

- Outcomes are listed for individual agenda items throughout the agenda below

TIME	TOPIC/OUTCOME	WHO
6:30 p.m. (5 min.)	WELCOME, Meeting Purpose, Introductions, Agenda review	Kathy Peterson
6:35 (5 min.)	Role of National Forest Foundation	Nerissa Sintetos
6:40 (15 min.)	PowerPoint Presentation: Angeles National Forest overview: Mission, challenges (include summary of Station Fire restoration strategy), past role of volunteers/partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desired outcome: Meeting participants understand the Angeles NF need for support, and begin to think about the various ways a Friends organization might provide support. 	Kathy Peterson
6:55 (10 min.)	Presentation: What a Friends group is/ is not (including a statement regarding FACA sideboards, non-profit organizations, etc.; and models of some existing Friends groups). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desired outcome: Meeting participants understand the broad sideboards of a Friends organization – the decision space available to them. 	Nerissa Sintetos
7:05 (15 min.)	Presentation: How to get started? An overview of the steps and decisions typically involved in forming a Friends organization.	Suzanne Avila
7:20 (10 min.)	Presentation: Summary of December 2010 meeting regarding Long-term goals, roles, and functions for the Friends of the Angeles.	Kathy Peterson
7:30 (30 min.)	Facilitated Discussion: Brainstorm what activities/supporting functions a Friends of the Angeles organization might take on. Encourage participants to share their values/passions, and how a Friends group might reflect these. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desired outcome: List of possible activities, functions, roles of a Friends organization, which would lay the foundation for shaping a collective vision and laying out a roadmap. Desired outcome: A general understanding of the meeting participants' interest in providing support; and a determination of interest to move ahead. 	Paige Van Riper / Group
8:00 (10 min.)	BREAK (Optional)	
8:10 (15 min.)	Facilitated Discussion: Next Steps. Discuss a possible road map – a sequence of possible steps – to form an Angeles Friends group. Include brainstorming re how a Friends of the Angeles organization might be governed; options for structuring a board of directors; control of funds, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desired outcome: Agreement on sequence of steps, including a rough timeline. Desired outcome: Agreement on next step, and who will be involved. 	Paige Van Riper / Group
8:25 (5 min.)	Closeout and Adjourn	Kathy Peterson