



Project Progress Report

Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project - Dry Lake Hills Hand Thinning



Project Summary:

Coconino National Forest has experienced decades of fire suppression activities and as a result, the City of Flagstaff and the Dry Lake Hills area is at risk of catastrophic wildfire and post-fire flood impacts. In 2010, Flagstaff experienced the Schultz Fire, burning 15,000 acres and producing at least \$133 million in economic damages. Forest management activities within portions of the Coconino National Forest have increased the risk of catastrophic wildfire events and the effects of severe post-fire flooding to the City of Flagstaff. The Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP), a city and federally funded forest thinning and fuels reduction project is aimed at reducing these risks.

Due to the rugged and steep terrain, the Dry Lake Hills region within FWPP has historically not been targeted for fuels reduction. Therefore, this region is at an especially high risk to experience a catastrophic wildfire event. Unfortunately, the Dry Lake Hills is located above the financial and cultural center of Flagstaff so a wildfire has the potential to result in severe economic, social, and ecological consequences for the City of Flagstaff. A wildfire could severely threaten the area's recreational and scenic values and impact the tourist industry. Ecologically, a crown fire would kill large areas of forest and would threaten to destroy important wildlife habitat including Mexican Spotted Owl Protected Activity Centers. Neighborhoods and infrastructure located within this portion of FWPP are vulnerable to severe post-fire flooding.

In partnership with the City of Flagstaff Fire Department, the US Forest Service, and Conservation Legacy–Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) is conducting hand thinning operations to reduce hazardous fuels and improve the resilience of the watershed ecosystem upstream of Flagstaff. This project strongly aligns with and is immediately adjacent to the landscape-scale conservation initiative, Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI). One of the major goals of 4FRI is to restore the structure of Ponderosa pine ecosystems and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires through fuels reduction. The FWPP operations adjacent to current 4FRI mechanically treated units strategically creates an expanded and more continuous treatment area and a more fire resilient forest around Flagstaff.

“National service means working to improve the environment around you, whatever that is. I know that the work we did will help prevent fires in the future. I got to give back and preserve natural resources.”

~Frank Gonzales, VFC Crew 131

Project Objectives:

The primary objective of this project is to implement forest hand thinning operations, in strategic locations, to decrease the threat of catastrophic wildfire and damage caused by post-fire flood impacts. To accomplish this, AZCC engaged young adults, and military veterans to complete this work. Programs of Conservation Legacy are founded on the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Conservation Legacy is now in its 21st year of Corps programming with young people - providing a structured, safe, educational and challenging work environment by supporting locally based conservation programs, like AZCC. These programs provide service and work opportunities for a diverse group of individuals to complete important conservation and community projects for the public benefit.



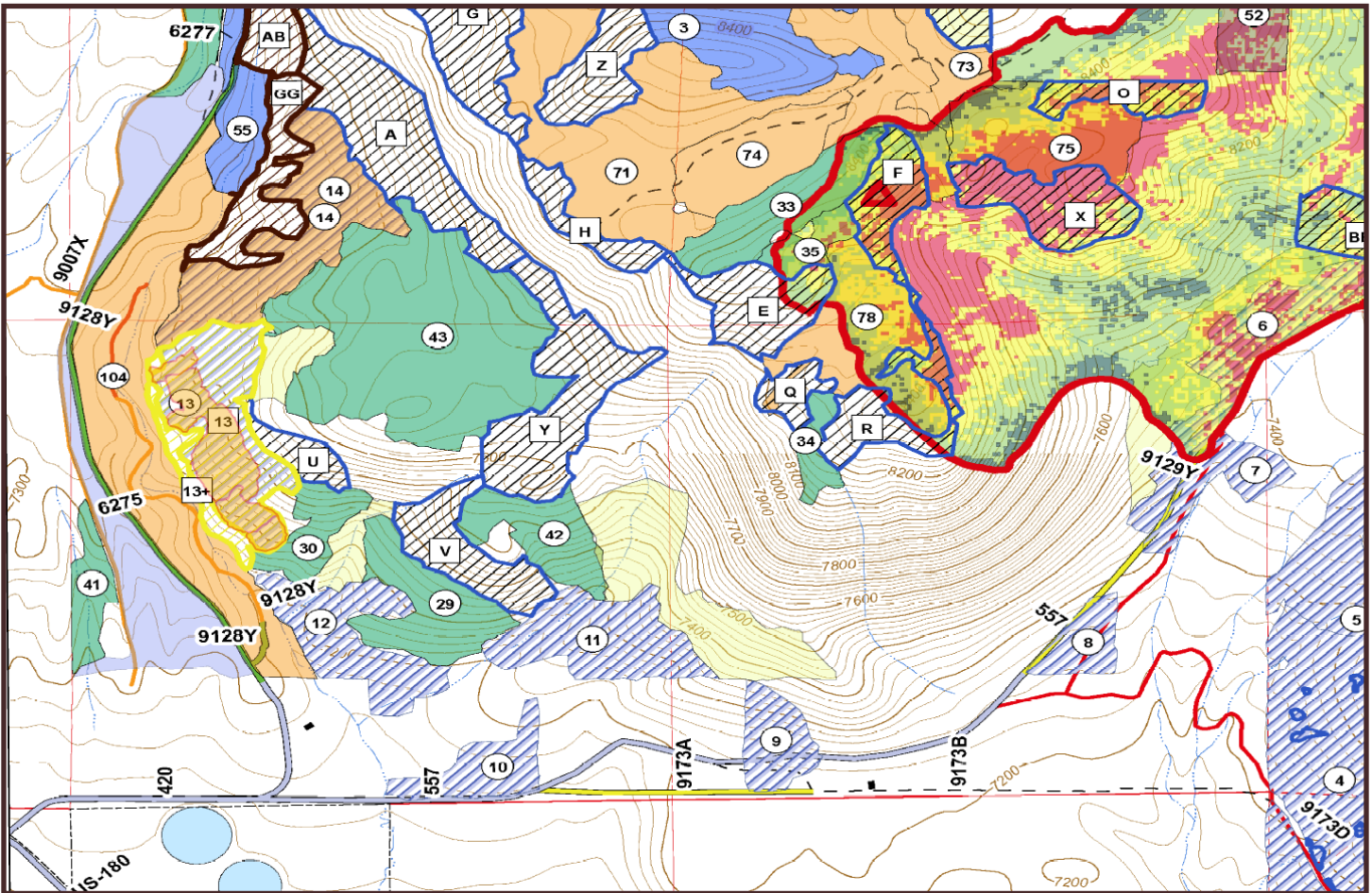
Members Served - 33

Hours Served - 2,429



The project took place on the Flagstaff Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. The Dry Lake Hills portion of the FWPP project area is north and upstream from downtown Flagstaff. The hand thin units have been identified and mapped by timber staff on the Coconino National Forest. These hand thin areas are selected due to steep and rough terrain, and because of their strategic location; these hand thin areas will help connect and make more continuous the current mechanical thinning operations occurring in the area.

AZCC has deployed young adult crews and one veterans crew to this project. Together the crews have completed 20 acres of thinning and fuels reduction. Crews started work on the southern boundary of unit 13 and have worked north west through the unit. After members felled trees they bucked and piled the slash according to prescription.



"I am prior military and I know what National Service is. I am happy to have helped the community and this was a good stepping stone to be able to actually do national service in wildland fire. At AZCC I received all fire certifications, got a solid experience and received a job offer with the Black Mesa Hotshots"

~Robert Jolles, VFC Crew 131



Plan Moving Forward:

AZCC will continue to deploy young adult crews in the winter and spring session to complete the remaining 51 acres. Crews will be trained in forest management careers, obtain job skills training and receive education in fire ecology and fire regimes. By doing so, this will provide networking opportunities with forest management professionals across multiple agencies including the United States Forest Service and the City of Flagstaff Fire Department.

AZCC will coordinate with the City of Flagstaff and FWPP to organize and conduct 2 public outreach events led by AZCC volunteers.

AZCC will continue in its mission of providing opportunities and on the job training for our members to foster the next generation of land stewards.



Arizona Conservation Corps
is a program of Conservation Legacy