



Echoes of Excellence

Ellen Parish is the President of the [Diablo Trust](#), a nonprofit in northern Arizona that provides a forum for active community participation in collaborative land stewardship (see the [harmonic highlights](#) article below for more information on the Diablo Trust.)

Ellen grew up near Porterville, California in a family that ranched and worked in the animal health industry. She moved to Arizona to go to school at NAU and, like so many of us do, fell in love with northern Arizona. Ellen's strong connection to conservation was enhanced through studies in biology and physiology. While at NAU she fell in love with the ceramics department, and to this day makes ceramics as a creative outlet during our winter months.

In the early 2000s Ellen was hired as a technician for Western Ecosystem Technologies and became acquainted with the Flying M Ranch. She valued the beef products the ranch sold and wanted to find a way to connect the Flagstaff community to their local ranchers. She soon started selling Flying M beef at the local farmers market and to local restaurants.

Ellen then had the opportunity for a leadership role as a Diablo Trust Board Member and has served as the president for the last three years. She is honored to be leading the group as they reach three decades of collaborative land stewardship in northern Arizona. Ellen shared, "We are celebrating an amazing history of the Diablo Trust, and continue to help the public understand what ranching is about and how we care for the land. The ranching community knows sustainable open land is vital in northern Arizona, and our goal is connecting with the local community to steward and manage the land."

"The people I work with are incredible and often times our most meaningful relationships have been forged in the tough times and this has been a huge gift for me!" expressed Ellen. "I love this area, the land, the varied ecosystem, the community, the ranching

families who have lived here for generations, and the agency folks who dedicate their careers to this beautiful place.”

Photo: Ellen Parish, Diablo Trust President

Collaborative Beats Partnership Spotlight

None of Us Can do This Alone

The [National Forest Foundation](#) (NFF) is a Congressionally chartered organization established in 1992 that works across the United States and on nearly all National Forests in Arizona and New Mexico. The NFF has grown tremendously over the past 30 years expanding their capacity to support forest restoration with their Southwest region staff growing from just three employees five years ago to 15 today.



Implementation is now the NFF’s focus and their goal to support the Coconino National Forest is coming to fruition through tremendous partnerships that have created momentum for forest restoration across northern Arizona. Sasha Stortz, Southwest Region Director shared, “None of us can do this alone, and working with committed partners and a committed National Forest has really made all these projects satisfying as we navigate implementation.”

One example is the United States Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI) stewardship project on the Flagstaff Ranger District. The REPI project is part of a comprehensive approach to watershed protection including the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project, and was identified as a priority by the Four Forest Restoration Initiative.

Implementation not only means more resilient forests and water supplies, but also protection of the naval observatory and an opportunity to partner with the Department of Defense to protect site infrastructure from future wildfire and smoke impacts. The NFF brought together funding and resources from the Department of Defense, Coconino County, the City of Flagstaff, and the Coconino National Forest with the first unit being treated by Miller Timber using a Ponsse harvesting system this past fall.

“The REPI project is one of our most significant accomplishments, and covers 4,000 acres, - our largest forestry project in the Southwest Region. It is possible due to the amazing team of Flagstaff Ranger District employees who oversee the project and work hand-in-hand with the NFF,” said Stortz. “The shared benefits, funding, and innovation generates significant and strategic impacts in forest restoration, and it is great to get work done on

the ground, so we can all see and experience resilient forests.”

Photo: A feller Ponsse operating in the REPI stewardship project on the Flagstaff Ranger District.

Harmonic Highlights

A Showcase of Successes With Our Partners

An Unlikely Alliance

The Diablo Trust, a non-profit, was founded 30 years ago by two northern Arizona family ranches when the Bar T Bar and the Flying M ranches sought an innovative approach to respond to public concerns about the impacts of cattle grazing on public land. Combined, the two ranches cover 426,000 acres of ranchlands including private, State, and Federal lands.



Through collaborative stewardship, active research, and public engagement the Diablo Trust strives to protect open space, wildlife habitat, and local food on working lands in northern Arizona. Along with a diverse team of long-standing partners, they have restored over 100,000 acres of grasslands, thousands of acres of wildlife habitat, and facilitated research opportunities to promote the continued health of ranchlands and wildlife habitat across the western United States.

Ellen Parish, Diablo Trust President shares, “Our organization builds bridges in our community. We provide opportunities for people to meet and understand we all have the same goals and we are all part of the ecosystem. The Diablo Trust fosters meaningful and trusted relationships in an effort to keep our lands open, profitable, healthy, and accessible to people and wildlife. We can only be successful if we are working together toward the same goal.”

The Diablo Trust is currently working with agency partners and the community around sustainable recreation. Heavy use by off highway vehicles has become a big focus for the group and connects to their goals to continue to sustain open space, wildlife habitat, watershed, clean air, and healthy food. The organization is solution based and knows people cannot just talk in an echo-chamber; it is important to be comfortable in an uncomfortable situation and talk about the issues and get realistic about solutions.

Continued success for the organization depends on community involvement, partnerships, education opportunities, and volunteers. The Diablo Trust invites other partners and members of community to engage with them thought the year, whether at the annual meeting in February, or their August campout. Interested? - check out the [Diablo Trust](#), enjoy the ranches, meet amazing people, and eat great food.



Water, We Can't Live Without It!

The [Friends of the Verde River](#) (Friends) is a nonprofit group that facilitates regional river and watershed collaboration, informs statewide policy with an emphasis on the local perspective, and implements on-the-ground projects. Over the past decade, the organization has experienced tremendous growth focusing on conservation in the Verde River Watershed.

The Verde River watershed includes Arizona's only two Wild and Scenic Rivers; the lower Verde River and Fossil Creek. The watershed extends from its highest point in the San Francisco Peaks at 12,637 ft. (Humphrey's Peak) to its lowest point at the confluence of the Verde River with the Salt River at 1,323 ft. The Verde River is also one of Arizona's last free-flowing rivers, and is home to beaver, river otters, native fish, great blue heron, gray fox, bobcat, javelina, bald eagles, native reptiles and amphibians, and is a critical flyway for migratory birds.

The Friends have restored riparian vegetation throughout Fossil Creek for the past five years as part of the Fossil Creek Invasive Plant Management partnering with Wild AZ crews to remove invasive plant species and complete an inventory along the entire creek. Over the years they have treated 12,000 acres removing invasive species like Himalayan black berry, giant reed, tamarisk, tree of heaven, Siberian elm, and Russian olive.

The organization just received their third grant from the National Forest Foundation and along with funding from the Coconino National Forest will continue to tackle regrowth of many invasive species. They also work with private landowners because invasive species grow beyond ownership or legal boundaries. And all of these partnerships are essential to their coalition's success.

As Hudson Keffer, Friends ecologist shared, "Supporting a sustainable ecosystem in Fossil Creek is an amazing opportunity to make a positive difference in a valuable northern Arizona waterway. One of our special efforts has been to remove Himalayan black berry from the Fossil Springs Botanical area. We are excited to continue to work closely with the Coconino National Forest and plan to establish plots to measure treatment success."

If you want to learn more about the Friends endeavors check out the most recent [blog](#) from their crew in Lower Fossil Creek.

Honored

The [Elden Pueblo Heritage Site](#) is a cooperative endeavor between the Coconino National Forest, Arizona Natural History Association, and the Arizona Archaeological Society to provide educational opportunities in archaeology at Elden Pueblo. Their archaeological programs provide hands-on experience in mapping, excavating, and artifact analysis for participants to



learn about and become involved in the science of archaeology. Through these personal experiences, participants learn about archaeological concepts, values, laws, and practices.

Lisa Deem, Elden Pueblo Heritage Site Program Manager shared, "When visitors and participants learn about human history and culture you can see the lightbulb of understanding go on when they understand the history of Elden Pueblo. Stewardship values are cultivated, and people walk away with a sense of ownership, understanding, and respect for these special places."

Elden Pueblo is an ancient 60-80 room pueblo of the prehistoric Sinagua culture and a Hopi ancestral site, that was inhabited from about A.D. 1070 to 1275. The site is unique because it makes archaeology and the study of ancient northern Arizona peoples accessible to the public. For almost 50 years archaeologists have supervised members of the public in excavations, archaeological research techniques, and highlighted the Pueblo's story.

The project has hosted a variety of explorations over the years through opportunities to honor the roots and heritage of the Pueblo culture. These explorations have created partnerships that support the project and are critical for its success. Next year they will even have a site host which is a volunteer position that will support their public outreach and education goals.

"The Coconino National Forest is among those areas having the highest density of archeological sites in the country, and in recent years, we have had a comparatively low rate of vandalism to these sites. This is partly because our community is being brought into the stewardship of these cultural resources. People have an experience to draw on, and this understanding has become multigenerational with parents bringing their children back to learn about the Pueblo," Deem shared.

There are a variety of public and school programs, and the location (one mile north of the Flagstaff Mall on U.S. Highway 89) is open to the public. If you are interested, please join the project in their quest to learn about the past at this [link](#).

Photo: Local students listening to a presentation in the Elden Pueblo community room.



Wow...more than three million visitors a year!

Sedona Red Rock Country is a place unlike anywhere else in the world and attracts more than three million visitors annually. These visitors enjoy an extensive system of 400+ miles of trails providing them with access to incredible natural wonders. Federal appropriations cover approximately 8% of the cost to maintain these trails, and the remaining 92% depends on the support of our

partners.

The [Sedona Red Rock Trail Fund](#) is one such partner whose priority is to fill this funding gap so we can all continue to have access to these natural wonders. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Sedona Red Rock Trail Fund for their continued support and dedication to the Red Rock Ranger District. You help us steward the whole and we recognize it takes a tremendous amount of work and time to fund and maintain a professional trail crew to tackle this work. Have a great season everyone!

Photo: This season the Red Rock Trail Crew includes 21 members, which is the largest trail crew in the Southwest Region. Crew members include; top left to right, Scott Gailus, Troy Philbrook, Andy Barrett, Matthew Garcia, Lynae Bresser, Shila Simpson, Rebekah Sutherland, Seth Bennett, Nathan Lott, Marina Pope, Ariana Gutierrez, Henry Vaughan, Kevin Kuhl. Bottom left to right; Ryan Kingston, Frae Kelly, Jessica Schultz, Holly Cliché, Lyle Kruse, Sasha Godsil, Elizabeth Sutherland, Samantha Braun, Emma Gibson, Erin Baggs.

Heart to Heart

A message from your partnership coordinator

Happy New Year and thank you for an amazing start to 2025! As I draft this message I reflect on the past two years and the amazing work we have accomplished together during this time. This reflection is also timely as I am leaving the Coconino and will be serving as a public affairs specialist for the Alaska Regional Office. My family and I will be staying in northern Arizona so I have no doubt our paths will cross again.

There is a very quick turn-around time with my start date January 13th...I know, I know, that is next week! EEK!! I have some projects that will be handed off to the amazing staff on the Coconino, and a few things that may be on hold while the forest determines the future of the partnership coordinator position. Please know the forest is committed to our partners and is grateful for your amazing support and continued dedication to stewarding the whole. As I leave here a quote I hope you find inspiring.

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

— *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

With gratitude, Katherine

Beats of Innovation

Grant writing support

The [Arizona Economic Resource Center](#) engages eligible Arizona cities, towns, counties, Tribal communities, and nonprofits to win and implement competitive federal, state, municipal, or foundation grants.

[Creative Flagstaff | Where Arts, Science & Culture Converge](#) often has free comprehensive workshops on grant writing tailored for artists, creatives, and nonprofit organizations. Check out their website for future opportunities to enhance your grant writing skills and connect with the local arts and nonprofit community.

The Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations accelerates the market adoption of clean energy technologies and fills a critical innovation gap on the path to clean electricity and net-zero emissions. Their [exchange](#) hosts a list of funding sources.

[Updated Rural Development Resource Guide](#). Together, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development [released a joint planning resource guide](#), designed to help eliminate barriers and encourage collaboration among stakeholders. The guide includes four focus areas: Planning and Technical Assistance, Infrastructure and High-speed Internet Expansion, Entrepreneurship, and Business Assistance Workforce Development and Livability.

Economic EKG

Below is a clearing house of a variety of funding opportunities and resources across many agencies and organizations.

January 13, 2025 [USDA Forest Service Wood Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program](#)

January 13, 2025 The [Community Forest Program](#) Request for Applications is now available on [Grants.gov](#) (Opportunity Number: [USDA-FS-2025-CFP](#)). For questions about the Community Forest Program RFA, please reach out to Candice Washington (candice.washington@usda.gov).

January 15' 2025 [Garden Club of America Fellowship in Urban Forestry](#)

January 30, 2025 [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program](#)

January 31' 2025 [GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant](#)

February 1, 2025 [virtual fence funding](#)

February 7, 2025 National Forest Foundation [Matching Awards Program](#), their flagship competitive grant program, that focuses on community engagement and completion of stewardship activities. Its goal is to create lasting change that provides all communities, particularly underserved ones, with opportunities to benefit from activities on National Forest System lands. Eligible organizations include nonprofits, Tribal governments and organizations, and

For more information on current Forest Service funding opportunities, click [here](#).

First Nations Development Institute Capacity Support Grants support capacity building to engage in Forest Service IRA and BIL funding opportunities and programs. Eligible Tribes and Native-led organizations can apply for up to \$25,000 in capacity support funding [Learn more](#).

Volunteer Opportunities

Look for more opportunities headed your way in 2025.

Conservation Education

Natural Inquirer: Smokey Bear Reader is now available and offers fire prevention materials. Order free copies here: [Meet Smokey Bear's Team - Vol. 1 No. 12 - Natural Inquirer](#). The Natural Inquirer [blog](#) has started is open for submissions.

Rhythmic Reflections

"We spend January 1st walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives, not looking for flaws, but for potential."

-Ellen Goodman

universities. Application deadlines include Feb. 7, 2025 for round 1, and July 2025 (specific date TBD) for round 2.

February 28, 2025 8:59 pm PST [Community Wildfire Defense Grants](#) assist at-risk communities, including Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, with planning for and mitigating wildfire risks. Applicants are encouraged to develop proposals in consultation with state or Forest Service regional cooperative fire contacts listed in the Notices of Funding Opportunity. These grants help communities and Tribes to plan for and reduce wildfire risk. While this opportunity does not cover NFS lands it could be used on Tribal, private, or state lands.

April 4, 2025 The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful Challenge Grant [Request for Proposals is now available!](#) This request consolidates funding from multiple federal agencies and the private sector to enable applicants to conceive and develop large-scale, locally led projects to address shared priorities spanning public, Tribal, and private lands. A recording of the applicant webinar can be found [here](#).

April 22, 2025 [The Innovative Finance for National Forests grant program](#) supports the development and implementation of innovative finance models that leverage private and public capital other than USDA Forest Service appropriations to enhance the resilience of the National Forest System and deliver commensurate returns to stakeholders.

May 24, 2029 National Park Service Grant Program: [Creating Opportunities for Relevant Experience Wildland Fire Training Crews Purpose](#). Crews are comprised of women, veterans, or youth. The program offers basic training, knowledge and experience to inspire interest in future careers for participants while supporting the

NPS wildland fire mission. Crews will work with professional NPS fire staff and gain on-the-job skills and experience. Eligible Applicants: Non-profit applicants who are Section 501(c)(3) compliant, state governments, and federally recognized Tribal governments.

Pulse check

Thank you for joining us for the Winter 2024 Pulse on Partnerships Newsletter! We look forward to continued success with our partners and communities. Please fill out this [form](#) if you have partnership related ideas for our newsletter.

Pulse on Partnerships Newsletter Winter 2024



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