



## Using Volunteers to Close Roads in the Coconino National Forest

- 2006-present
- Coconino National Forest, Mogollon Rim Ranger District
- Partner: Grand Canyon Wildlands Council

### Project description

*In 2006, 2007, and 2008, with the aid of volunteers from the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council, the Mogollon Rim Ranger District closed approximately 22.9 miles of forest roads by using “soft-closure” techniques to disguise road entrances.*

The work was accomplished by hand with no mechanized equipment. To disguise road entrances, the volunteers spread slash, needles, and logs; transplanted grass-plants; and “dead-planted” small trees to make it appear that trees grew in the old road bed. These soft-closure techniques are easy to teach and implement with volunteers. Costly cultural resource clearance is not needed prior to work being completed because ground disturbance is limited.

To support the volunteer effort, the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council secured grants from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust and the National Forest Foundation that included funding for staff, travel, tools, food and refreshments.

### Benefits

By using soft-closure techniques and volunteers, the Forest can leverage cost savings. By leveraging the Wildlands Council’s strong volunteer network, its environmental education emphasis, and its ability to secure grants from funding sources not available to government agencies, the Forest is able to expand efforts to restore Forest ecosystems.

This partnership helps the Wildlands Council achieve its goals to restore natural processes and key species in the Grand Canyon ecoregion. “But there’s a benefit for the volunteers, too,” says Emily Omana, the Council’s Conservation Biologist. “People really want to give back, and we provide a way for them to do that. And we provide a safe way for folks to get out into some beautiful country. We meet the volunteers and caravan with them to worksites. In the field we provide a kitchen, food, water, restrooms, and safety instructions.”



Before road closure, June 2006.  
Photo courtesy Grand Canyon Wildlands Council.



After road closure, June 2007. “Dead-plantings” have over-wintered and there is no use of the roadbed by motorized vehicles.  
Photo courtesy Grand Canyon Wildlands Council.

## Keys to success

“Having common goals for watershed recovery was a key ingredient in developing the partnership between the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council and the Mogollon Rim Ranger District,” says Dick Fleishman, Soil and Water Specialist with the Forest. “We began a strong working relationship during a NEPA process for watershed recovery within the East Clear Creek watershed, and built upon to this to implement the road closures.”

## Type of agreement

Formal Sponsored Volunteer Agreement (Forest Service form FS-1800-8)

## Project costs and contributions

Mogollon Rim Ranger District, Coconino National Forest:

- Provided tailgate safety sessions and other training as needed.
- Located road segments to close.
- Provided project oversight, including preparation of the sponsored volunteer agreement and job hazard analysis.

Grand Canyon Wildlands Council:

- Recruited 281 volunteers for a total of 1,431 volunteer hours.
- Secured grants to pay for support materials (tools, food, refreshments) and help pay for support staff.

## Estimated savings

At an average of \$10/hour, the total in-kind volunteer hours on road closures was over \$14,000 dollars, or about \$659/mile. In the past, the cost used in estimating mechanized road closures on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District was \$500-\$1,000 per mile, however, with increased fuel and equipment cost, this is now more realistically \$1,000-\$2,000 per mile. This cost is just to accomplish the work and does not include additional cultural resource clearance needs for mechanized site work. *Therefore, the cost to complete road closures using volunteers is about half of current mechanized road closure techniques.*

## More information

Dick Fleishman, Soil and Water Specialist  
R3, Coconino National Forest  
Tel: (928) 214-2435 or (928) 477-5055  
[dfleishman@fs.fed.us](mailto:dfleishman@fs.fed.us)

Emily Omana, Conservation Biologist  
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council  
Tel: (928) 556-9306  
[emily@www.grandcanyonwildlands.org](mailto:emily@www.grandcanyonwildlands.org)  
<http://www.grandcanyonwildlands.org>

Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust  
[http://www.nmpct.org/protecting\\_animals.php](http://www.nmpct.org/protecting_animals.php)

The Trust provides funding to Arizona conservation nonprofits for protecting animals and nature. The Trust supports organizations dedicated to planning and collaborative conservation (and prevention), and/or habitat and species protection, and environmental education and public awareness.

National Forest Foundation  
<http://www.nationalforests.org/>

Engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the National Forest System.

*Using Volunteers to Close Roads on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest – A partnership between the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council and the US Forest Service* (Link: <http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/roads/documents/UsingVolunteersToCloseRoadsCoconinoNF.pdf>)

Find this story and more at the Partnership Resource Center website: <http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/roads/success-stories.php>

This story produced by the FS Grant Strategists Enterprise Unit for the San Dimas Technology & Development Center

**FS Grant Strategists** **SDTDC** **TD**

Elizabeth Carroll 530-642-5106 [ecarroll@fs.fed.us](mailto:ecarroll@fs.fed.us) Carlos Garcia 909-599-1267 [carlosgarcia@fs.fed.us](mailto:carlosgarcia@fs.fed.us)