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Kaibab National Forest Releases Draft Forest Management Plan

WILLIAMS, Ariz. – The Kaibab National Forest has released its draft land and resources management plan and accompanying draft environmental impact statement (EIS), which are available on the Kaibab National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/kaibab/plan_revision.

The plan guides the Kaibab National Forest in fulfilling its stewardship responsibilities to best meet the needs of the American people, now and for future generations. It provides direction in the form of desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability; incorporates the best available science; and provides a framework for adaptive management.

The Notice of Availability, which is expected to appear in tomorrow's Federal Register, initiates a 90-day public comment period. Comments on the draft plan and draft EIS should address the specific content of the plan and the adequacy of the analysis of the alternatives discussed. This will allow the Kaibab National Forest to respond to the comments and address any relevant needs before finalizing the plan and EIS.

The draft plan lays the foundation for 1) restoring the structure, function, and composition of fire adapted ecosystems, 2) protecting and regenerating aspen, 3) protecting and restoring natural waters, and 4) restoring grasslands by reducing tree encroachment.

The draft plan was developed collaboratively over a three-year period. Alternatives have been developed to address three potential areas of controversy: the adequacy of the proposed plan to protect existing and provide for future old growth forest conditions; the potential for regular mechanical tree cutting to have long-term adverse effects to wildlife, soils, and other resources; and the amount of recommended wilderness.

Two public meetings have been scheduled to provide information and accept comments about the draft plan. The first will be May 7 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Fredonia Middle School in Fredonia, Ariz. The second will be May 16 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Williams Ranger District office in Williams, Ariz.

Documents and background information are available on the Kaibab National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/kaibab/plan_revision. Comments may be submitted to comments-southwestern-kaibab@fs.fed.us. For additional information, please contact Ariel Leonard, Kaibab National Forest planner, (928) 635-8283, aleonard@fs.fed.us.

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