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News Release

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Kaibab National Forest partners with Northern Arizona University to promote the shared stewardship and management of wilderness

Williams, Ariz., Nov. 2, 2018—For Immediate Release. As Northern Arizona University's fall 2018 semester quickly advances toward winter, employees with the Kaibab National Forest are celebrating another year of successful long-term partnering with the school to promote the shared value of wilderness preservation.

Over many years, the Kaibab National Forest has teamed with Dr. Martha Lee, a professor in NAU's School of Forestry, with the goal of providing educational opportunities for students interested in the management of wilderness areas.

Besides classroom experience, students have assisted with real-world wilderness projects alongside public land managers and other community leaders from the Forest Service, National Park Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Coconino County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, and other agencies and organizations.

"A little before 2000, I was co-teaching the wilderness management class with another faculty member. It was straight lecture, which just didn't seem to fit," Lee said. "So, I partnered with the Coconino National Forest to take the students out of the classroom. That was the beginning of this amazing partnership with the Forest Service."

According to the class description, FOR 445, or Wilderness Management, teaches the philosophical, historical, legal, ecological, social and cultural aspects of lands managed under the Wilderness Act. Passed in 1964, the Wilderness Act was created to protect pockets of wild land, untouched by human interaction, and to preserve those areas for future generations.

Since then, the National Wilderness Preservation System has grown to more than 110 million acres, with Arizona possessing the second largest amount of wilderness units in the United States. Fortunately for Lee's students, many of these rare, wild places are located close to the university, and local land managers have been eager to promote shared stewardship efforts.

"During our meetings over summer, I tell managers that I want the projects to be meaningful for the students, as well as relevant and useful for the agency," said Lee. "I want them to get to know these land managers and learn about what they do."

Throughout this semester, Lee's students have had the opportunity to work side-by-side on meaningful projects with several land managers. On the Kaibab National Forest, the work has focused on the interpretation, management and stabilization of the historic Kendrick Mountain Lookout Cabin in the Kendrick Mountain Wilderness, a 6,660-acre area that encompasses Kendrick Peak, one of the highest peaks in the San Francisco volcanic field. On top of Kendrick Mountain is a fire lookout tower and cabin, which have been important for many decades in the detection of wildland fires. The project has even spurred a Facebook page chronicling the students' work on the 107-year-old structure.

"Participating in classes like Dr. Lee's wilderness class gives Forest Service employees an opportunity to connect with students on a very personal level," said Neil Weintraub, Kaibab National Forest archaeologist. "The students not only have a chance to participate in wilderness stewardship, but they also get firsthand experience about real life challenges and complexities facing Forest Service wilderness managers."

Along with the chance to apply classroom learning to real-world scenarios, students also get to work closely and network with specialists from various local agencies. This has led to job opportunities for some, including Dutch Maatman, a recreation specialist on the Kaibab National Forest.

"Had I not taken Dr. Lee's class in 2012, I wouldn't be where I am today. In many ways, that opportunity helped shape and focus what my desires were for my career in conservation," said Maatman. "I want students to understand that these lands have intrinsic value, and we have an obligation to protect it for generations to come."

In just a few short weeks, Lee will be retiring from her position at NAU. While the future of the class may be unsure, the knowledge and connections students have made will stand, along with the important management work they have completed in the field.

"I'm going to be sad to leave this class. This is one of the most rewarding classes I've ever taught because of these amazing partnerships," Lee said. "I hope I have a bunch of students out there who have a sense of caring about wilderness, appreciate how it is managed differently, and understand why it needs to be protected."

For more information on the Kendrick Mountain cabin project, visit www.facebook.com/KendrickCabin/.

Kaibab National Forest information is available through the following sources:

- Kaibab National Forest Website: www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/KaibabNF
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/KaibabNF
- Flickr: <http://bit.ly/KaibabNFPhotos>

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Students from Dr. Lee's fall 2017 Wilderness Management class assisted Kaibab National Forest employees after a tree fell on the roof of Kendrick Mountain Cabin. Credit Kaibab National Forest.

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Students from Dr. Lee's fall 2017 Wilderness Management class adding support beams to stabilize the damaged roof at Kendrick Mountain Cabin. Credit Kaibab National Forest.