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News Release

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Kaibab National Forest seeks public comment on proposed Kaibab Plateau Ecological Restoration Project Environmental Assessment

FREDONIA, Ariz., Oct. 10, 2019 -- The Kaibab Plateau Ecological Restoration Project Environmental Assessment (EA) is available for public review and comment. The North Kaibab Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest is proposing the project to reduce the threat of uncharacteristic, high-intensity wildfire and to restore the structure, species composition, and function of ecosystems within the project area.

The project is designed to increase resiliency and the overall health of vegetation and watersheds as well as restore low-intensity fire to the fire adapted ecosystems of the area. This landscape scale restoration project includes a combination of prescribed fire and non-commercial, mechanical vegetation treatments on approximately 518,000 acres of the North Kaibab Ranger District.

The condition and structure of the project area's forests, woodlands, shrublands and grasslands have changed dramatically from natural conditions, in large part because fire has been excluded due to decades of successful fire suppression. Most of the Kaibab National Forest's vegetation is adapted to recurring wildfires, and fire plays a vital role in maintaining ecosystem health. Today, the project area contains uncharacteristically dense forests with many more young trees than were present historically, and factors such as climate change and regional drought are making them potentially more vulnerable to high-intensity wildfires.

Prescribed fire treatments would include broadcast and pile burning to reduce fuel levels and tree densities, control conifer regeneration, and promote understory plant vigor. Mechanical treatments would include pruning ladder fuels, mastication, chipping and thinning to remove smaller diameter trees with the goal of protecting larger or older trees by removing understory and ladder fuels.

"This is the second official comment period for the project," said North Kaibab District Ranger Randall Walker. "We have decided to provide this additional comment period due to the interest in the project





and the changes we made to address public concerns received from the initial scoping period."

The Kaibab National Forest encourages public review and is seeking comment or feedback on the Kaibab Plateau Ecological Restoration Project EA, during the required 30-day comment period, in accordance with Forest Service's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures. The required legal notice for comment was published today (Thursday, October 10, 2019) in the Arizona Daily Sun (Flagstaff, Arizona), which is the official newspaper of record for the Kaibab National Forest. Thus, specific, written comments should be postmarked or sent by November 12, 2019.

Comments must be in writing and may be delivered electronically, in person, by mail or facsimile. Electronic comments, including attachments, may be emailed to comments-southwestern-kaibab-north-kaibab@usda.gov. Please include "Kaibab Plateau Ecological Restoration Project" in the subject line. Comments may be submitted electronically in Word (.doc or .docx), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), Adobe portable document formats (PDF), or HyperText Markup Language (.html). Submit comments via hand delivery (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to noon, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays) or mail to: U.S. Forest Service, North Kaibab Ranger District, Attn: David Vincelette / NEPA Planner, 430 South Main Street, PO Box 248, Fredonia, AZ 86022. Comments may be faxed to 928-643-8105.

For detailed project information, including the full proposed action document, please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54226>

A detailed Kaibab Plateau Ecological Restoration Project area map is included on the next page.

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 (photos): www.flickr.com/photos/kaibabnationalforest/albums

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