

Mt. Lemmon Stakeholders Meeting
April 1-2, 2005
Executive Summary

Motivated by the Aspen Fire and the resulting devastation to the forests on Mt Lemmon, the Village of Summerhaven and surrounding areas in June 2003, a group of community leaders initiated a broad-based effort to stimulate collaborative natural resource management on Mt. Lemmon and Upper Sabino Watershed region. The meeting of multiple entities, referred to here as stakeholders, involved with the natural and community resources on Mt Lemmon was organized. The kick-off event, a multi-stakeholders workshop entitled “Collaboratively Managing Natural Resources: Deciding Mt. Lemmon’s Future,” was held in Tucson on April 1-2, 2005 to explore stakeholder interests, the potential for collaboration, and to begin planning for the future. The meeting was organized by a steering committee led by Trees for Mt. Lemmon, a community-based special project of the Coronado Resource and Conservation Development Area, a 501 © 3 non profit corporation. The Steering Committee was made up of representatives from Trees for Mt Lemmon, the US Forest Service, University of Arizona, the U of A Cooperative Extension Service, and the Audubon Society.

Mt Lemmon is part of the Santa Catalina Mountains, a unique sky island that includes the Upper Sabino Watershed, ponderosa pine with genetics distinct from other areas, habitat for a wide variety of plants and wildlife, the village of Summerhaven with its businesses and surrounding areas of homes for full and part time residents, and attractions for southern Arizonans to enjoy the high cool forest. In addition to the huge structural losses incurred during the Aspen Fire, significant damage occurred to the watershed and forest. Limited water resources have always been a issue on Mt Lemmon. Forest management has been debated for years. Both issues have, at times, divided individuals and entities responsible for them. The group that initiated this meeting sought to bring organizations and entities responsible for all the natural and community resources together to discuss how to build collaborative relationships to create a future for Mt Lemmon based on common visions and goals.

The professionally facilitated meeting was convened on Friday evening, April 1, and all day Saturday, April 2, 2005, at the City of Tucson’s Ward 6 Office. On Friday evening, approximately 65 people from the Mt Lemmon community were present when two members from the Forest

Service kicked off the meeting: Larry Raley, Santa Catalina District Ranger, described fire mitigation work, the Forest Plan Revision, and other plans in the Coronado National Forest, while Ignacio Peralta, of the Carson N.F., described the innovative Collaborative Forest Restoration Program in New Mexico. The majority of the meeting was dedicated to participant input, discussion and planning. Issues of concern included, education of the public regarding fire danger, when is it appropriate to close the forest to the public because of fire danger, thinning a perimeter around the village of Summerhaven. The major concern expressed by the community dealt with preventing another catastrophic fire from affecting their properties and the community.

On Saturday, about 40 people, representing an array of constituencies and perspectives, brought forth their views about future management of natural and community resources on Mt. Lemmon. The dominant themes were:

- Healthy forests and watersheds through sustainable and balanced forest management, planning, collaboration and stewardship.
- A balance between natural systems and community needs through a process of collaborative and integrated management of the whole landscape.
- A sustainable community and healthy economy that provides for residential, commercial and recreational uses, including the commercial use of forest products.
- A spirited sense of collaboration, partnership, cohesion and volunteerism.

Participants identified a range of entities that would have to work together to achieve the desired future of Mt. Lemmon. While the Coronado National Forest is responsible for activity on public lands, other activities would be under the purview of the community organizations of Mt. Lemmon, including Trees for Mt. Lemmon, the Mt. Lemmon Fire District and the Mt. Lemmon Water District. Pima County, the Arizona State Land Department, the University of Arizona, and organized conservation groups were also identified as critical participants in a collaborative process for Mt. Lemmon.

The participants identified principles to guide the collaborative effort. The primary principle is that the group be a new entity, not an outgrowth of existing organizations. All entities that were invited to the April meeting are to be included and further brainstorming of other participants will take place at the first meeting of the group that is to be created. Participants indicated a preference for

open membership with multiple levels and options for participation and varied methods of outreach to engage stakeholders not yet involved. The new alliance would serve as the umbrella organization for collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, provide a forum for education and communication, and facilitate joint planning and implementation of agreed-upon projects. The new group could also be the primary public interface with the Coronado National Forest, which is preparing to launch its Forest Plan Revision process later this year.

Finally, the participants agreed to a series of immediate next steps, including expanding and distributing a new stakeholder list to participants, to convene a second meeting the week of April 25, and to distribute the final report of the stakeholder meeting to all of the meeting participants and the community at large through an Executive Summary with the full notes being available on the Trees for Mt Lemmon website treesformtlemmon.org. The participants also agreed to learn from other collaborative groups working on similar issues elsewhere in Arizona, to review the current Coronado National Forest Plan, and to meet with Coronado National Forest planning staff to discuss options for collaboration with the Mt. Lemmon stakeholders in the Plan Revision process.