



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Coconino  
National Forest,  
Supervisor's Office

1824 S. Thompson Street  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001-2529  
Phone: (928) 527-3600  
Fax: (928) 527-3620

File Code: 2500/2670

Date: January 3, 2007

Dr. Laura Foster Huenneke  
Dean, College of Engineering and Natural Sciences  
Northern Arizona University  
Box 5621  
Flagstaff, AZ 86012-5621

Dear Dr. Huenneke:

On behalf of the Coconino National Forest, I am pleased to write this letter of support for the establishment of a National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) "core wildland site" in the Beaver Creek Watershed of the Coconino National Forest. Specifically, I believe this research would enable us to better understand the impacts that land use, climate change and invasive species are having on ecosystems. The information and collaboration that result from NEON research will assist our planning efforts on the Forest, provide education and outreach opportunities for schools and the general public and potentially stimulate the local economy.

The Beaver Creek Watershed is an ideal location for a future NEON research facility for many reasons. For example, it would build upon previous research conducted by the Forest Service, the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the Arizona Game and Fish Department in the Beaver Creek Experimental Watershed. This 112,535 hectare study site and preserve was originally established in conjunction with the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Man and the Biosphere Program. The research conducted in this watershed studied the effects of vegetation manipulations upon the watershed's hydrology and wildlife. This study has produced careful inventories of vegetation cover, climate and hydrology that would provide useful baseline data for future NEON research.

The timing of this proposal is particularly fortuitous. Management plans are currently being developed for this area of the Coconino National Forest. These plans include proposals for restoring the fire adapted ecosystems and enhancing habitat for threatened and forest sensitive species populations such as the Mexican spotted owl and Northern goshawk. The analysis process currently underway will provide for the long-term integrity of the proposed NEON core site and investment in required facilities, minimizing the need for additional future analysis.

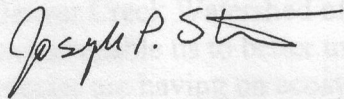
We also see many opportunities on the horizon for synergy and shared use of administrative site facilities at the Happy Jack Ranger Station. A new Ranger Station for this district is planned to be constructed near Clint's Well which will result in our Happy Jack site being available as an administrative site for NEON. The Happy Jack site will also be used as a research administrative site for the nearby Lowell Observatory/Discovery Channel telescope which is presently under construction.



Finally, we also share interest in the educational aspects of NEON. At the lower end of the Beaver Creek Watershed is the Beaver Creek Ranger Station. This facility is close to I-17 and has easy accessibility. This area is targeted for the Sinagua Circle educational project which highlights indigenous cultures of the area and their use of water. This perspective would tie in very well with NEON educational programs about our changing natural resources and management.

I appreciate your consideration of Beaver Creek Watershed and the Coconino National Forest for a NEON core wildland site and look forward to the possibility of working in conjunction with this exciting research and education endeavor. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



NORA B. RASURE  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Carl Edminster, Diane T Jacobs, Amy Whipple, Neil Cobb

The timing of this proposal is particularly significant. Management plans are currently being developed for this area of the Coconino National Forest. These plans include proposals for restoring the fire adapted ecosystems and enhancing habitat for threatened and forest sensitive species populations such as the Mexican spotted owl and Northern goshawk. The analysis process currently underway will provide for the long-term integrity of the proposed NEON core site and investment in required facilities, minimizing the need for additional future analysis.

We also see many opportunities on the horizon for synergy and shared use of administrative site facilities at the Happy Jack Ranger Station. A new Ranger Station for this district is planned to be constructed near Clint's Well which will result in our Happy Jack site being available as an administrative site for NEON. The Happy Jack site will also be used as a research administrative site for the nearby Lowell Observatory/Discovery Channel telescope which is presently under construction.