



Dec. 11, 2003

## **Senator Jon Kyl announces \$2 million allocation for NAU's Ecological Restoration Institute**

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz.— Senator Jon Kyl, R.-Ariz., is expected to announce that the Forest Service will allocate \$2 million in 2004 to Northern Arizona University's Ecological Restoration Institute during his commencement address at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12 in the J. Lawrence Walkup Skydome.

Following the address, at noon., Kyl will be honored in a tree-planting ceremony in front of the Southwest Forest Science Complex on the NAU campus and will be available for media comment.

"The work of the ERI is important if we are to reduce the threat of unnatural, catastrophic fire today and restore forests for generations of Arizonans to come," said Kyl. "Our responsibility to future generations must be at the forefront of our work. We must never let this important work be held hostage to partisan bickering."

Kyl's support for NAU, the School of Forestry and the ERI extends back to 1995 when he worked with then Secretary Bruce Babbitt to fund the first, large-scale forest restoration research project at Mount Turnbull on the Bureau of Land Management's Arizona Strip District north of the Grand Canyon.

"Senator Kyl has helped NAU build a nationally recognized program that is relevant and critical to developing solutions to the problem of forest restoration and wildfire," said NAU President John Haeger. "The ERI attracts outstanding students who will graduate with relevant work and academic experience that prepares them for the challenges of contemporary land management. Such work is the hallmark of NAU. It responds to local, state and national needs. Healthy land is the foundation upon which Arizona must build its future."

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“Senator Kyl has been the leading advocate in the Senate for ecological restoration of western wildlands,” said ERI Director and Arizona Regents’ Professor Wallace Covington. “The Senator has repeatedly emphasized that the restoration of forest health is fundamental to reversing the decline of land health and eliminating unnatural fires and bark beetle outbreaks.”

“The ecological research and community assistance enabled by federal funding gives our students many opportunities to perform work worth doing. These funds help students make a difference by working cooperatively with lands managers, the public and others concerned about the future of Arizona’s wildlands,” said Covington. “Over the past three years federal funds have helped support 62 faculty and staff, 81 undergraduates and 66 graduate students to participate in interdisciplinary work in ecological and socio-political research, community-based internships and other practical work related to forest restoration.”

Since 1995, Kyl has led Arizona’s congressional delegation in helping the ERI attract more than \$15 million to help resolve the problem of forest health and unnatural wildfire and bark beetle epidemics.

The ERI has shared funding with organizations such as Arizona Game and Fish, the Arizona Land Development, the Flagstaff Fire Department, The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership, the Coconino Rural Environmental Core and others to develop, apply, monitor and evaluate scientifically rigorous, restoration-based treatments that restore forest health and reduce the risk of wildfire.

— NAU —

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