



For Immediate Release
Thursday, June 3, 2010

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Foresters take Payson Residents and Visitors on a Walk in the Woods

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Ecologists and foresters from the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University and the Tonto National Forest are inviting Payson area residents and visitors to join them on a FREE *Walk in the Woods* from 9 a.m. to noon, Wednesday, June 30. The group will meet at the Payson Ranger Station, 1009 E. Highway 260, about half a mile east of Safeway for a brief introduction. Transportation will be provided for two short stops in the nearby forest.

In the setting of the ponderosa pine/oak forest, researchers will discuss and show the difference between today's unnatural forest structure and forest conditions before European settlement of the West in the late 1800s.

"Intense livestock grazing, federal fire suppression policies and harvesting of the older ponderosas contributed to today's unhealthy forest ecosystems," said ERI Executive Director Wally Covington. "Without frequent, low-severity fires that killed tree seedlings, the once park-like forests have become overcrowded with dense stands of small trees. They not only choke out grasses and wildflowers but also set the stage for unprecedented crown fires."

Foresters will discuss how these same policies and practices played a part in the development of dense, unhealthy forests in the Payson area and also will showcase forest treatments in the urban interface, where the homes meet the forest. ERI ecologists will reveal research findings and discuss what it will take to restore health to millions of acres of frequent-fire forest ecosystems across the American West.

For more information, contact ERI Public Education and Information Program Director Bonnie Stevens at 928-380-4349.

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