

Grand Canyon Forests Festival kicks off Saturday

By DAILY SUN STAFF

04/20/2001



From Earth Day to Arbor Day, the second annual Grand Canyon Forests Festival will showcase the diverse ecology of the Colorado Plateau with informative talks, demonstrations and music at locations all around Flagstaff.

From the debate over restoring overgrown ponderosa pine forests to the challenges of sustainable growth and land stewardship, the weeklong series beginning Saturday offers activities galore for northern Arizona residents.

This year's festival begins with an Earth Day celebration at Wheeler Park. It starts at 10:45 a.m. Saturday with a welcome by Flagstaff City Councilmember Al White, followed by five hours of events.

The festival will present a state-of-the-art hogan construction display and a unique bridge to demonstrate the viability of using small diameter trees that dominate the ponderosa pine forest.

The building of a replica of an eighth-century Chinese military bridge is a project by Northern Arizona University's Department of Construction Management at the School of Engineering.

The bridge, which consists entirely of wood less than 4 inches in diameter, is perfect for golf courses, the city's urban trail system and for use as decorative lawn structures, said Steve Mead of the NAU Department of Construction Management.

"What we're trying to do is look for innovative applications for small roundwood as part of the forest restoration effort," Mead said.

The design of the of Chinese bridge has sparked quite a bit of interest, he noted.

"Truthfully, I'm in the construction business and I've never ever seen a structure that's quite like this one.

We've got some engineers scratching their heads right now to figure out why and how it works," he said.

Another creative and useful project being displayed at Wheeler Park is a model of a hogan made of small-diameter pine. Indigenous Community Enterprises is working with

the Navajo Nation to design model homes at its headquarters in Cameron.

"We'll be handing out information about the project and talking about small-diameter construction," said Brett KenCairn, Executive Director of Indigenous Community Enterprises.

"The hogan project is one of the most exciting projects I've ever been involved with," said KenCairn, "In one activity, we are linking forest restoration, sustainable community development, and cultural preservation and enhancement."

Eventually the project will provide more than designs for hogans but include a construction unit or a how-to-build kit complete with instructions and materials for folks wanting to build their own hogan, he added.

The festival's week of events also includes a State of the Colorado Plateau speaker series from noon to 1 p.m. on Monday, April 23, at NAU's Hanley Hall featuring Gary Nabham, director of the Center for Sustainable Environments, and Tom Sisk of the Ecology and Conservation Biology Department.

On Wednesday, April 25, at the du Bois Ballroom, W. Wallace Covington, director of the Ecological Restoration Institute, will present a keynote address called "Putting the pieces together: Practicing forest ecosystem restoration."

The Flagstaff Activist Network, the Southwest Forest Alliance, the Sierra Club, the Forest Conservation Council and the National Forest Protection Alliance, will host a series of events in the Grand Canyon Forest Festival this year. In past years, the environmental groups have challenged the Fort Valley restoration project developed by the Grand Canyon Forest Partnership, said FAN executive director Roxane George.

"We see the inclusion of FAN's events in the Forest Festival and the participation in these events by Partnership members as an important step towards re-opening discussion and developing sound environmental and restoration goals for the forests surrounding Flagstaff," George said.

For more information about Forest Festival events, call the Ecological Restoration Institute at 523-9011 or check out their website at www.eri.nau.edu.

A festival program is available.