

# Observatory Mesa Growing Smarter Grant Project Narrative

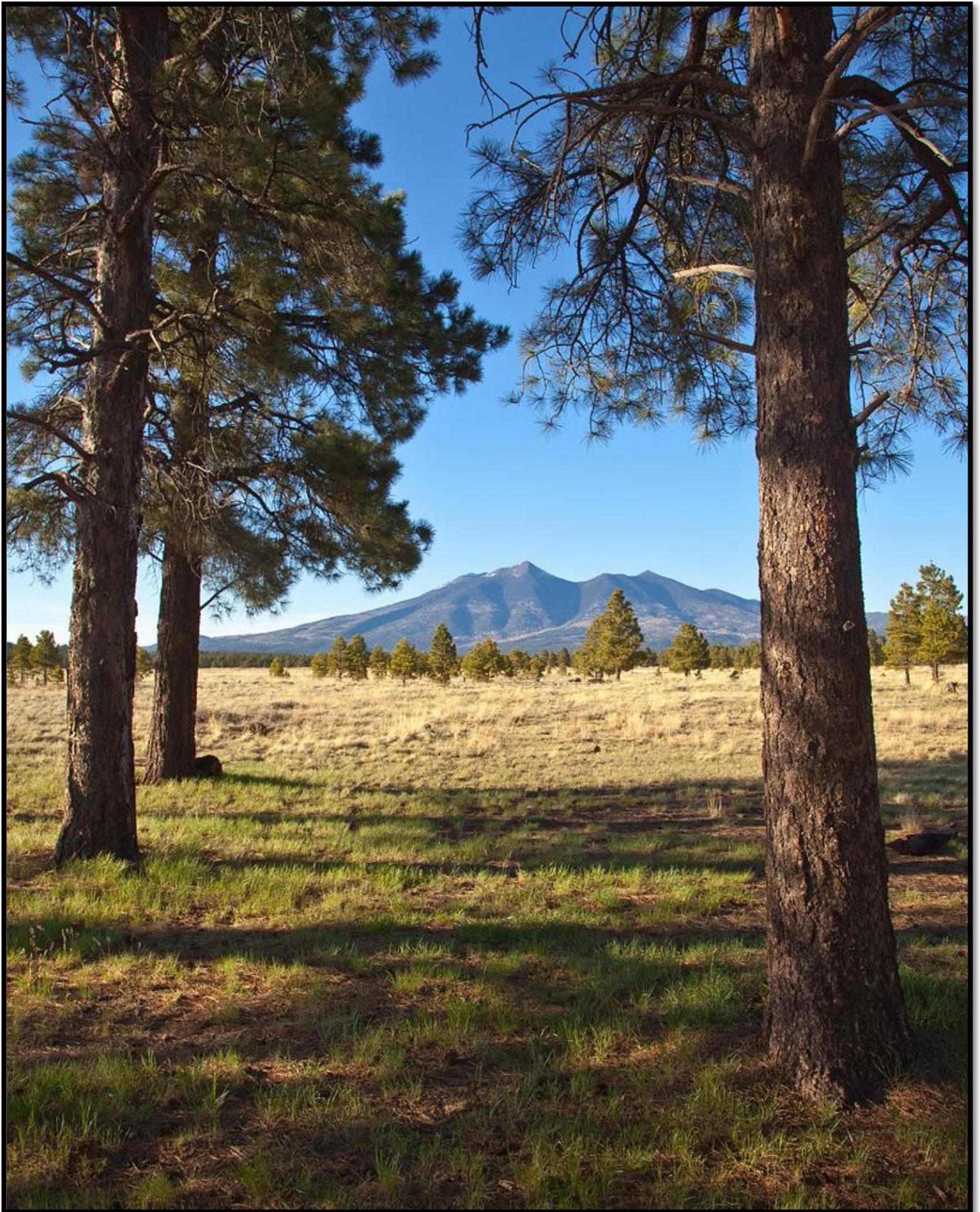


View of San Francisco Peaks from Observatory Mesa © Tom Bean

**PROJECT NARRATIVE**  
**CITY OF FLAGSTAFF GROWING SMARTER APPLICATION**

**Introduction**

Observatory Mesa encompasses nearly 7,600 acres, of which state lands comprise approximately 2,260 acres in a checkerboard fashion, along with approximately 4,400 acres of U.S. Forest Service land. The largest single ownership of private land is the Lowell Observatory, which has approximately 760 acres on the southeast edge of the Mesa. Attached are photos of the subject property depicting its ecological values, conservation values, and community support. The photos were taken at 24 different locations in and around the property. These points are depicted on the attached map. Each photo is captioned with the number of the photo point and the compass direction of the photo. The 8" x 10" photo on the following page is Point 13.



## **I. Ecological Values**

### **A. Riparian area**

**Does the parcel contain a riparian area or is the parcel adjacent to a *preserved* area containing a riparian area? Clearly state whether the riparian area is on or adjacent to the parcel and describe the riparian area in terms of vegetation type. If the parcel contains a riparian area, provide panoramic and close-up photos of riparian area and vegetation, and a 7.5' USGS map clearly highlighting the location of the riparian area on the parcel to be purchased. (0, 4, or 8 points)**

Yes. The Observatory Mesa parcels contain several intermittent riparian areas.

Each section within this application contains an intermittent stream. There are two in Section 6 that are tributaries of the Rio de Flag. Another intermittent stream is in the northeast quarter of Section 8 that flows to the east into the Rio de Flag. Section 12 has three intermittent streams, one of which feeds into Belle Spring in an adjacent section. There is a significant drainage in the northeast portion of Section 12 that has a broad influence on adjacent Sections 7 and 8. Sections 18 and 19 have intermittent streams that originate from Tunnel Spring. The conservation designation of these lands would lend to the overall integrity of the Rio de Flag watershed, a vital resource for the Flagstaff community.

The 100-year flood plain affects the southeast corner of Section 18 in the Clay Avenue Wash area. The other sections within this petition are unaffected by the 100-year floodplain.

There are several water tanks in this application area including, Matson, Truck Tank, and Lang. Perennial water in the form of a seep that feeds Matson tank lies within Trust Sections 8 and 6 and Forest Service Section 7. There are three unnamed tanks that are considered "live tanks" because they still hold water after several dry years. Tunnel Springs, which is in Section 18, was continually full of water until approximately 1995. One thought is that this spring was fed by the perched aquifer in the Baderville area. New development and greater use of this aquifer may be what has stopped the flow. Tunnel Springs was developed by the railroad to provide water for its steam engines. Old Town Springs, located in Section 16 at the southeastern edge of the Mesa, is part of the Mesa's system of springs.

Observatory Mesa is located in the Rio de Flag watershed and the Clay Avenue Wash drainage basin (the Clay Avenue Wash being a tributary of the Rio de Flag). The Rio de Flag is a tributary of the San Francisco Wash, which is a tributary of the Little Colorado River.

*Attachment 1.A. Photo of riparian vegetation, map of springs and tanks.*

Attachment: 1.A. Photos of riparian vegetation



**Point 1. North. Water tank on southwest corner of Section 8. June 15, 1998.**

**Photo credit: Nat White**

## **I. Ecological Values**

### **B. Wildlife**

#### **1. Threatened and Endangered Species**

**Does this parcel provide habitat for any Threatened or Endangered (T&E) species as documented by the Arizona Game & Fish Department? (0 or 3 points)**

Yes. Arizona Game & Fish Department (AFGD) has not documented any Threatened or Endangered (T&E) species within the parcel, however, according to the Arizona Game & Fish Department online tool, the Mexican Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) occurs within a five mile buffer of the parcel. As a result, Observatory Mesa is considered to be critical habitat.

*Attachment 1.B.1. Arizona Game & Fish Department Online Tool*

## I. Ecological Values

### B. Wildlife

#### 2. Sensitive Species. Does this parcel provide habitat for any Sensitive Species as documented by the Arizona Game & Fish Department? (0 or 3 points)

Yes. According to the Arizona Game & Fish Department, the parcel and surrounding lands within a five mile buffer provide habitat for the following twenty-two sensitive species, as identified by State and Federal offices.

- Accipiter gentilis, Northern Goshawk (FWS, USFS, BLM, State)
- Aquila chrysaetos, Golden Eagle (FWS, BLM)
- Aquilegia desertorum, Mogollon Columbine (State)
- Astragalus rusbyi, Rusby's Milk-vetch (USFS)
- Bat Colony
- Strix occidentalis lucida, Mexican spotted owl (FWS, State - Designated Critical Habitat)
- Clematis hirsutissima, Clustered Leather Flower (USFS)
- Eumops perotis californicus, Greater Western Bonneted Bat (FWS, USFS, BLM)
- Falco peregrinus anatum, American Peregrine Falcon (FWS, USFS, BLM, State)
- Gymnogyps californianus, 10J area for California condor
- Haliaeetus leucocephalus, Bald Eagle (FWS, USFS, BLM, State)
- Hedeoma diffusa, Flagstaff False Pennyroyal (USFS, State)
- Idionycteris phyllotis, Allen's Lappet-browed Bat (FWS, USFS, BLM)
- Microtus mexicanus Navaho, Navajo Mexican Vole (FWS, USFS, State)
- Myotis evotis, Long-eared Myotis (FWS)
- Myotis occultus, Arizona Myotis (FWS, BLM)
- Myotis thysanodes, Fringed Myotis (FWS)
- Myotis volans, Long-legged Myotis (FWS)
- Opuntia x martiniana, Seashore Cactus (State)
- Pinus aristata, Rocky Mountain Bristlecone Pine (State)
- Rana pipiens, Northern Leopard Frog (USFS, BLM, State)
- Zigadenus virescens, Green Death Camas (State)

*See Attachment 1.B.1. Arizona Game & Fish Department Online Tool*

## **I. Ecological Values**

### **B. Wildlife**

#### **3. Critical Pathway for Migratory Species. Does this parcel provide habitat for any migratory wildlife species as documented by the Arizona Game & Fish Department? (0 or 3 points)**

Yes. The parcel provides habitat for migratory wildlife species as documented by the Arizona Game & Fish Department. The parcel is extremely valuable as a wildlife habitat and corridor.

According to the Arizona Game & Fish Department, Observatory Mesa is a high priority for wildlife habitat conservation in Arizona. The varied topography of Observatory Mesa supports several vegetation types including ponderosa pine forest, stands of Gambel oak, high-elevation grassland and shrub-steppe, and numerous springs and seeps are found in the area. These habitats provide essential resources for diverse wildlife including but not limited to elk, mule deer, pronghorn, grey fox, several small species of squirrels, chipmunks and other small mammals, porcupine, mountain lion, black bear, various species of bats, turkey, raptors including red-tailed hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, and several owls, migratory and resident songbirds, and reptiles and amphibians such as chorus frogs and short-horned lizards.

Wildlife movement corridors are important to protecting wildlife migration patterns that sustain feeding and breeding activities for wildlife existence. The Arizona Game & Fish Department recognizes Observatory Mesa and the area immediately to its west as an important link in a landscape-scale wildlife corridor known as the Woody Ridge Corridor, which connects habitat on the San Francisco Peaks with lower-elevation shrub and grassland habitat near the Mogollon Rim to the south. This corridor supports migratory movements of a wide range of species and was the first wildlife corridor selected by the Department's Regional office for GIS-based modeling due to its significance for wildlife. Several raptors listed as State Wildlife Species of Concern, northern goshawk, American peregrine falcon, and wintering bald eagle, have also been reported here.

*Attachments 1.B.3. Photos of wildlife, Arizona Game & Fish Department letter, Northern Arizona Audubon Bird List*

Attachment: 1.B.3. Photos of wildlife



**Point 4. North. Late fall elk migration across Section 12. No date. Photo credit: Nat White**



**Point 5. North. Elk on Section 12. No date. Photo credit: Nat White**

Attachment: 1.B.3. Photos of wildlife



**Point 6. South. Mule deer feeding in grassy opening amid the ponderosa pine forest.**

**© Tom Bean**

Attachment: 1.B.3. Photos of wildlife



**Point 7. East. Mountain bluebird in grassland area of Observatory Mesa. © Tom Bean**

## **II. Conservation Values**

### **A. Scenic and/or Geological Features**

**Does the parcel have scenic and/or geological features such as mountains, steep slopes, rock outcroppings, diverse or abundant vegetation, caves, faults, volcanoes, lava tubes, etc? Please describe and provide photos. (0 or 3 points)**

Yes. The parcel has scenic and geological features such as mountains, steep slopes, rock outcroppings, diverse or abundant vegetation, caves, faults, volcanoes, lava tubes, etc. The parcel provides a scenic gateway into Flagstaff from I-40 and historic Route 66. In particular, the parcel has cinder cones, steep slopes, lava flows, rock outcroppings, and diverse and abundant vegetation. The parcel is part of Observatory Mesa, an elongated, flat topped, volcanic feature lying just west of Flagstaff and southwest of the San Francisco Peaks. It is generally 200 to 400 feet higher than the adjacent land with a slope to the south. A-1 Mountain is at the higher, northwest end of the Mesa. This 8,300-foot cinder cone complex was the source of a 300,000-year-old volcanic flow that formed Observatory Mesa. The Burlington and Santa Fe railroad grade follows the contour at the base of the steep, southerly edge of the Mesa. Three drainage systems, the Rio de Flag to the north and east, the Clay Avenue Wash to the south, and Volunteer Wash to the west follow the base of the Mesa. These drainages support a higher vegetative and structural diversity for wildlife than surrounding areas.

The scenic beauty of Observatory Mesa is related to its location between the San Francisco Peaks and the Mogollon Rim. Its elevation provides 360 degrees of panoramic views unaffected by the development that lies just below its edges. The side canyons, the forest and grasslands, and pockets of different vegetation fostered by the varied soils, exposure, and underground moisture, produce seasonal changes of scenic beauty that enhance the panorama. All the sections have spectacular views of the San Francisco Peaks, Mount Elden, and Dry Lake Hills.

Section 18 is a flat, thin ponderosa pine forest that defines the edge of Observatory Mesa on the south. This section has a mile and a half of steep slopes that provide excellent views of Woody Mountain, Mormon Mountain, and Anderson Mesa. Section 18 has a more open and natural forest due to restorative thinning, making it an excellent area for abundant wildflowers. Section 12 offers a large meadow with 360-degree view of Mount Elden/Dry Lake Hills, A-1 Mountain, Wing Mountain, Sitgreaves Mountain, Bill Williams Mountain, Woody Mountain, Mormon Mountain, the San Francisco Peaks, as well as views of Dry Lake. It is in direct line of sight of the Naval Observatory.

The upper portion of Section 6 offers unique views of both Mount Elden and the San Francisco Peaks. Section 8 has a steep tree-covered canyon on its east side, providing a backdrop to the city's regional park, Thorpe Park. There is a bowl-shaped canyon in Section 8 that is unique because it does not have a wide assortment of rock outcroppings, providing favorable conditions for a variety of wild flowers and grasses. The native plant species include some old growth ponderosa pine, four genera of native grass species, and a variety of other tree and shrub species. There are abundant warm-loving woody species on south or west-facing rock exposures that are indicative of increased habitat diversity. Among these are New Mexico

locust, mountain mahogany, juniper, Gambel oak, smooth sumac, Apache plume, wild rose and wax currant. An abundance of forb species, many of them long-blooming wildflowers such as Arizona gilia and golden-beard penstemon, provide nectar for several species of hummingbirds.

*Attachments 2.A. Photos of scenic and geologic features, photos of diverse and abundant vegetation, plant species list.*

Attachments 2.A. Photos of scenic and geologic features



**Point 7. South. Grassland vegetation with distant rain clouds on Section 12. © Tom Bean**



**Point 8. South. View of Mormon Mountain from south rim of Section 18. © Tom Bean**

Attachments 2.A. Photos of scenic and geologic features



**Point 9. Northeast. View along road across State Trust Lands with ponderosa pines on Observatory Mesa. © Tom Bean**

Attachments 2.A. Photos of scenic and geologic features



**Point 10. North. Hiker on Section 6. © Tom Bean**

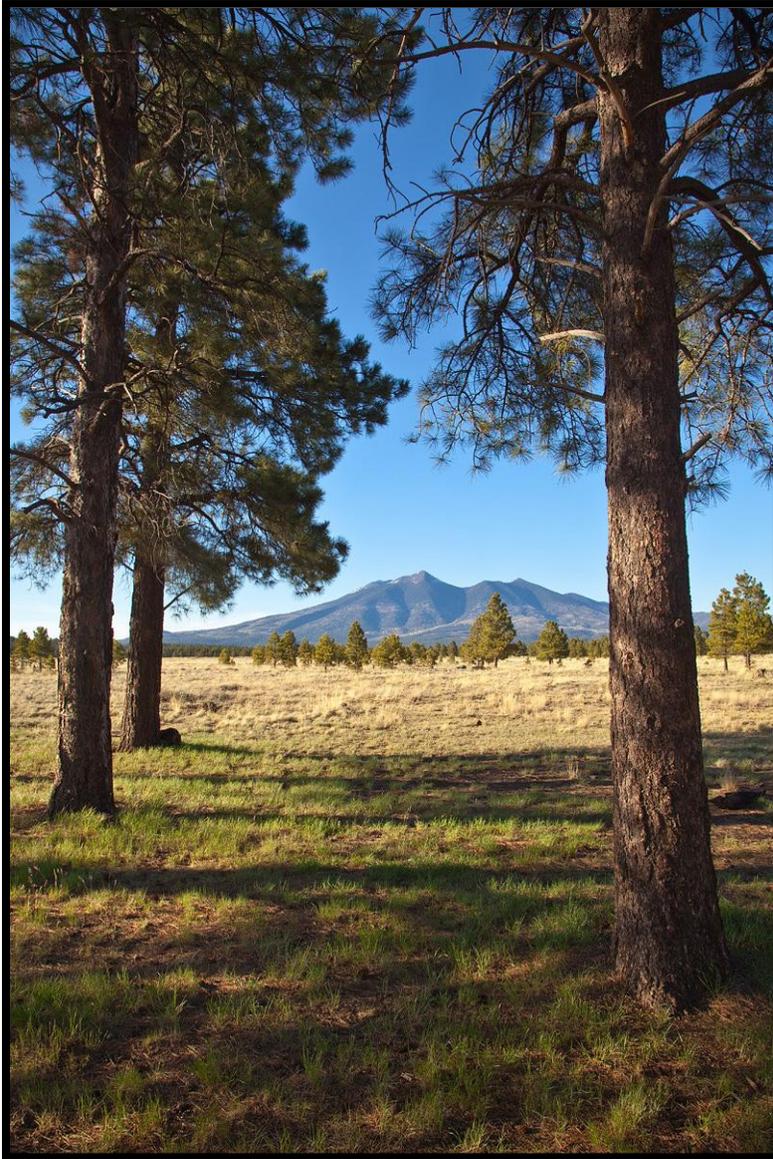


**Point 11. East. View along Forest Service Road 515A in Section 6. © Tom Bean**

Attachments 2.A. Photos of scenic and geologic features



**Point 12. North. Wildflowers on Section 12. Photo credit: McKenzie Jones**



**Point 13. North. View of the San Francisco Peaks from Section 12. © Tom Bean**



**Point 14. South. Naval Observatory on the horizon from Section 12. © Tom Bean**



**Point 15. Northwest. Steep slopes on Section 8. © Tom Bean**



**Point 16. North. View of the San Francisco Peaks from grasslands on Section 12. © Tom Bean**

## **II. Conservation Values**

### **B. Parcel Size**

**What is the size of the parcel included in the application? Parcel size should include the subject parcel and any adjacent preserved lands. (0, 2, 4, 6, or 8 points)**

The size of the parcel is 2,260 acres and there are 623 acres of adjacent preserved land. Lowell Observatory's Astronomical Preserve (Section 17) is located immediately adjacent to the parcel and contains 600 acres of preserved land. This land was granted to Lowell Observatory through an Act of Congress in 1894. The City of Flagstaff's Thorpe Natural Preserve is adjacent to Section 8 and contains 23 acres of preserved land. This land was purchased in 2010 utilizing City of Flagstaff Open Space bond money and is zoned as Public Open Space (P-OS).

## **II. Conservation Values:**

### **C. Archaeological or Historic Site.**

**Does the parcel have an archaeological or historic site(s) that is eligible for or on the State or National Register of Historic Places?**

No. The parcel does not have an archaeological or historic site that is eligible for or on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Observatory Mesa played a part in pioneer history and Native American history, but there is little physical evidence. There are, however, several old roadbeds up the sides of canyons that are supported by hand-built rock walls. In addition, several of the tanks are vestiges of watering holes built over one hundred years ago. The current railroad bed runs along the southern border of portions of Sections 18 and 19. The old sandstone railroad bridge abutments found just south of the current tracks are the oldest in Flagstaff. These are remnants of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad line, which came to Flagstaff in 1881, providing the economic stimulation that turned Flagstaff from a settlement to a town. In one sense, these old railroad segments symbolize the beginning of Flagstaff's growth as a town. Protecting the areas to the north of the railroad tracks (parts of Sections 18 and 19) would preserve the integrity and natural setting of these historic sites and provide public access to these locations.

*Attachment 2.C. Photo of historic resources*

Attachments 2.C. Photo of historic resources



**Point 17. South. FUTS trail in tunnel under the BNSF railroad tracks. © Tom Bean**

### III. Planning and Public Support

#### A. Planning

**1. Local and Regional Plans. How does this parcel meet the needs and/or goals identified in the adopted local and regional plans and policies? Provide copies of the relevant pages of the approved local or regional plan, or the organization's charter and strategic plan, which describe the community's open space needs or goals. (0 to 3 points)**

Three planning documents reflect local desire to see the parcel preserved as open space. The acquisition of the project area supports numerous goals of the Open Space and Greenways Plan (OSGP), the existing Flagstaff Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan (RLUTP), and the Coconino County Comprehensive Plan (CCCP).

- Open Spaces and Greenways Plan (1998)

The importance of Observatory Mesa as a regional asset for conservation and protection began more than 14 years ago when several public and private concerned parties including City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, Sierra Club, Coconino National Forest, Arizona State Land Department, National Park Service, Northern Arizona Homebuilders Association, Northern Arizona Realtors Association, and Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce signed a memorandum of understanding identifying Observatory Mesa for conservation in the Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan. The above signatories agreed in principle to conserve and protect a package of Flagstaff area lands that included Observatory Mesa State Trust land. The primary goal of the plan is "to maintain Flagstaff's quality of life by finding ways to balance development with the retention of open spaces and natural resources." The OSGP identifies State Trust lands at Observatory Mesa as a priority for conservation as public open space.

*The Flagstaff Open Spaces and Greenways Plan can be viewed online at <http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/7959>.*

- Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan (2001)

The Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan was adopted by the Flagstaff City Council and Coconino County Board of Supervisors in November 2001 and ratified by city voters in May 2002. The planning area coincides with the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization boundaries encompassing 525 square miles of the greater Flagstaff region. The acquisition of the Observatory Mesa project area for open spaces purposes is consistent with numerous goals and policies of RLUTP and the adopted Guiding Principles, especially pertaining to sustainability, healthy ecosystems, smart growth and quality development, a vibrant and resilient economy, sense of place and community character, and partnerships.

- Housing and Neighborhoods Goal 3 states, "Development patterns designed to maintain the open character of rural areas, protect open lands, and to protect and maintain sensitive environmental areas will be promoted."
- Open Space, Parks, Recreation and Trails Goal 1 states, "The region will have a balanced system of open lands, natural areas, wildlife corridors and habitat areas, trails, greenways, parks and recreation facilities."
- Natural and Cultural Resources and the Environment Policy 1.10 states: "Historical, archeological and cultural resources shall be identified and preserved

through restoration or adaptive reuse, as links between past, present, and future generations.”

- Natural and Cultural Resources and the Environment Policy 1.12 states: “Natural systems, like watersheds and airsheds, and their relationships and impacts to the built environment should be considered when planning for the region.”

The following goals and policies also support the preservation of Observatory Mesa:

- OSPR1.2 – Implement Urban and Rural Open Spaces Plans
- OSPR1.4 – Preserve Priority Open Lands
- OSPR1.5 – Protect “Neighborwoods”
- OSPR1.6 – Provide Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Facilities throughout the Region
- OSPR1.7 – Preserve Rural Character and Natural Environment
- CD1.1 – Preserve the Character of the Region’s Natural Setting
- CD1.2 – Protect the Region’s Mountains and Canyons
- CD1.3 – Protect the Region’s Topographic Features
- CD1.5 – Continue Interagency Coordination for Development and Protection for Wildlife Habitat and Corridors

As a component of RLUTP, the Flagstaff Urban Trail System Master Plan includes future trail segments within the parcel to provide further regional recreation and transportation connectivity. *The Flagstaff Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan can be viewed online at <http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/366>.*

- Coconino County Comprehensive Plan (2003)

The Coconino County Comprehensive Plan is a conservation-based plan adopted by the Coconino County Board of Supervisors in 2003. The Comprehensive Plan is different from most county plans in that it is based upon a conservation framework and ecological principles. The underlying philosophy is that healthy functioning ecosystems are critical for healthy functioning human communities. The preservation of Observatory Mesa is consistent with the CCCP at many levels. One goal of the Plan with respect to growth areas is to “concentrate development in designated growth areas while preserving open space and landscapes.” As with the Flagstaff Regional Plan, the Comprehensive Plan refers to and incorporates the objectives of the OSGP Plan as it applies to those environmentally and culturally sensitive lands identified as appropriate for conservation and open space purposes. The preservation of Observatory Mesa is clearly consistent with the vision, goals, and policies of the CCCP. *The CCCP can be viewed online at <http://www.coconino.az.gov/comdev.aspx?id=142>.*

*Attachments 3.A. Flagstaff Urban Trail System Master Plan map, related excerpts from local and regional plan documents*

### **III. Planning and Public Support**

#### **A. Planning**

##### **2. Benefit to Local Community**

**Please describe how preservation of this specific parcel will provide recreational, educational, and economic benefits to the local community. Please note this question refers to local benefits and not state benefits. (0 to 3 points)**

#### Recreational

Observatory Mesa provides a buffer between developed/developing industrial and residential lands. It serves as “neighborhoods” for the Downtown/Cheshire/Linwood/Coconino Estates neighborhoods and connects open space west of the San Francisco Peaks with that north of Rogers Lake. Neighborhoods is a term used in the Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan (OSGP) that refers to undeveloped areas near neighborhoods which act as a buffer and provide opportunities for recreation and relaxation. The parcel hosts segments of the Flagstaff Loop Trail and Observatory Mesa trail that promote connectivity for non-motorized transportation and recreation.

Arizona Game & Fish Department (AGFD) has identified Observatory Mesa as an important wildlife habitat and a significant hunting site. Given its proximity to Flagstaff, Observatory Mesa receives high levels of coordinated visitation for wildlife recreation such as wildlife viewing and hunting.

#### Educational

Since the 1990s, Observatory Mesa has been an outdoor classroom for students in northern Arizona. The abundance of astronomical viewing opportunities has provided extensive educational use of this parcel by Lowell Observatory and local schools. The potential for developing scientific education for K-12 programs, graduate education, life-long learning, and applied research on forest and grassland restoration is outstanding given the rich natural resources found on this parcel. Potential local educational partners including Willow Bend Environmental Education Center, Northern Arizona University Centennial Forest, Lowell Observatory, Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff Unified School District, Coconino Community College, and Coconino National Forest.

#### Economic

Visitors from all over the world are attracted to Flagstaff’s clean mountain air, year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, and western legacy of pioneer ranchers, railroad builders and lumbermen. Some of the West’s most beautiful country surrounds Flagstaff, from the Coconino National Forest and the San Francisco Peaks to the Red Rocks of Sedona to the rugged deserts of neighboring Native American nations.

A recent poll of Arizona residents statewide conducted July 2011 by WestGroup Research indicates nearly all (93 percent) categorize parks and open space as essential to Arizona’s tourism economy (Arizona Forward). In addition, three in four Arizonans rate parks and open space as important to them personally. Nearly 5.5 million Arizonans participate in active outdoor recreation, generating approximately \$350 million in annual state tax revenue, producing close to \$5 billion in retail services and supporting 82,000 jobs across Arizona,

according to the Outdoor Industry Foundation (Arizona Forward). The 2009 National Parks Second Century Commission estimated that every \$1 in taxpayer money spent on National Parks returned a \$4 economic benefit through tourism and private sector spending. Meanwhile, a report released by the Interior Department shows that recreational activities on Arizona's public lands (about 40 percent of the state) supported 21,364 jobs and contributed just under \$2 billion to Arizona's economy (Arizona Forward).

Eco-tourism and its related service sector are important components of Flagstaff's economic base. As such, the natural environment and outdoor recreational opportunities are extremely important to the tourism trade in Flagstaff. The project area encompasses both a planned trail corridor that supports the community's connectivity and provides additional tourist opportunities. According to the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, 1.3 million wildlife viewing participants spend \$838 million in Arizona annually. Sites like Observatory Mesa can significantly contribute to the local tourism economy. Preserving Observatory Mesa will protect important viewsheds for Interstate 40 and Historic Route 66 travelers and Flagstaff Loop Trail hikers.

The purchase of this parcel will cause a reduction in the availability of land for future sale and development in the City of Flagstaff while at the same time increasing the amount of quality open space. This reduction should make the remaining developable lands more desirable, especially those located closer to the urban boundary and public services. Research conducted in Arizona and nationwide has shown that the conservation of iconic assets like Observatory Mesa benefits local and regional economies. The purchase of the parcel for conservation purposes may increase the monetary value of the surrounding developable area.

Numerous studies have found that open space has basic enhancement value that increases the value of the surrounding land. A study in Columbus, Ohio found a positive impact (7 to 23 percent) on property values where properties faced open space (Weicher and Zeibst, 1973). Correll et al. found that in Boulder, Colorado, the existence of greenbelts had a significant impact on adjacent residential property values including up to an average of 32 percent more than those 3,200 feet away (1978).

Additionally, Lowell Observatory has been a significant and stalwart Flagstaff economic factor for over 100 years. In particular, its reputation attracted the Flagstaff Station of the U.S. Naval Observatory to locate here more than forty years ago, and later, the Astrogeological branch of the U.S. Geological Survey. Protecting State Trust Land on Observatory Mesa positively impacts the observatories, provides protection from further light pollution, and strengthens the astrogeological sector of our economy. In particular, conservation of State Trust land on Observatory Mesa will protect the \$259 million in local investment the United State Navy has made over the past 55 years in telescopes, instrumentation, and personnel.

*Attachments 3.A.2. Photos illustrating community benefit, references*

Attachments 3.A.2. Photos illustrating community benefit

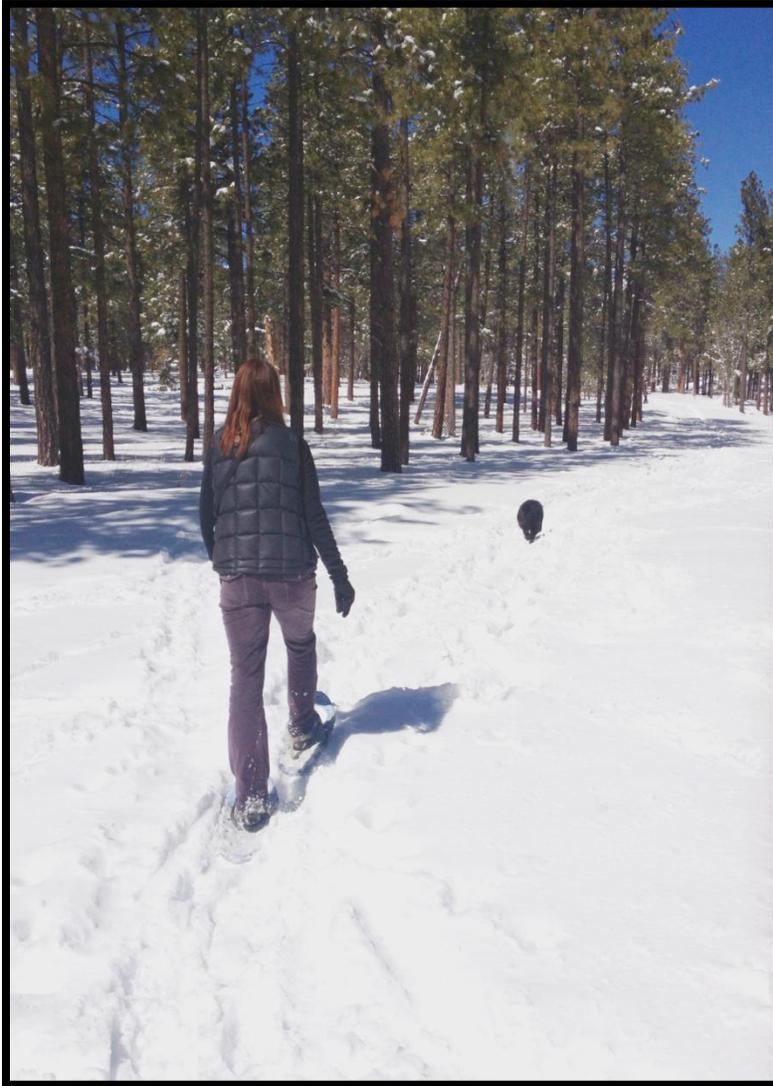


**Point 18. South. Runners on Observatory Mesa. © Tom Bean**



**Point 19. North. Man walking dog north of Forest Service Road 515. © Tom Bean**

Attachments 3.A.2. Photos illustrating community benefit



**Point 20. West. Woman snowshoeing on Observatory Mesa. Photo credit: McKenzie Jones**



**Point 21. Dome of the U.S. Naval Observatory's 60 inch telescope. Photo credit: Nat White**

### **III. Planning and Public Support**

#### **B. Public and Community Support**

##### **1. Community Support. Describe and provide evidence of public and community support for protecting this specific parcel. (0 to 5 points)**

In 2002, the City of Flagstaff submitted an Arizona Preserve Initiative petition to reclassify State Trust land on Observatory Mesa for conservation purposes. In 2004, Flagstaff voters approved a \$5.5 million bond to acquire State Trust lands on Observatory Mesa as open space. On February 12, 2013, approximately 100 community members attended the State Land Public Comment Hearing and spoke out in unanimous support for the reclassification of Observatory Mesa as suitable for conservation purposes. The City of Flagstaff received 28 letters of support for the preservation process from community members and groups.

In 2009, over 200 community members participated in National Trails Day to construct the Observatory Mesa Trail as part of the Flagstaff Loop Trail. Flagstaff Biking Organization has hosted multiple volunteer work days to construct and maintain the Observatory Mesa Trail.

*Attachments 3.B.1. Photos illustrating community support, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, 2004 Open Space bond language, letters of support*

Attachments 3.B.1. Photos illustrating community support



**Point 22. Volunteers at National Trails Day construction of Observatory Mesa Trail, June 6, 2009. Photo credit: Coconino County**



**Point 23. Volunteers constructing Observatory Mesa Trail, June 6, 2009. Photo credit: Coconino County**

Attachments 3.B.1. Photos illustrating community support



**Point 24. Lowell Observatory Trustee William Lowell Putnam speaking at the State Trust Public Comment Hearing. February 12, 2013. © Tom Bean**

### **III. Planning and Public Support**

#### **B. Public and Community Support**

##### **2. Partnerships**

**Please describe the parameters of any partnerships created for the purpose of acquiring this parcel. Provide copies of agreements, contracts, or letters from the partnering entity illustrating the partnership. (0 to 3 points)**

As partners in constructing the Flagstaff Loop Trail, Coconino County, Coconino National Forest, Flagstaff Biking Organization and the City of Flagstaff have worked together to provide trail connectivity throughout Flagstaff and on Observatory Mesa. Coconino County acquired and maintains the trail easement for the Observatory Mesa Trail segment of the Flagstaff Loop Trail.

Additionally, as 600 acres of unincorporated State Land are included in the City of Flagstaff's application, Coconino County continues to coordinate with the City of Flagstaff to ensure that the fire safety and public safety needs of the land at Observatory Mesa within the County's jurisdiction are met. Moving forward, the City and County will continue to partner to create a strong Management Plan for Observatory Mesa.

*Attachments 3.B.2. Flagstaff Loop Trail Memorandum of Understanding*