



ARIZONA  
FORWARD

**NEWS**

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## **BUSINESS-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP CALLS FOR STATEWIDE FOCUS ON FOREST HEALTH**

*“Healthy Forests Impact Our Health, Environment, Economy & Quality of Life”*

**PHOENIX, Ariz. (Oct. 7, 2015)** – Arizona Forward is releasing its newest primer today – “Threats to Forest Health Put Arizona at Risk.” It urges statewide attention for treatment and restoration to prevent the devastating fires that have scarred our state’s landscape, tarnished watersheds, depressed the economy and threatened the quality of life for residents throughout the Grand Canyon State.

The nearly 30-page document is written in layman’s terms and includes actions needed now to mitigate the impact of wildfires and threats to water quality. It encourages all Arizonans to engage in this critical issue, with a section dedicated to how everyone can be part of the solution. The primer is being released at SRP’s “Healthy Forest, Vibrant Economy” forum, which is expected to draw upwards of 300 community leaders to the Doubletree Resort in Scottsdale for a two-day conference on how to accelerate forest restoration in Arizona.

“Too many Arizonans believe forest health issues are only relevant to those of us who live in the Northern part of our state,” said Diane Brossart, president and CEO of Arizona Forward. “Forest ecosystems impact everyone who lives here, from Flagstaff to Phoenix and all the way to Tucson and beyond.

“Were it not for the rains we had in June and July of this year, the loss of life and property Californians recently experienced as a result of rampant wildfires could have happened here.”

Arizona Forward developed the primer, its fourth publication on key sustainability issues facing the state, to provide unbiased facts, background information and viable options to consider as Arizona undertakes efforts to restore and maintain healthy forests.

The primer notes that healthy forests are critical to maintaining a robust economy. “In addition to serving as places of beauty that attract tourism, forests are also custodians of the air and water Arizonans need to survive,” the document states.

Fire is a natural process, but Arizona’s forest are not in a natural state. Years of fire suppression and drought have ushered in the era of the megafire, as the Southwest experienced with the Wallow and Rodeo-Chediski fires.

## Add 1/Arizona Forward Primer

Among actions outlined in the primer to address forest health are:

- Forest thinning and prescribed burning
- Re-establishing a forest products industry
- Preparing more land for treatment by accelerating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process
- Support adaptive management of treated forested lands
- Sediment and soil erosion management
- Habitat improvement and re-vegetation projects
- Eliminating “fire borrowing” so that these projects can be fully funded

“Arizonans can contact their elected representatives, and invest their time, talent and finances in the partnerships and organizations that are making a difference in restoring our healthy forests,” said Eric Marcus, executive director of the Sustainable Economic Development Initiative (SEDI) and Co-chair of Arizona Forward’s Healthy Forest Ecosystems Committee, along with Bruce Hallin of SRP. “Arizonans need to understand that unhealthy forests impact us all – no matter where in the state we live.”

Arizona Forward was founded in 1969 as Valley Forward Association and expanded its mission statewide in 2013, bringing business and civic leaders together to convene thoughtful public dialogue on regional issues and to improve the environmental quality and economic vitality of Arizona cities and towns.

For a copy of the primer or additional information about Arizona Forward, visit [arizonaforward.org](http://arizonaforward.org).

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