

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Power Plant Improves Forest Habitat**

A new, biomass-fueled electricity plant in Eager, Arizona will help improve the health of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, decrease the risk of catastrophic forest fires, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide a boost to the region's economy. Arizona Public Service (APS), the state's largest and longest-serving electricity utility and an NWTF Energy for Wildlife partner, helped fund creation of the plant through the Stone Forest Biomass Project. The project plans to fuel the plant with renewable biomass generated by thinning ponderosa pine in the National Forest. Western Renewable Energy took over operations at the plant this month.

Biomass technology converts vegetation waste such as forest and agricultural byproducts—even yard trimmings—into clean fuel for power generators. The Stone Forest Biomass Project will help reduce future forest fire threats by converting trees and other vegetation removed during forest thinning into electricity.

APS, which bankrolled the majority of the approximate \$4 million cost of the plant's construction, is a member of the National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Energy for Wildlife program, a membership-based program certifying public utilities that manage their property as habitat for wild turkeys and other wildlife species.

"It's really a breath of fresh air to see APS take the initiative to improve Arizona's forestland by putting financial resources back into our natural resources," said Jay Jordan, the NWTF's Energy for Wildlife coordinator. "This project is valuable to wildlife, will make our forests safer and improve our homes, businesses and the economy." The project couldn't come at a better time. Ongoing drought conditions since 1999 have produced drier trees that in the past year have become susceptible to infestation by the Ips bark beetle. The beetle feeds off these trees, making them even more vulnerable to fire.

"By allowing the removal of small, non-commercial size trees, this project ultimately will reduce the fire hazard in this area of the state," said Jim Anderson, forest planning staff officer for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. "This plant and future such projects can only help the long-term health of our forests."

By burning wood chips from the harvested trees, APS and Western Renewable Energy expect to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the area by up to 15,000 tons per year. Trees that in the past would have burned in the forest will now be burned in a boiler under controlled conditions, producing less emissions.

"I knew we had to do something to protect our forest," said Steve Hall, a principal with Western Renewable Energy. "Once we realized we could maintain the forest while generating electricity, this plant made all the sense in the world."

The Stone Forest project will result in about 2,300 acres of fire risk reduction per year and consumes approximately 96 tons of wood each day. The plant produces about three megawatts of electricity per day, enough to supply up to 3,000 homes with electricity.

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