

Location and Contact Information

Fort Valley Experimental Forest is administered by the USDA Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Located a short drive from Flagstaff, Arizona, the forest consists of four "units," not all of which are contiguous. While some recreation is allowed in the experimental forest and its multi-use trail system, guests should be careful to avoid all sensitive plant species and research projects while visiting. Please remain on designated trails and respect all research equipment.

[For more information:](#)

Rocky Mountain Research Station
Fort Valley Experimental Forest
Flagstaff, Arizona
928-556-2001

www.fs.fed.us/rm/fort-valley

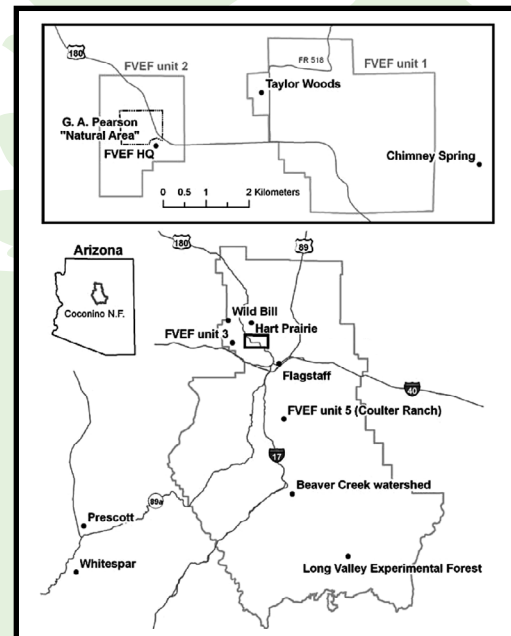


Fort Valley Experimental Forest headquarters

Map of the Rocky Mountain Research Station



Map of Fort Valley Experimental Forest



Rocky Mountain Research Station

The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) is one of seven units within U.S. Forest Service Research and Development – the most extensive natural resources research organization in the world. RMRS maintains 12 field laboratories throughout a 12-state territory encompassing parts of the Great Basin, Southwest, Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains.

RMRS administers and conducts research on 14 Experimental Forests and Ranges (EF&R) in seven states. The U.S. Forest Service's EF&R network represents many of the ecosystem types found in the United States and Puerto Rico. Most EF&Rs contain significant acreage and many encompass large experimental study sites that are used to examine the effects of operational-scale treatments such as prescribed burning and forest thinning. RMRS also oversees activities on several hundred Research Natural Areas, which have been set aside to conduct research while conserving biological diversity.

[For more information:](#)

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www.fs.fed.us/rmrs
[www.twitter.com/usfs_rmrs/](https://twitter.com/usfs_rmrs/)

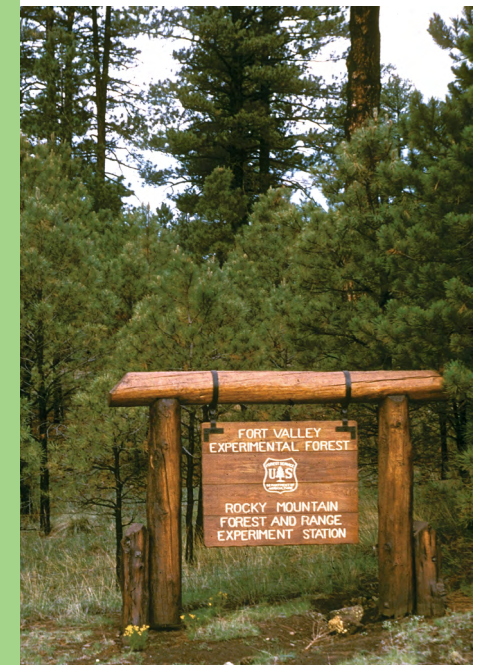
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USDA United States
Department of
Agriculture

Fort Valley Experimental Forest

"Here we shall plant the tree of research."

– **Raphael Zon,**
U.S. Forest Service,
Fort Valley, 1908



**Forest
Service**

**Rocky Mountain
Research Station**

Keeping U.S. Forests Healthy

Public lands are one of the United States' most important natural assets. Their benefits include wildlife habitat, water supply, timber, recreational opportunities and edible plants, game and fish. To help manage and understand these lands, the U.S. Forest Service developed a network of experimental forests and ranges. Today, the Experimental Forest & Range system is a network of 80 protected places that are used for long-term land and resource research and management.

A Legacy of Research

Fort Valley Experimental Forest (FVEF) was the first of these Experimental Forest research sites. It was established in 1908 by Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. In those early days, the country's forest research program had a staff of one person, Gustav Pearson, who lived in a two-room cabin in what is today known as Fort Valley Experimental Forest. His job was to find out why ponderosa groves were not regenerating after heavy logging and grazing had occurred. Recommendations that came from research here were the basis of many U.S. Forest Service management practices that have preserved ponderosa forests for over a century. Today, scientists at the 5,200-acre site can build on decades of recorded forest and climate data and follow in the footsteps of early forest research pioneers whose observations and insights are still studied.

An Ideal Location, Then and Now

FVEF is comprised of four unconnected sites located in a large, bowl-shaped meadow of the 1.8 million-acre Coconino National Forest, which includes part of the largest contiguous ponderosa pine forest in the United States. Although it's just 10 miles

northwest of Flagstaff, Arizona, Fort Valley was selected as a research site because its virgin ponderosa pine stand had been too remote for timber industry cultivation.

Initially, all of the workers at FVEF were Forest Service research scientists. In more recent years, other scientists have also recognized the value of FVEF and have conducted research there, including some long-term studies. The Fort Valley campus is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and research collaborators include the Coconino National Forest, Northern Arizona University, the U.S. Geological Survey, and Arizona Game and Fish Department.

The Importance of Ponderosa Pines

Several experimental forests in the western states focus on ponderosa pine research and restoration. There are many reasons for this. Ponderosa pines are one of the most economically and ecologically important tree species in the western United States. They have the widest range of any pine species in North America, growing from Canada to Mexico and from the Great Plains to the West Coast. They are drought-tolerant and fire-resistant, and are often located near human communities.



Ponderosa pines. (Photo: Dave Powell, USDA Forest Service (retired), bugwood.org)

Ponderosa pines are an important timber species, and they serve as a home and food source for many birds and animals.

Named for their heavy, “ponderous” wood, ponderosa pine trees can live for more than 600 years and exceed 200 feet in height. With their long needles and orange-colored bark that can smell like vanilla or butterscotch, these pines are one of the most rugged, distinctive and iconic trees of the American West.

Over the years, FVEF researchers have studied natural and artificial regeneration, stand improvement, water supply, climate, fire, tornadoes, diseases, insect infestations and human use—everything that might influence a ponderosa tree's life.

A New Generation of Research Challenges

Looking to the future, research on the Fort Valley Experimental Forest will address forest density and age as well as disturbances on forest ecosystems, water quality and water availability in the inland western United States. The rapidly increasing gap between water supply and demand, along with potential changes in precipitation and temperature, is expected to create a variety of challenges and research opportunities. Fort Valley and other experimental forests are likely to become even more important in the years ahead.

Fort Valley Research Facilities

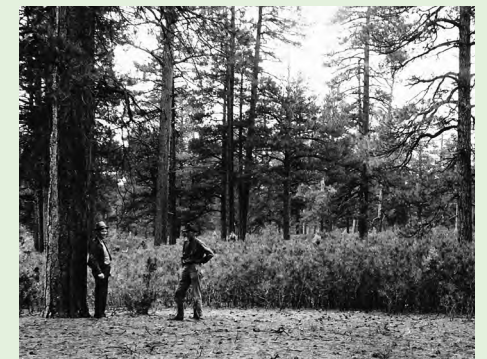
Fort Valley's facilities include a variety of permanent housing and research structures, many of which were built or expanded by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s. These facilities are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are used regularly by the U.S. Forest Service and other select groups, by request.



Sept. 1936—Juniper posts cut by Civilian Conservation Corps.



July 1936—Reproduction after cutting, sample plot S3. Cutting 1909, practically no seedlings at that time. Most of trees present are of 1919 origin.



Sept. 21, 1946—Looking west from south side of thinned plots on the Sitgreaves NF, AZ.