

# Research Natural Areas

USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain, Intermountain, Southwestern and Great Plains States

SEARCH RNAs BY

County

GO

## G.A. PEARSON

- ABOUT RNAs
- HOME
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  - CREDITS

A cooperative project of the

USDA Forest Service  
Northern Region,  
Rocky Mountain Region,  
Southwestern Region,  
Intermountain Region,  
Rocky Mountain Research  
Station,  
and the  
Montana Natural Heritage  
Program

### General Information

S.USNAHP\*82

- Created: 1950
- Size: 154 (acres)
- Elevation Range: 7325 - 7450ft
- Location: *Gus Pearson RNA is located on the south slope of the San Francisco Peaks about 9 miles northwest of Flagstaff.*

### Site Description

This is an extremely small RNA that supports old growth ponderosa pine forest. The area has become fragmented due to competing land uses and has been subject to fire suppression. Lack of natural fire regimes has resulted in development of doghair thickets of ponderosa pine in the understory. Fragmentation has occurred in the area with installation of two powerlines and associated roads.

### Climate and Enviromental Information

*Data not Available*

### Vegetation - G.A. Pearson

Interior Ponderosa Pine (SAF 237, K18)

HOME | ABOUT | USING RNAs | RNA OPPORTUNITES | RNA REFERENCES | CONTACT US | RELATED SITES

SEND US A COMMENT

U- Classification, R-3, Coconino  
G.A. Pearson Natural Area

July 5, 1950

REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE G. A. PEARSON NATURAL AREA

Purpose

To preserve permanently in natural state for scientific, research, and educational use a virgin stand of pure ponderosa pine representing commercial old-growth stands as they occur on the Coconino Plateau in northern Arizona

Description of Area

Location Embracing 154 acres, the area is located about 9 miles northwest of Flagstaff, Arizona, and is within the boundaries of both the Fort Valley Experimental Forest (Unit II) and the Coconino National Forest. Boundaries and topographic features are shown on attached map.

Location by legal subdivision is as follows:

<u>Township 22 north, Range 6 east, G. and S. R. B. and M.</u>	<u>Area</u> (Acres)
Section 22· E½ SW¼	80
NW¼ SE¼	40
SW¼ SE¼, less 6 acres in southwest corner enclosed by Fort Valley headquarters fence	34
Total area	154

Natural Features Area is situated on the lower south slope of the San Francisco Peaks with elevations varying from 7,330 to 7,450 feet. Two intermittent drainages traverse the area in a general northwest-southeast direction. Soil is a rocky clay loam derived from volcanic basalt with scattered rock outcrops. Annual precipitation averages 23 inches.

Forest Values: The Entire area in timbered, bearing a pure uneven-aged stand of ponderosa pine. Site quality is about average for the Coconino Plateau (V+). Timber volume averages about 13,500 board feet per acre with three-fourths of the volume in mature and overmature "yellow pines" and the remainder in immature "blackjacks". The various age classes occur in typical group arrangement. Sawtimber size trees (11.6" or larger d.b.h) occupy 55 percent of the area, poles 5 percent, seedlings and saplings 33 percent, and 7 percent of the area

is classified as nonstocked. Seedlings and saplings are mostly of 1919 origin. A few snags have been cut from time to time for fuelwood but no commercial timber cutting has occurred. Adjoining stands on the north, west, and east have been cut by several experiment methods, varying from clear-cutting to light salvage. The preservation of the virgin area will enhance the value of these studies by providing a direct contrast of conditions and trends in undisturbed stands. Eighty acres of the tract comprise a virgin growth plot where individual tree records have been maintained since 1925.

Agricultural value. None, too rocky for cultivation.

Grazing Value. Grazing capacity about one cow for a 4-months' grazing season. Area is currently open to cattle using the Maxwell Springs allotment and to exempt stock owned by one of the Fort Valley ranchers. No springs, tanks, or other sources of water for livestock are located within the area.

Mineral value No mining claims are located within the area and so far as known no mineral value exists.

Value for other public uses: The area has been a part of the Fort Valley Experimental Forest since January 1936 and its high value for experimental work is recognized. Absence of water or outstanding scenic features limit recreational values.

Transportation facilities Area adjoins the headquarters of the Forest Valley Experimental Forest and is readily accessible. The county highway from Flagstaff to Kendrick Park passes through the east half and secondary forest roads extend through the west half. These features will facilitate the conduct of scientific studies, increase the demonstrational values of the area, and aid in its protection from fire, trespass, or other damaging uses.

Improvements. Other than roads and fence along the southern boundary, no permanent improvements exist in the area. A weather station near the east boundary was abandoned in 1946.

Existing permits A special-use permit to Coconino County covers the right-of-way for the Flagstaff-Kendrick Park road. Grazing on the natural area is now administered by the Coconino National Forest under permit covering the Maxwell Springs allotment. This permit will be revised in 1956. When the natural area is fenced, control of grazing will be assumed by the Experiment Station. Because of its heavily timbered character, forage is scant and exclusion of the natural area will have little or not effect on the carrying capacity of the allotment. No other permits granting use of occupancy of the area in existence.

Public sentiment Public sentiment will likely favor the creation of the natural area because it represents one of the few virgin stands remaining within 10 to 15 miles of the City of Flagstaff. The timber volumes on the area were not included in

establishing the cutting budget for the "Flagstaff federal sustained yield unit" and there should be no conflict with lumber producing interests.

Plant of Management

Administration. Administration of the natural area will be in conformity with regulation U-4 and the instructions on pages 40a-41, GA-A3, of the Forest Service Manual. As opportunity affords the area should be fenced to exclude domestic livestock. Hunting will be permitted, at least until such time as the deer population in the vicinity, now excessive, is reduced to normal. The experiment Station will assume primary responsibility for initiating and supervising scientific studies on the natural area.

Fire Protection Responsibility for fire protection will rest primarily on the administrative staff of the Coconino National Forest. Intensive plans for adequately protecting both the natural area and the adjoining high-value lands within the Fort Valley Experimental Forest will be worked out by the Forest in cooperation with the Experiment Station and will be subject to approval of the Forest Supervisor and the Director.

Reporting Officer                      Date

Approved

Forest Supervisor                      Date

Director , Southwestern              Date  
Forest and Range Experiment  
Station

Regional Forester                      Date

AN ORDER ESTABLISHING THE G. A. PEARSON NATURAL AREA OUT OF  
CERTAIN LANDS WITHIN THE FORT VALLEY EXPERIMENTAL FOREST AND  
THE COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST, ARIZONA

By virtue and authority vested in me by the Regulation U-4 of the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture relating to the occupancy, use, protection, and administration of the national forests, I do hereby designate as the G. A. PEARSON NATURAL AREA the following described lands.

Township 22 north, Range 6 east, G. and S. R. B. and M.

Section 22: E $\frac{1}{2}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$  (80 a.)  
NW $\frac{1}{4}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  (40 a.)  
SW $\frac{1}{4}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  , less 6 acres in southwest corner  
enclosed by Fort Valley headquarters  
fence (34a.)

Total 154 acres

Said lands shall hereafter be administered as a natural area, subject to the provisions of said regulations and the instructions thereunder.

Acting Chief, Forest Service

Date

## G. A. PEARSON NATURAL AREA

### ABSTRACT

The G. A. Pearson Natural Area, established in 1950 by the U.S. Forest Service, encompasses 154 acres (62 ha) in the Fort Valley Experimental Forest approximately 8 miles northwest of Flagstaff, Coconino County, Arizona. The site lies at 35° 15' N. Lat. and 111° 45' E. Long. The natural area represents a pure stand of old growth ponderosa pine that to some extent has been utilized for avifauna and floristic studies.

### Location

The G. A. Pearson Natural Area was established to preserve a stand of pure old growth ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) which characterizes the original forest on the Coconino Plateau in northern Arizona. The 154 acre tract is located in the Fort Valley Experimental Forest, Coconino County, Arizona, and is administered by the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station (Flagstaff, Arizona), Coconino National Forest. The natural area occupies a portion of section 22, T. 22N., R. 6E., Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian. (See Figure 1).

### Access and Accommodations

The natural area is located approximately 8 miles northwest of Flagstaff, Arizona, on U.S. Highway 180, which passes through the northern portion of the area. Several small, primitive roads traverse the area. Forest Service Road 222, which passes through the southern portion of the area is the only maintained, usable road.

The nearest commercial accommodations are in Flagstaff. There are no campgrounds located within the natural area, however, improved forest campgrounds are located nearby in adjacent portions of the Coconino National Forest.

### Climate

The climate is cool with two wet seasons separated by drier periods. Averaging 23 inches annually, most precipitation occurs as snow during the winter that comes from storms moving into the area from the Pacific Ocean. These storms produce cold, cloudy weather for several days at a time with intermittent snow and rain showers. The average snowfall in the area is approximately 90 inches over a five month period. In late spring drought conditions predominate. The summer rains during July and August normally fall from moist, unstable air flowing into Arizona from the Gulf of Mexico. The resultant thunderstorms are of moderate intensity and short duration. The autumn is generally dry and clear with occasional thunderstorms (Green and Sellers, 1964).

### Topography and Landform

The natural area occupies gently sloping topography on the lower, south-facing portion of the San Francisco Mountain lava flows. Elevations range from 7,325 to 7,450 feet. Geologically the area consists of a basaltic lava bedrock of Cenozoic age covered with Quaternary gravel, sand, silt and clay (Hunt, 1956 and Robinson, 1913). There are no streams or springs located in the natural area.

### Biota

The primary vegetation of the natural area consists of a pure uneven aged stand of ponderosa pine. U.S. Forest Service reports indicate that old growth trees (11.6 inches or larger diameter at breast height) occupy 55% of the area; poles 5%; seedlings and saplings 33%; and 7% of the area is

nonstocked. The average height of the forest is 42 feet with an absolute density of 200 trees per acre (Carothers, Haldeman, Balda, 1973). The sparse understory shrub association consists primarily of buck-brush (*Ceanothus fendleri*) and Arizona rose (*Rosa arizonica*) with an occasional common juniper (*Juniperus communis*) present. A quantitative list of the dominant trees and shrubs is compiled in Table 1 along with a qualitative list of herbaceous species noted on the natural area in Table 2.

A tentative list of mammals believed to inhabit the natural area as residents or transients is provided in Table 3. Haldeman, Balda and Carothers (1973) conducted an indepth study of the avian species composition and nesting populations in the natural area (See Table 3). A total of 69 bird species was noted in the ponderosa pine forest. Twenty-three species were observed to nest on the natural area while several others were known to nest out of the natural area boundaries but in the same type of plant community. The most abundant nesting species, comprising 52 percent of the total nesting pairs, were the Violet-green Swallow, Pygmy Nuthatch, Gray-headed Junco, Mountain Chickadee and the Robin. During winter observations only 10 species of the original nesting populations were noted.

#### History of Disturbance

Human disturbance of the natural area is confined mostly to road construction and highway maintenance of U.S. 180. Several dead trees have been cut from time to time for fuel wood, but no commercial timber cutting has occurred. The area is open to limited grazing, however the present or past status of cattle utilization of the area is unknown. If grazing has occurred there has evidently been little conspicuous, long lasting damage through overgrazing. Permanent water is a considerable distance from the natural area suggesting that livestock have never been attracted to the area.

#### Research History

Extensive observations of the avifauna and floral community of the natural area were made in Haldeman, Balda and Carothers' study of species composition and breeding populations in the San Francisco Mountain area. No additional research is presently known to be in progress.

The G. A. Pearson Natural Area is also a part of the Fort Valley Experimental Forest, much of which is similar in floral association and environment. The possibility exists of using other parts of the forest for experimentation and using the natural area as a control site. Other opportunities include the study of community composition, structure and productivity of a rather homogeneous environment.

#### Maps and Aerial Photographs

Special maps applicable to the natural area include: Topography — 7 1/2' Humphry's Peak, Arizona quadrangle, scale 1:24,000, issued by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1966. The Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, Forestry Sciences Laboratory, Flagstaff, Arizona 86001, can provide details on the most recent aerial photo coverage and forest type maps for the area.

TABLE 1. Shrubs, Saplings and Trees of the G. A. Pearson Natural Area (from Haldeman, Balda and Carothers, 1973).

<u>Shrub and Sapling Species</u>	<u>Density (per acre)</u>	<u>Relative Density (%)</u>	<u>Relative Frequency (%)</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	1453	94	69	53
<i>Ceanothus fendleri</i>	75	5	13	10
<i>Rosa arizonica</i>	15	0.9	9	7
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	3	0.2	9	7

TABLE 2. Herbaceous species of the G. A. Pearson Natural Area (from Haldeman, Balda and Carothers, 1973).

GRAMINEAE - Grass Family	
<i>Festuca arizonica</i> .....	fescue
<i>Poa pratensis</i> .....	Kentucky blue grass
<i>Poa fendleriana</i> .....	mutton grass
<i>Stenion longifolium</i> .....	squirrel-tail
<i>Hordeum jubatum</i> .....	fox-tail barley
<i>Koeleria cristata</i> .....	june grass
<i>Blapheroneuron tricholepis</i> .....	pine drop-seed
<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> .....	blue grama
LILIACEAE - Lily Family	
<i>Iris missouriensis</i> .....	Rocky Mountain iris
RANUNCULACEAE - Crowfoot Family	
<i>Thalictrum fendleri</i> .....	meadow-rue
ROSACEAE - Rose Family	
<i>Potentilla crinita</i> .....	cinquefoil
<i>Geum triflorum</i> .....	oldman-whiskers
LEGUMINOSAE - Pea Family	
<i>Lupinus palmeri</i> .....	lupine
<i>Lotus wrightii</i> .....	deer-vetch
<i>Astragalus humistratus</i> .....	milk-vetch
<i>Oxytropis lambertii</i> .....	loco-weed
<i>Vicia pulchella</i> .....	vetch
<i>Vicia americana</i> .....	vetch
GERANIACEAE - Geranium Family	
<i>Geranium caespitosum</i> .....	cranesbill
EUPHORBIACEAE - Spurge Family	
<i>Euphorbia palmeri</i> .....	spurge
MALVACEAE - Mallow Family	
<i>Sidalcea neomexicana</i> .....	checker-mallow
UMBELLIFERAE - Parsley Family	
<i>Pseudocymopterus montanus</i> .....	Pseudocymopterus
POLEMONIACEAE - Phlox Family	
<i>Gilia aggregata</i> .....	skyrrocket gilia



TABLE 2 (Continued)

BORAGINACEAE - Borage Family	
<i>Lithospermum multiflorum</i> .....	gromwell
SCROPHULARIACEAE - Figwort Family	
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i> .....	mullein
<i>Penstemon barbatus</i> .....	beardtongue
<i>Castilleja integra</i> .....	paint-brush
RUBIACEAE - Madder Family	
<i>Houstonia wrightii</i> .....	Houstonia
COMPOSITAE - Sunflower Family	
<i>Townsendia exscapa</i> .....	Townsendia
<i>Erigeron flagellaris</i> .....	fleabane
<i>Achillea lanulosa</i> .....	yarrow
<i>Senecio multilobatus</i> .....	groundsel
<i>Senecio actinella</i> .....	groundsel
<i>Tragopogon dubius</i> .....	goats-beard
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> .....	dandelion

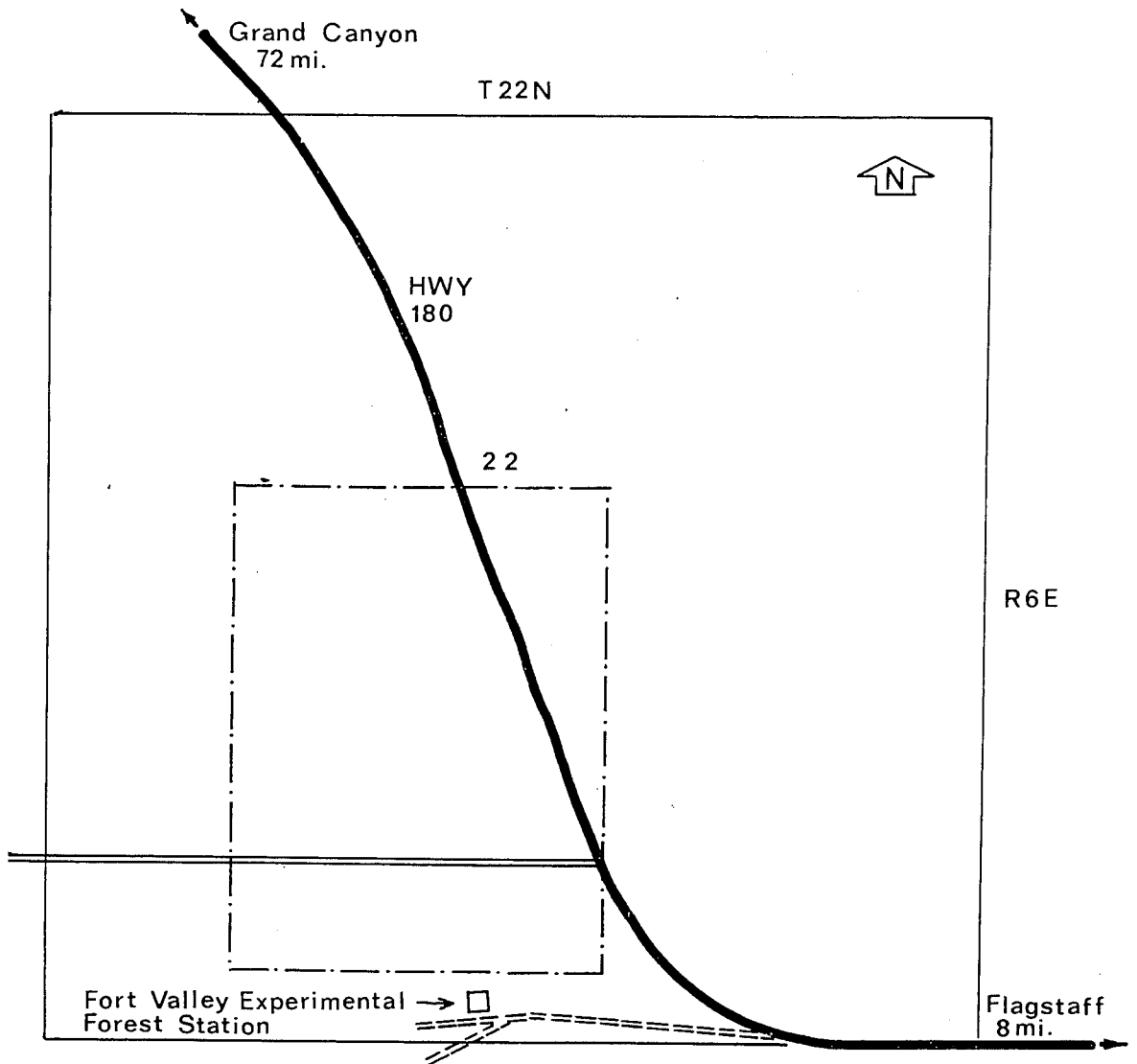
TABLE 3. Birds and mammals of the G. A. Pearson Natural Area. Bird data are from Haldeman et. al. (1973). Birds marked by an asterisk are known to breed in the area. The mammal list was taken from Lowe (1964).

Birds	
* Goshawk .....	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
* Mourning Dove .....	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
Great Horned Owl .....	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>
* Broad-tailed Hummingbird .....	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>
* Red-shafted Flicker .....	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker .....	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>
* Hairy Woodpecker .....	<i>Dendrocopos villosus</i>
Northern Three-toed Woodpecker .....	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>
* Western Flycatcher .....	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>
* Western Wood Pewee .....	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>
* Violet-green Swallow .....	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>
* Steller's Jay .....	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>
Common Crow .....	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Clark's Nutcracker .....	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>
* Mountain Chickadee .....	<i>Parus gambeli</i>
* White-breasted Nuthatch .....	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>
* Pygmy Nuthatch .....	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>
* Brown Creeper .....	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
* Robin .....	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
* Hermit Thrush .....	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>
* Western Bluebird .....	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>
Mountain Bluebird .....	<i>Sialia currucoides</i>
* Solitary Vireo .....	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>
* Audubon's Warbler .....	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>
* Grace's Warbler .....	<i>Dendroica graciae</i>
* Brewer's Blackbird .....	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>
* Black-headed Grosbeak .....	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>

TABLE 3 (Continued)

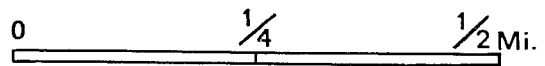
I. Birds (Continued)	
Evening Grosbeak .....	<i>Hesperiphona vespertina</i>
Cassin's Finch .....	<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>
* Pine Siskin .....	<i>Spinus pinus</i>
* Gray-headed Junco .....	<i>Junco caniceps</i>
II. Mammals	
Merriam's shrew .....	<i>Sorex merriami</i>
Vagrant shrew .....	<i>Sorex vagrans</i>
Black-tailed Jack Rabbit .....	<i>Lepus californicus</i>
Nuttall's cottontail .....	<i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i>
Golden-mantled ground squirrel .....	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>
Tassel-eared squirrel .....	<i>Sciurus aberti</i>
Deer mouse .....	<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>
White-footed mouse .....	<i>Peromyscus leucopus</i>
Porcupine .....	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>
Coyote .....	<i>Canis latrans</i>
Bobcat .....	<i>Lynx rufus</i>
Mule Deer .....	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>

FIGURE 1.



LEGEND

- - - - Boundary (approximate), Research Natural Area
- Section line
- ==== Light duty road
- ===== Unimproved dirt road
- Highway



G. A. PEARSON NATURAL AREA, COCONINO CO., ARIZONA



Photo 1. The G. A. Pearson Research Natural Area showing various size classes of ponderosa pine.



Photo 2. Uneven aged stands of ponderosa pine on the G. A. Pearson Natural Area.

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Society of American Foresters  
Committee on Natural Areas

Proposed Natural Area

Name of Proposed Natural Area G. A. Pearson

Location: State Arizona County Cocconino

Nearest Town Flagstaff

Nearest Federal, State or county highway North US 180

Permanence Afforded Through What Means Regulation  
(law, regulation, will, endowment, Board of Directors, etc.)

Name of Administration Unit Fort Valley Expt. Forest  
(National Forest, national park, national wildlife refuge, State, university, etc.)

Listing of Timber Types on Area:

<u>S.A.F. Type No.</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
<u>237</u>	<u>154</u>	<u>250</u>
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>
Barran, water, buffer zone, etc.	<u>154</u>	<u>      </u>
Total:	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>

Range in Elevation: Low 7325 Feet High 7450 Feet

Topography Level to rolling  
(Level, rolling steep, broken, etc.)

Geology Volcanic  
(Volcanic, alluvial, moraine, etc.)

Average Height and Diameter of each major species:

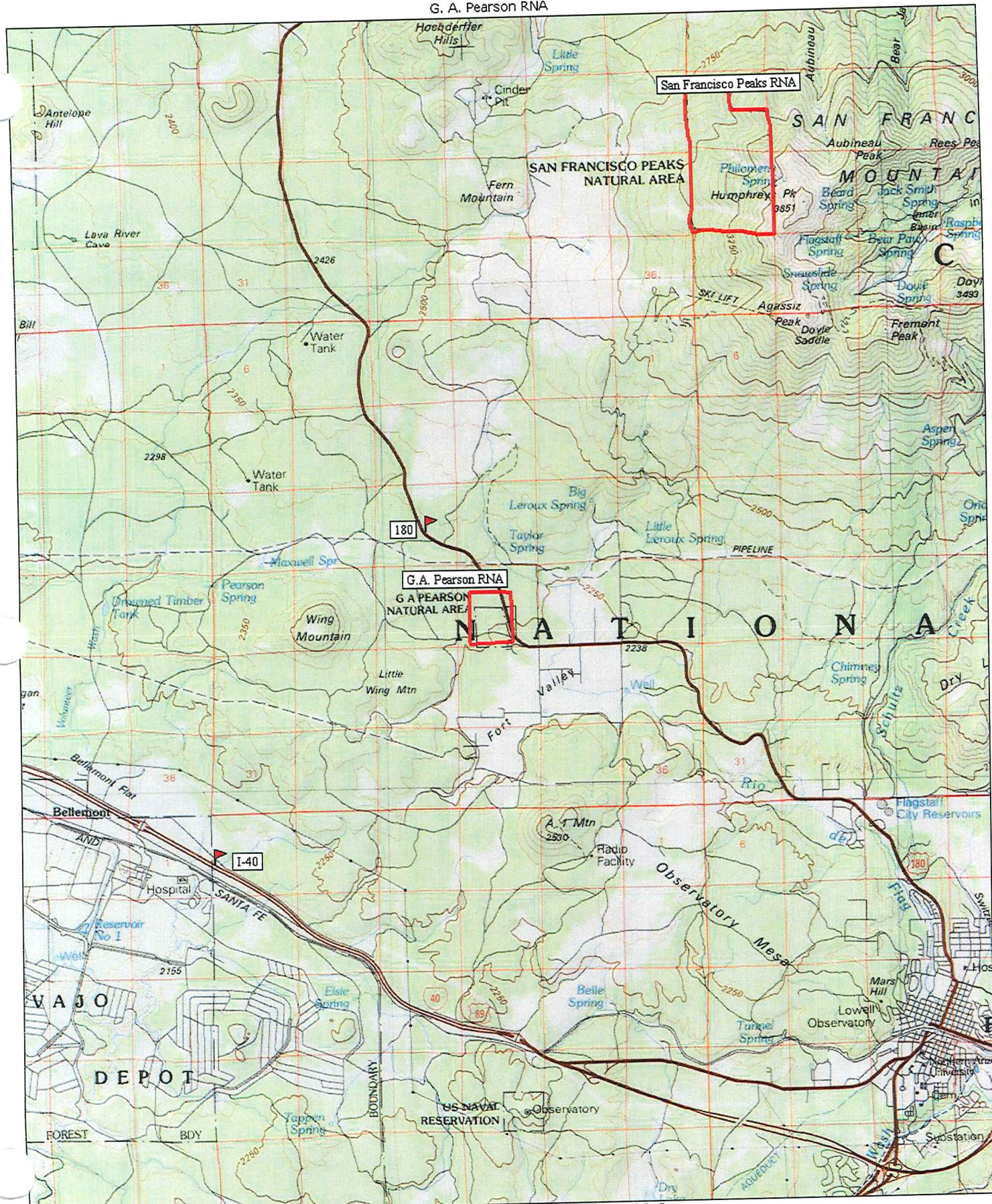
<u>Species</u>	<u>Average Height</u>	<u>Average Diameter</u>
<u>Proserpinaca sp.</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>20</u>

Submitted by Gil Schubert Title Project Leader

Mailing Address Director, Rocky Mt Expt Sta Date 1-27-69  
240 W. Prospect

Fort Collins, Colorado 80521



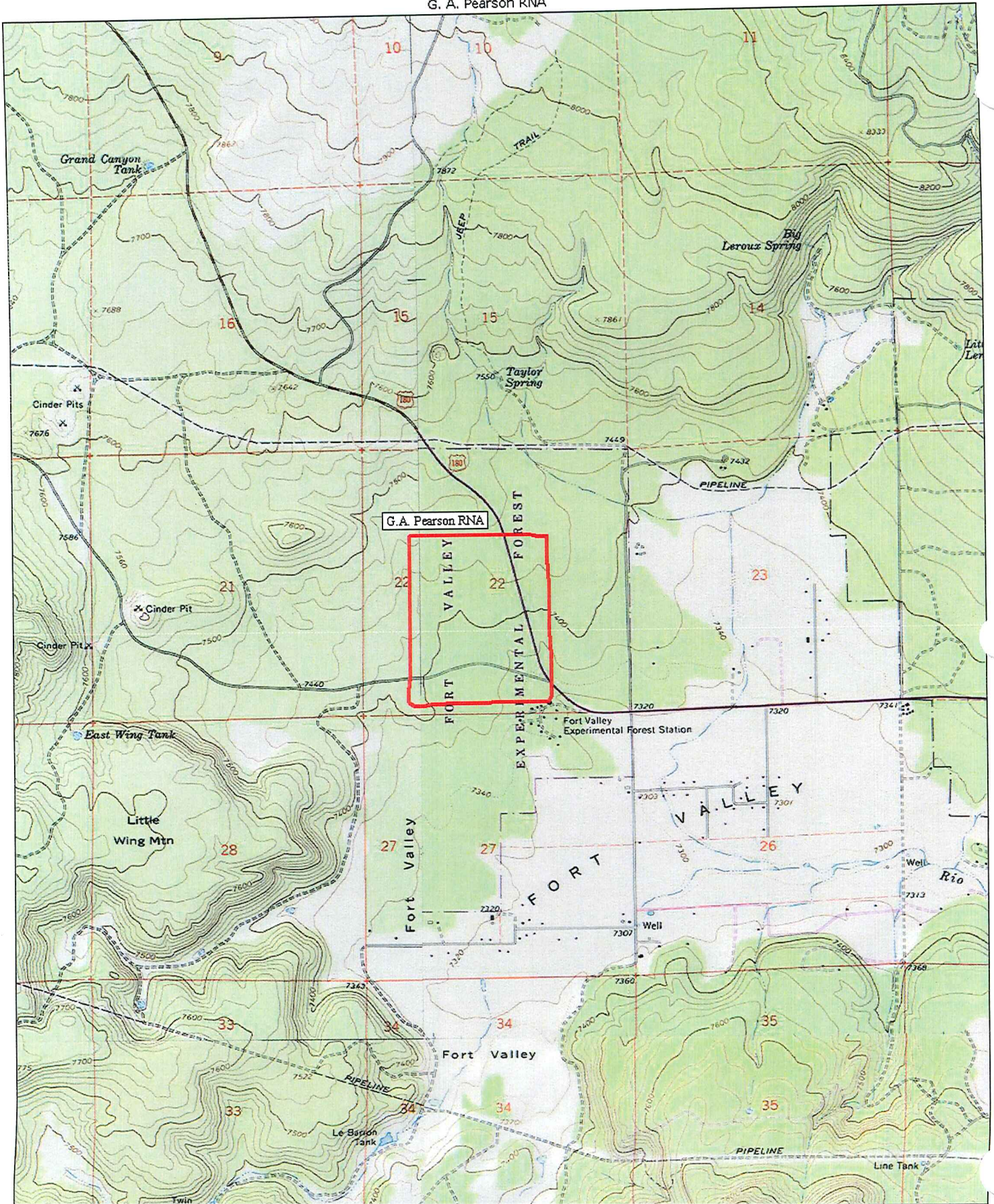


TN 12° MN

0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 miles  
 0 1 2 3 4 5 km  
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G. A. Pearson RNA



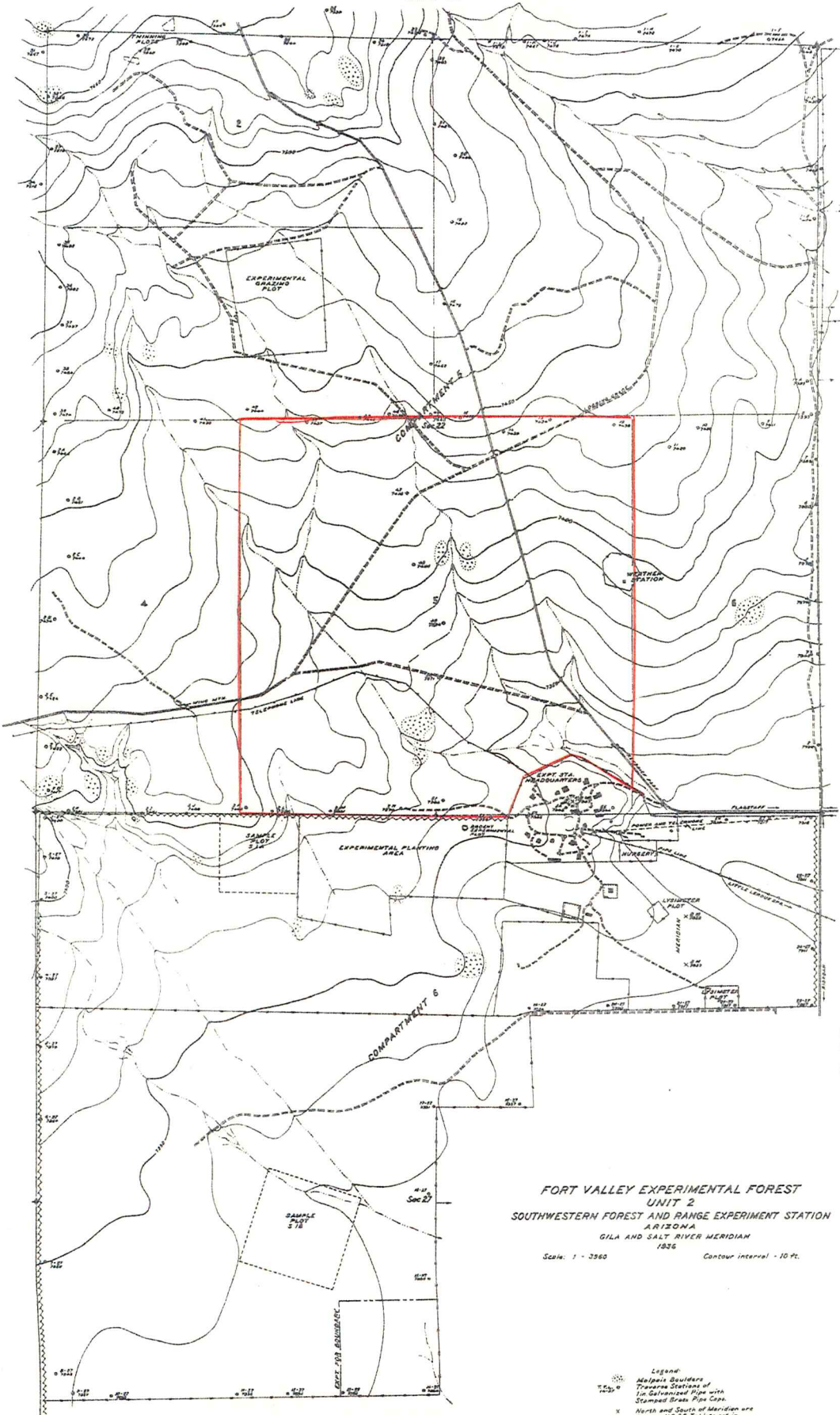
TN 12° MN

0 5 1 MILE  
0 1000 FEET 0 500 1000 METERS

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R. 6 E.



T. 22 N.

FORT VALLEY EXPERIMENTAL FOREST  
 UNIT 2  
 SOUTHWESTERN FOREST AND RANGE EXPERIMENT STATION  
 ARIZONA  
 GILA AND SALT RIVER MERIDIAN  
 1826

Scale: 1 - 3560

Contour interval - 10 ft.

Legend:  
 ● Malpais Boulders  
 ○ Transera Stations of  
 1/2" Galvanized Pipe with  
 Stamped Brass Pipe Caps  
 X North and South of Meridian are  
 Bronze U.S.P.S. Tablets set in  
 Concrete Posts  
 Topography by A.G.R. Drachman, and  
 W.E. Burton.

G. A. Pearson Natural Area

Unfortunately, three allotments converge in the suggested sites. We foresee management conflicts and much refencing in order to set up an RNA here. One weir is almost useless since a highway and old borrow pit interfere with the natural hydrological cycle. Also, the range seemed, at best, in a fair condition. The bottoms, especially were taken over by iris and bluegrass, replacing the more productive and ecologically diverse mixed sedge communities.

The Arizona fescue meadow at Profanity Ridge on Escudilla Mountain remains our choice for this example of montane grassland.

#### 9. Forest Lakes Old Growth Ponderosa Pine

This site was suggested by the Heber Ranger District as a possible RNA. Nearly pristine yellowpine old-growth covers about 600 or so acres in vicinity of Forest Lake Estates (private residence area on patented mining claims). We found this to be truly an exceptional and noteworthy area. The forest meets description of the ponderosa pine/screwleaf muhly-Arizona fescue habitat type. Site index is high II and low I in the bottoms. The forest appears two-aged: an overstory of old yellowpine greater than 250 years and regeneration, often as thickets, of saplings less than 100 years.

While research opportunities here are enormous, we regretfully decline to suggest this site as an RNA within the Region's present need. Our basic reason is that as of now the representation of ponderosa pine ecosystems appears filled. Similar ponderosa pine/bunchgrass ecosystems are within the Gus Pearson, Monument Canyon, and proposed Rocky Gulch RNA's.

We hope this area can continue to serve a useful old-growth function within the Forest Plan. Possible prescriptions as an old-growth requirement for wildlife and as historic or cultural value can be developed. The Task Group suggests that you might consult with Stet Edmunds, Timber Staff, Carson NF. Stet identified a tract of similar old-growth yellowpine on the Mt. Taylor District of the Cibola NF while he was ranger there. Its recreational and wildlife possibilities exceeded its timber returns.

#### 10. Double Cabin

Double Cabin is a site somewhat over 100 acres where nearly pristine ponderosa pine and mixed conifer ecosystems exist as old growth. The ecosystems appear to be ponderosa pine/Arizona fescue on the drier site, white fir/Arizona fescue on the wetter.

Like Forest Lakes ponderosa pine, this area is unusual and of natural area quality. The Region does not contain any example of the white fir/Arizona fescue within its RNA network (minor acreages of this ecosystem can be found on north-facing slopes in Monument Canyon RNA in New Mexico).

However, the proposed site is too small for qualification as RNA, and edge effects upon the old-growth stands would affect much anticipated research there. Again, the old stands might well serve a useful wildlife requirement within that area.