



# City Council Report

**Date:** June 6, 2016  
**To:** City Council  
**Through:** Karolyn Kent, Assistant City Manager  
**From:** Dan Cleavenger, Water Resources Department Director  
**Subject:** Authorize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Forest Foundation (NFF) through the Northern Arizona Forest Fund (NAFF) and the City of Mesa for improved watershed management

## Strategic Initiatives



## Purpose and Recommendation

The proposed MOU between the City of Mesa and the National Forest Foundation (NFF) provides a framework for support by the City for implementation of high priority forest restoration and watershed health projects on National Forest lands in the Salt and Verde River Watersheds. Participation in this program will help maintain both the resiliency and quality of City water supplies delivered through the Salt River Project (SRP) system.

The Water Resources Department recommends that the Mesa City Council approve the Memo of Understanding.

## Background and Discussion

The NFF is the only nonprofit conservation organization wholly dedicated to the health and vitality of United States national forests and grasslands. NFF's Northern Arizona Forest Fund (NAFF), developed in partnership with the Salt River Project (SRP), provides Arizona businesses, residents, and municipalities a way to invest in forest health and watershed improvement projects.

Mesa, along with other water providers in the valley who receive surface water from the Salt-Verde watershed through SRP, has experienced significant impacts in the quality of the water supply delivered to the treatment plants after a significant fire event within the watershed. SRP has spilled water laden with ash and debris. Considering that water from the Salt-Verde system makes up over 40% of the City's surface water supply, Mesa's Water Resources Department has developed operational procedures to minimize the impacts to our customers in response to such events. Such procedures primarily involve reducing the distribution of water treated at the Val Vista Water

Treatment Plant and increased pumping of groundwater.

Recognizing the efforts of SRP and the NFF to manage the forests of the Salt Verde watershed and the resulting positive impact on our water supplies, several valley water providers have agreed to invest in the healthy forest projects through contributions to the NAFF.

YEAR	PHOENIX	SCOTTSDALE	GLENDALE
FY 15/16	\$200,000	-	-
FY 16/17	\$200,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
FY 17/18	\$200,000	\$50,000	\$25,000
FY 18/19	-	\$50,000	\$25,000
TOTALS	\$600,000	\$120,000	\$75,000

Through these contributions the NFF looks to complete such projects as forest thinning and prescribed burning, stream and wetland restoration, sediment and erosion management, and habitat improvement and re-vegetation.

Upon adoption of the proposed Resolution, the City would make an initial contribution of \$30,000 within FY2016/17, and additional annual payments of \$30,000 for FY2017/18 and FY2018/19.

### **Alternatives**

Mesa could decline to approve the Memo of Understanding but then would forego the opportunity to participate in stewardship activities associated with the NAFF. These activities may lower water treatment and delivery costs, protect the reliability of water supplies, and reduce the risk of costly infrastructure expenditures caused by fire and flooding. In addition, the City would lose the opportunity to develop marketing materials that communicate our partnership with NAFF to our customers and citizens.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The Water Resources Department has budgeted an annual cost of \$30,000.00 for contributing to the Fund for a total of three (3) years or \$90,000.00.

### **Coordinated With**

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the MOU as to form.