



## Mingus Mountain Campground: A Retrospective

*Article and photos by Jerry Dalen*

The year was 1996, and the Prescott National Forest Service had served notice to our small band of free flyers that they had come up with a master plan for Mingus Mountain, our premier flying site in Arizona. Unfortunately, that plan did not include “dispersed” camping. Considering that we had been allowed for over 20 years to camp on top of the mountain, only yards from our gliders and launch ramps, we considered this bit of news devastating indeed.

However, after a few more inquiries, we were told that if we could demonstrate that there was sufficient need for us to be

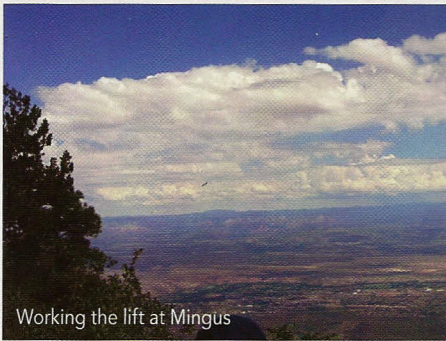
camped on the mountain, perhaps some arrangement could be worked out. That was all the incentive we needed to ignite a ferocious letter-writing campaign to the local ranger station in Camp Verde, a small town south of the mountain in the beautiful Verde Valley that is home to the offices of the Forest Service. Indeed, after a few weeks, numerous letters from the hang gliding and paragliding community as well as from some of our friends around the country made it obvious to the Forest Service that we were serious about pursuing the campground. There was some resistance from others in

the government agency who had not seen the site and really had no idea what this hang gliding thing was, but they eventually saw the light, and in October of 1996 a group of Arizona Hang Glider Association (AHGA) members met with the head rangers for the Prescott National Forest to discuss the particulars of this “hang gliding campground.” Several other meetings with the Forest Service yielded a well-diagramed proposal for the campground, which was submitted to the club membership for approval.

Now, ten years later, we have turned the corner on the Mingus Mountain



# Foundation



Working the lift at Mingus

Campground Project. With the help of the Foundation for Free Flight (formerly USHGF), along with the generous donations of time and money from the members of our club, friends, and USHPA members across the United States, we have built the foundation for a beautiful campground.

Picture a tree-covered forest thick with ponderosa pines at almost 8000 feet in elevation. Picture eleven camp-

ing spurs, four of them with doublewide parking and all of them able to accommodate almost every type of RV or camping trailer. Each spur has its own fire ring/grill and picnic table, a center fire ring for socializing, and a nice comfortable bathroom within a short walking distance. We are still working on outfitting all of the spurs with their accommodations, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Add in the concrete ramp on the south launch, along with a gravel/dirt north launch to handle overflow on those busy days, and you've got yourself a world-class flying site. Hopefully within the next couple of years the project will be complete. (See our Web site at [www.ahga.org](http://www.ahga.org) for details.)

And as this season comes upon us, our local contingents of paraglider pilots are working together with the Forest Service to improve the paragliding launch. Add

it all up, and the result of several years of hard work and dedication from the members of the AHGA is proudly offered to all USHPA members to enjoy.

So come on out and experience the great air, friendly locals, the beautiful views, and of course the great flying. You're welcome any time, but mark your calendar for our Labor Day Fly-in, September 1-3.

*See the article by Hal Hayden in the August 2004 issue of this magazine for more information on the early stages of the Mingus Mountain campground project.*



Plenty of room for setup!