

Mountaineire Community Trails Project

USDA Forest Service
Mormon Lake Ranger District, Coconino National Forest
Coconino Country, Arizona

Background

This project was developed in cooperation with Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP), a nonprofit organization based in Flagstaff. The Mountaineire area planning process was the fourth large-scale collaborative project that GFFP has assisted the Coconino National Forest with project planning and design. Proposed recreation activities were derived from the Project Initiation Letter, Need for Change Report, and comments from the GFFP Board of Directors on a Draft Proposed Action developed by GFFP and the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team.

Purpose and Need for Action

There is a need to provide designed and maintained designated trail opportunities in the project area. Currently an unmanaged system of user-created social trails fails to provide adequate public recreational opportunities and is leading to unnecessary resource impacts.

Proposed Action

Three types of trail system opportunities were considered for inclusion in this proposal: short-distance non-motorized opportunities, a longer-distance motorized single-track system, and a longer-distance motorized ATV trail system. Both long-distance motorized trail systems have been dropped from consideration at this time. There are ample opportunities for street-legal ATV use on Forest Roads in the project area, and designating a motorized single-track trail system is outside the scope of this analysis.

As the community of Mountaineire grows there will be an ongoing need for public recreational opportunities on adjacent national forest lands.

While there are a number of actions that could help provide recreational opportunities, it is prudent to propose limited actions and reserve further actions until the community organizes and displays a desire to help develop and design any additional recreation projects. The following actions are proposed below and detailed on Map 1:

- ❑ Designate public access points for both non-motorized uses and motorized uses (road access) using existing easements and rights of way to ensure ongoing, unimpeded public access to National Forest Lands. No new easements or rights of way are proposed.
- ❑ Designate a system of non-motorized multi-use trails surrounding the community of Mountaineire to be open to foot, horse, and bicycle traffic, but closed to motorized traffic of approximately 3.5 miles.
- ❑ Evaluate existing user-created social trails and Forest Service roads slated for closure for conversion to system trails and rehabilitate any remaining, redundant social trails.

- ❑ Issue a Forest Order prohibiting motorized cross-country travel in the Mountaineer project area and limited motorized use to designated roads only.
- ❑ Install fencing and barriers as necessary to prevent motorized use of the non-motorized trail system.

The Coconino National Forest has implemented similar decisions in recent years with great success. A prime example is the Campbell Mesa area southeast of Flagstaff. The Campbell Mesa area was criss-crossed with many Forest Roads and had no designated trail system for the growing Country Club area neighborhood. The area was closed to motorized use and designated trails were constructed. This proposed action is similar in that a designated trail system is proposed to provide non-motorized recreational opportunities for the Mountaineer community and to limit the impacts of motorized use.

Decision Authority

I am planning on authorizing this project through a Decision Memo. This action would be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment because of authorities under FSH 1909.15 Sec. 31.2, paragraph 1. – Construction and reconstruction of trails.

The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects, which may significantly affect the environment.

Proposed Non-Motorized Trail System – Map 1

Mountaineer Community Trails Project - March, 2005

