



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Coconino  
National Forest,  
Supervisor's Office

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File Code: 1950-3/7710

Date: July 16, 2007

Dear Forest User,

Enclosed is a copy of the Proposed Action for the Coconino National Forest's Motorized Travel Management Plan. This document describes how we propose to manage motor vehicle use on the forest in order to comply with new Forest Service travel regulations (36 CFR 212). The Proposed Action represents a synthesis of public comments and Forest Service specialist recommendations gathered during the travel analysis process we initiated last year.

In fall of 2006, we hosted several open houses across northern Arizona, and our staff has attended additional meetings since then in order to gather ideas regarding motorized forest travel from everyone concerned: neighbors and visitors, state, county, local and tribal governments, and other Federal agencies. If you are receiving this letter, you probably attended an open house or meeting or perhaps you contacted us via phone, letter, or email. I appreciate your interest and time spent so far in participating in our project planning. During this process, it was obvious that many different people recreate or use the Coconino National Forest in many different ways. Sometimes, these differences lead to conflict. But what you all share in common is that you *enjoy* your National Forests.

The Proposed Action focuses on changes to the forest's existing transportation system; we are not proposing any change to existing authorized motorized trails or the Cinder Hills OHV area or areas currently closed or restricting motor vehicles. The Proposed Action includes amending the Forest Plan to prohibit "off-road" driving across the entire forest. However, we still plan to allow motor vehicles limited access off designated routes for the purpose of dispersed camping. We propose to close numerous roads that are unnecessary or redundant, or that cannot be adequately maintained, or that compromise the integrity of sensitive resources. However, we also propose to add some currently unauthorized or "user-created" routes to the forest transportation system in order to provide access to points of interest and maintain some longer distance loop-riding opportunities.

While the Proposed Action will significantly reduce miles of National Forest System roads, we intend to maintain adequate motorized access to the forest. In conjunction with existing motorized trails and the Cinder Hills OHV area, the Proposed Action would result in approximately 3,950 miles of designated roads and trails and one 13,711-acre area open to motor vehicles on the forest.

Unfortunately, the Proposed Action will probably not meet everyone's specific need or desire. For instance, several groups have expressed concern about the lack of motorized trails currently on the forest and they feel that opportunities for trail riding will be even less after off-road driving is prohibited. These groups suggested potential new motorized trails during the travel analysis process. Our preliminary effects analysis found resource concerns with some of these specific trail proposals; other suggestions were more general in nature and I determined that we did not have sufficient staffing or time to analyze these conceptual ideas. For these reasons, we did not include additional motorized trails in the Proposed Action, but I am willing to consider



alternatives to this Proposed Action.

*Scoping* is an ongoing procedure used to identify important issues and determine the extent of analysis necessary for an informed decision on a proposed action. I have determined the forest will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze the impacts of this Proposed Action and any alternatives that are considered. Publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register initiates the scoping process under provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. During this scoping period, the Forest Service will be seeking comments on the merits of the Proposed Action, as well as comments that address errors or information that has been omitted, or possible alternatives to be considered in our environmental analysis.

A series of open houses are scheduled to further explain the Proposed Action and to provide an opportunity for public input. Open houses are planned at the following locations and dates:

July 31, Flagstaff, AZ, Sinagua High School, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

August 1, Happy Jack, AZ, Happy Jack Lodge, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

August 2, Camp Verde, AZ, Cliff Castle Casino, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

August 4, Flagstaff, AZ, Sinagua High School, 12:00-5:00 p.m.

Written comments to be considered in the preparation of the draft EIS should be submitted within 45 days from the date an NOI is published in the Federal Register. The Environmental Protection Agency publishes NOIs every Friday in the Federal Register; we expect the NOI for this project will be published on August 3, 2007. To confirm the NOI publication date for this project, you can check the Federal Register on-line at [www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fedreg/frcont07.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/frcont07.html).

Written comments may be submitted to:

Nora Rasure, Forest Supervisor

1824 S Thompson St

Flagstaff, AZ, 86001

FAX: (928) 527-3620

Email: [comments-southwestern-coconino@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southwestern-coconino@fs.fed.us)

*Name and address of the person submitting electronic comments must be included.*

After this scoping comment period, we anticipate the draft EIS will be published in the summer of 2008. The comment period on the draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register. After the 45-day draft EIS comment period, we expect the final EIS to be completed by early 2009.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215, if the NEPA documentation results in an appealable decision.

Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any persons may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only limited circumstances, such as to protect trade

secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied; the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within seven days.

Again, I appreciate your help and interest with our forest management programs. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact Project Leader Jim Beard at (928) 527-3600. Additional information about this project can also be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/tmr.shtml>.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Nora B. Rasure*  
NORA B. RASURE  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure: