

FPR Comment Summary Round 2

Topic #1: Desired Conditions and Social and Economic Sustainability

- **How is the Forest important to communities?**
- **What connections do individuals and communities have to the forest?**

People from a variety of forest communities see the forest as shaping their community identity. Open spaces, watershed protection, and recreational opportunities are among the reasons the forest is important to communities. Recreational activities enjoyed by many include hunting, fishing, cutting firewood, dispersed camping, wildlife watching and hiking. There is a concern that hunting, target shooting and motorized recreation occurs too close to residential areas. People approve of the fuels reduction and fire management efforts on the Wildland Urban Interface and would like to see it continued and increased. There is widespread support for more education and outreach by the Forest Service, informing the public on a range of topics including dispersing camping, motorized use, where Red Rock Pass money is spent, and wildfire prevention. People like the Forest the way it is and would like to see fewer or no further land exchanges or development of Forest land. It is evident that many people agree that being surrounded by the Forest adds to the quality of life in their community.

The Forest not only provides a scenic setting for people to live in but is recognized as a driver of the local economies through many forest based economic activities. Many people noted a shift in economic activities on the Forest from resource based industries, including mining and logging to a more tourist and recreation based forest economy. There is varying support for more intensive logging, through the creation of an economically viable method for thinning small diameter trees. The tourism industry is acknowledged as a major economic contributor and is heavily dependent on forest resources, including the scenery, road access, trails, and heritage resources. While some people back recreation permitting activities, such as SnowBowl and jeep tours, people would like to see them limited and in balance with ecosystem sustainability and have more public input considered in determining activities.

Topic #2: Desired Conditions and Ecological Sustainability

- What should the forest look like, and how should it respond to natural and human-caused events overtime?
- What should; ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, pinyon-juniper, grasslands, desert scrub, aspen, meadows, riparian, soils, and water look like in the future?
- How much, and what kinds of changes, are acceptable when a natural or human-caused event occurs?
- Where do prescribed fire treatments, and wild land fire, fit into the wild land urban interface and outside of it?

Forest health related topics and wildfire activities were two prominent categories of comments. A more diverse forest, with a greater variety of species, ages and grassy openings is desired. Many people support effort for restoration to pre-settlement forest conditions, featuring clearings, openings, meadows. The long-term effects of grazing on watershed integrity and soils are a concern. Many people would like to see a change in policy regarding commercial timber and public firewood permits that would enable the public to assist in thinning the forest and restoring forest health. Support for the protection and restoration of riparian areas and water resources is apparent. For some people the amount of dead trees due to drought and beetle kill is currently at unacceptable levels, and many people would like to see them removed. Current drought conditions and climate change are a concern for the long-term ecological sustainability of the forest. Eradication treatments of non-native species are desired. Projects to restore and protect native plant and wildlife species are encouraged. Continuity of wildlife habitat and corridors are a concern.

The public requests that wildfire be used as a tool to restore forest health, and naturally caused fires be allowed to burn in wild, remote areas if the fires are determined to be beneficial to the ecosystem. Conversely, some people object to allowing fires to burn at all and object to the smoke levels in the air. Wildfire prevention and fuel management treatments in the Wildland Urban Interface are a high priority for the public. There is a general desire for more information about monitoring and analysis regarding the effects of prescribed burns and what it means to restore forest health.

Topic #3: Objectives

- What should the forest focus on, and where, given the funding level?
- What should the forest spend more time and money on?
- What should the forest spend less time and money on?

Education and enforcement are two areas that most people would like the Forest to place more focus on. Examples of desired education include: outreach in schools, campfire talks, community education through newsletters or local media, and to educate the constantly changing, and growing population of forest users. The public would like to see an overall increase in law enforcement presence. People expressed that effective enforcement does not have to be writing tickets, but that an educational approach for future compliance can be effective. Priority areas for enforcement include trash dumps, motorized recreation, commercial uses, and high-use areas.

There is support for a more efficient Forest Service, with less bureaucracy and paperwork, and a more visible on-the-ground presence. People expressed that they liked to see Forest Service employees in “green rigs” and “getting things done.” A desire for more personnel and project continuity is expressed. The Forest should focus on road management and maintenance, particularly in the Wildland Urban Interface and on the edge of Wilderness. People would like to see the Forest use more volunteers to provide education service and assist in patrol, a general increase in collaboration, and partnership efforts. Increased focus on recreational opportunities, trail development, and maintenance area suggested, particularly by Verde Valley residents. People would like to see more focus on getting rid of and controlling invasive species. More emphasis on actively finding an economically viable use for small diameter trees is supported.

Topic #4: Suitability of Areas

- What uses should occur and where?
- What types and amounts of commercial use would you like to see on the forest and where?
- What types and availability of dispersed recreation activities would you like to see on the forest and where?
- Where should domestic livestock grazing be allowed?
- Where should; commercial sales of timber, biomass fuel projects, firewood gathering, pinyon-juniper treatments, and aspen cutting be allowed?

There are conflicting views on multiple-use management. Some believe there is room for everyone; others view multiple-use management as the cause for user conflicts. Limited commercial tourism by helicopter and airplanes is suggested to alleviate the noise pollution they create. Some people see commercial recreation outfitters as an appropriate use of the forest; conversely others would like more intensive Forest management and limitations to where jeeps can travel. People generally support responsible timber resource management activities, particularly if the area is in need of thinning and not located in a Wilderness area. Some of the public are satisfied with current grazing suitability. Conversely, others feel that riparian areas are not considered suitable for grazing. There is a call for more monitoring and analysis of resource based activities to verify that the activity is being conducted in a sustainable manner.

There were many comments about motorized recreation management on the National Forest. While people feel that motorized recreation is a suitable use, they would like to see it limited to designated system roads or special use areas. Many people consider off-road motorized use as a problem on the forest. They assert that ORV use is creating social road networks and erosion problems. Education, increased enforcement of regulations, and improved signage are supported to inform users of where motorized recreation is appropriate.

Topic #5: Special Areas

- What kinds of areas are unique and need special management, for example; Wilderness, botanical, geological, scenic, and recreation areas?
- Do changes need to be made to existing designations?
- Do new areas need to be created?

People would like to see a variety of special areas be designated, including seasonal wetlands, unique geologic areas, important bird areas, historic and pre-historic resources, and motorized recreation areas. There is strong support for the protection of riparian areas through special area designation. Roadless area conversions to designated Wilderness areas are also supported. There is satisfaction with current existing Wilderness area designations, though some would like to see changes. Desired changes in existing designations include expanding various current Wilderness areas and modifying the Munds Mountain Wilderness area surrounding Bell Rock to appropriately reflect its high visitation and park like setting. Some people do not want any new areas created, citing fears that special recognition will cause over use of the unique resource. Others do not want areas designated as it limits the multiple-use management concept. Buffers around special areas, like Kachina Peaks, are desired. Fossil Creek, Anderson Mesa, Wing Mountain, and Walnut Canyon are a few of the areas people would like to see receive special area designation.