



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY



Coconino Off-Road Vehicle Plan: Wildlife and Quiet Recreation Still at Risk

Please Attend an Important Citizens' Open House To Learn About and Comment on the Proposed Coconino National Forest Travel Management Plan

The Coconino is releasing a draft plan for reigning in off-road vehicle use as required by the agency's 2005 Travel Management Rule. Although the plan prohibits cross-country motor vehicle travel, it fails to **curb and reverse a century of damage from unmanaged motor vehicle use that has impacted crucial wildlife habitat and watersheds and disrupted the solitude that many people seek in a national forest.**

The Coconino is an incredibly rich, biologically diverse forest and grassland that is refuge for imperiled and biologically important species such as the Mexican spotted owl, northern goshawk, pronghorn antelope, mule deer, Gunnison's prairie dog, tassel-eared squirrel, mountain lion and black bear. However, populations of owl, goshawk and deer are on the decline. The East Clear Creek watershed, above the Mogollon Rim, offers requisite forest and stream habitat for these species, as well as the threatened Little Colorado River spinedace.

Damaging ORV use in Arizona was specifically cited as a reason for the new rule. The spread of noxious weeds, erosion, wildlife disturbance, noise and conflicts between ORV users and other visitors is among the worst in the nation. Irresponsible behavior could be rewarded if 40 miles of illegally created routes are sanctioned as legal trails, as proposed in the draft plan. **The Coconino needs to reduce routes on the forest - not add more!**

The forest **should** also provide people with a place to connect with nature and enjoy a welcome relief from the sights and sounds of motorized activities. Only by reducing the current spider web of motorized routes (over 5,000 miles!) can the forest provide safe places and passages for imperiled wildlife as well as tranquility for the human spirit. Forest Service studies reveal that motorized recreationists are a minority. Only 11% of forest visitors participate in ORV activities, and less than 3% responded that motorized recreation, including driving for pleasure, was their primary reason for visiting the forest. Hiking, viewing wildlife and natural features, relaxation and escaping noise are far more important. Yet, the impact of off-road vehicles is so pervasive that most visitors are frustrated and find the quality of their experience is greatly diminished.

This is an opportunity to speak up and be heard!

Some ORV users may enjoy the challenge of steep, rutted and muddy routes, but unmaintained roads result in damage to vegetation, and serious soil loss that chokes vital watersheds and fisheries. The Coconino can only maintain 11% of its routes to meet safety standards and control eroding soils.

What You Can Do:

- **ATTEND A CITIZEN'S OPEN HOUSE:** Receive information about the decision process, what is good and BAD about the forest's proposal, review maps of the proposed road system & where it would encroach on crucial wildlife habitat & damage watersheds. Then write effective comments to send to the Coconino.

Prescott: Wednesday, August 1, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Prescott College, San Juan Building, Second Floor, 370 Garden St. Prescott, AZ 86305

Refreshments Served

Flagstaff: Saturday, July 28, 11:00 – 12:30

Flagstaff Federated Community Church, Rees Hall, 400 W. Aspen Ave. Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Enjoy a picnic lunch on the lawn under the shade of beautiful old trees.

There is no cost, but please register by contacting Liz Boussard at eab8@nau.edu or 928-527-3809 (Flagstaff) or Sam Frank 928-717-6076 (Prescott). We can also give you directions or other information.

- **ATTEND A FOREST SERVICE OPEN HOUSE:** Voice your concerns for conservation values.
Flagstaff: Tuesday, July 31, 5 – 8, **OR** Saturday, August 4, 12 – 5, Sinagua High School, 3950 E. Butler.
Happy Jack: Wednesday, August 1, 5 – 8, Happy Jack Lodge, Lake Mary Road
Camp Verde: Thursday, August 2, 5 – 8, Cliff Castle Casino

For more information go to: www.endangereearth.org/orv