



White Mountain Apache Tribe

Office of Historic Preservation

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March 20, 2014

M. Earl Stewart – Forest Supervisor
ATTN: Coconino National Forest Plan Revision Team
Re: Revised Land Management Plans / DEIS
1824 S. Thompson Street
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Dear: Mr. Stewart,

The White Mountain Apache Tribe appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed Forest Management Plan and the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Coconino National Forest. Ndee (Western Apaches) have longstanding and powerful cultural and spiritual ties to all of the lands, mountain ranges, water sources, and ecosystems within the Coconino National Forest.

The Tribe has been clear and consistent in advising the U. S. Forest Service, and other federal and state agencies responsible for the management of our aboriginal territory about the high significance of our ancestral landscapes and sacred sites. The Tribe has also been clear and consistent about the American Indian fiduciary and public trust mandates to protect these lands and sites from the many threats posed by disrespect for plants, animals, minerals, waters, and Native American heritage.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe has also been clear and consistent in supporting interests asserted by the Yavapai-Apache Nation, the Hopi Tribe, Zuni Pueblo, the Tonto Apache Tribe, and the Navajo Nation regarding the unique and irrevocable significances of the major mountains under Forest Service trusteeship, such as Dził Cho (San Francisco Peaks).

In recent decades the White Mountain Apache Tribe has acted as a constructive participant in Forest Service consultative and administrative processes relating to our aboriginal lands and sacred mountains. The Tribe has been repeatedly assured by federal officials that they have understood our positions and their trust responsibilities to Indian people, tribes, and ancestral lands. In previous statements and in the proposed land management plan and DEIS we read of Forest Service commitments to the integrity and vitality of the natural and cultural resources of public lands—foundations of good governance and appropriate stewardship, to be sure.

The Ndee and White Mountain Apache Tribe always welcome the sorts of assurances contained in the "Tribal Relations" section of the Forest Management Plan and in that plan's many