

Doug Ruppel - District Ranger
1192 West Saddlevue Road
Douglas AZ 85607

September 3, 2020

Dear Doug,

I am writing in response to your Scoping Letter regarding Chiricahua Public Access. I am specifically writing in regards to the proposed road around the Dart Ranch that would provide vehicular access to John Long Canyon.

It's important to understand the background of this project. The Douglas Ranger District has been trying to access this area for at least 35 years with little success, due to wide-spread opposition from the local public. In the past, the district has shown a propensity for duplicity when it comes to accessing John Long Canyon.

The existing road from Rucker to John Long Canyon was created illegally by then AZ Game and Fish Regional Supervisor Gerry Perry. Douglas District Ranger Doug Hardy turned a blind eye to this illegal act. Unfortunately for Hardy and Perry, they failed to ensure access for the last stretch and were left with a road that provided vehicular access *almost* into John Long Canyon. This road does provide foot access into John Long Canyon and we believe this is sufficient for the public.

Creating vehicular access will have negative impacts to listed species. Peregrine falcons nest in the cliffs above John Long Canyon. Where the road in John Long Canyon previously headed north (where it is now closed), is the center of a Northern goshawk territory. This would be a preferred site for truck camping and would be a continuous impact on these rare birds.

I'm sure you are aware of the large number of hunters that congregate in Rucker during hunting seasons. If vehicular access comes to John Long Canyon, it will soon have multiple wildcat camp sites, with dozens of people in the canyon at any one time. The Coronado NF has not been able to adequately manage existing recreation on the forest. Creating vehicular access to a remote area of the forest will only exacerbate this situation.

How much will the road around the Dart Ranch cost? Who is paying for it? How will you manage this area to protect the ecological and cultural values found here? Prior to Scoping, how many letters has your district received unsolicited, that advocated for this action?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "David Hodges". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Hodges
Natural Allies
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