
From: Dave Rorick [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, July 22, 2021 6:44 AM
To: FS-objections-southwestern-coronado
Cc: Ruppel, Douglas -FS
Subject: OBJECTION: South Fork Day Use Area

TO: Kerwin S. Dewberry, Forest Supervisor
and Reviewing Officer,
South Fork Day Use Area #56779
Office of Supervisor
Coronado National Forest, Tucson Region

RE: OBJECTIONS TO CURRENT DRAFT DECISION
finding 'No Significant Impact'
for the South Fork Day Use Area Project

FROM:

Dave Rorick, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Supervisor Dewberry:

I submitted the below comment on the initial draft for the South Fork project in September 2020. I did not receive any acknowledgment of my objections to the initial draft. As I understand procedures, I and others should have received a response to our first comments, as well as notice of a time period for submitting our comments to this present draft.

MY COMMENTS ON THE INITIAL DRAFT:

Date submitted (US Mountain Standard

Time): 9/15/2020 4:01:53 PM

First name: David Last name: Rorick

Comments: For 35 years my birding friends and family members have been gathering at Portal for a week of birdwatching and nature hikes focusing on the South Fork trail of Cave Creek, every two to three years when possible. We've been witness to the damage of fire and floods, and unfortunate budget cutbacks affecting the Forest Service. All of us, appreciate the productive teamwork of the Forest and volunteers of the Friends of Cave Creek in this plan to restore basic day-use amenities to the South Fork trail, which is so important for birders and naturalists visiting the Chiricahuas. The one proposal I would like to ask you to revisit is the road closure, which punishes older visitors like me: We would face a 3/4-mile hike on that road to the berm, only to face another 1/2-mile hike over that very difficult washed out non-road, non-trail, just to get to the trailhead, where we encounter what we truly came for, a trail through nature!

MY OBJECTIONS TO CURRENT DRAFT DECISION

The Finding of 'No Significant Impact' on the natural environment of the South Fork Day Use Area is flawed. It purports to 'restore and enhance the level of services destroyed in the floods of 2014' but ignores the Forest Service tradition of welcoming the public and encouraging the public's opportunity to understand and appreciate the natural history of the area. Instead, the present draft continues to propose closing the access road to vehicles at times of most interest to researchers, photographers and a public drawn to the South Fork's habitat to observe nature's living cycles for themselves. Closure of the access road to vehicles would burden all visitors with a much longer hike just to get to the trailhead; but the worst hit would be older people like myself and colleagues, who will find the hike to the trailhead too difficult to manage.

The present draft contains no cogent argument nor any scientific study to justify road closure at any time of year. I have walked the

South Fork trail every two to four years since 1985; I have observed stolid trogons nesting in the sycamores, undisturbed by its human observers; I've encountered a black bear and a rattlesnake. But I've never seen a Mexican spotted owl, which I understand makes its home at an elevation much higher than an average visitor reaches on the South Fork trail. I have seen the effects of natural destruction, but never any evidence of human depredation. Instead I've met young researchers and photographers who are doing the work of educating all of us in nature's practices. The South Fork planning committee has suggested that its proposals would protect habitat and wildlife. But it has not presented to us any studies, evidence or data in support of the claim that road closure would serve to protect the wildlife of the South Fork.

I want to add my support to what my fellow visitors to the South Fork are suggesting as a healthy alternative: A permit system that can govern vehicles using the South Fork access road: The permit can include rules of the road and information on habitat that will educate the visitors in the South Fork's natural history and increase awareness of habitat sensitivity.

Thank you very much for consideration of my comments and suggestion.

Dave Rorick