

08-09-2023

Kerwin Dewberry – Forest Supervisor  
Coronado National Forest  
300 W Congress St  
Tucson, AZ 85701

Kurt Davis – Deputy Forest Supervisor  
Coronado National Forest  
300 W Congress St  
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Mr. Dewberry and Mr. Davis,

I am writing with serious concerns about the Chiricahua Public Access Project #57856.

I have been monitoring permitted research trail cameras in John Long Canyon for over 7 years now. I am in the canyon every 2 months or so, giving me a unique opportunity to watch the seasons, the wildlife and enjoy the peace and quiet of that amazing place. There are currently 5 trails that lead into that canyon – with a little walking effort, hunters and recreators can get there just like I do!

I am on foot in the upper canyon, giving me a wonderful forest experience that I would wish for anyone to experience. I have never run into another human out there – only bees, bears, deer, snakes, raptors, and many other quiet and shy creatures. I have seen the Mexican spotted owls, the peregrine and the goshawk with my own eyes and the jaguar through the lens of my cameras. I have seen an incredible diversity of life in a natural setting – a value that would certainly be degraded with vehicles, camping and the kinds of disruptions these vehicles and encamped humans would bring.

No more access is needed. There are currently 5 hiking trails that lead into that canyon – with a little walking effort, people can get there now:

1. FR74E to FR 4243 (Rak) -1-mile hike directly to John Long <http://www.chiricahuatrails.com/trails/rak-trail-267a>
2. FR74E to FR4244 to Trail 219 (Sycamore Canyon) to 219A - 2.1-mile hike directly to John Long.  
<http://www.chiricahuatrails.com/trails/sycamore-cub-trail-219a>
3. FR74 to FR 4250 to FR360 (Dart Ranch) - .5-mile hike directly onto John Long Road from Turkey Creek (FR41):
4. Trail 264 (Pole Bridge) - 2.5-mile hike directly into the top of John Long Road  
<http://www.chiricahuatrails.com/trails/pole-bridge-trail-264>
5. FR4257 to FR334 to Trail 266 (Cottonwood) - 2.7-mile hike directly into the top of John Long Road

Contrary to the implication in this proposal, YES, forest users can drive to the rim just above the Dart Ranch and easily hike down - they just can't drive down into the densely wooded and fire-prone canyon bottom. This current lack of vehicular access makes this one of the most delightful day-hiking and birdwatching areas in the Coronado National Forest.

I would like to note that completing this project enables only a very, very small percentage of the public, those with high clearance 4-wheeled drive vehicles, to access the bottom of John Long Canyon via vehicle. But even that disruption will be dramatic and destructive. Opening John Long Canyon to numbers of campers and vehicles creates 3 major risks:

**FIRE DANGER.** The geography in John Long Canyon is very narrow and goes for several miles into the mountains. If fire begins in the canyon and burns up canyon, the results will be devastating – both human and wildlife will be unable to escape. Building a road into the canyon would increase the number of campers who could become trapped by a fire, and the likelihood of ignitions from vehicles and human activities.

**FLOODING AND WEATHER DANGER.** It is ironic that Rucker Canyon has had the campgrounds closed and trails go unmaintained because of the number of times mother nature has devastated the canyon with wind and water, and yet this project proposes to open a new canyon that is even more treacherous and dangerous and subject to the whims of mother nature. I do not understand the logic.

**ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES BEING AFFECTED:** The impact on the endangered and threatened species will be unconscionable. The extraordinary biological values found in John Long Canyon represent a greater value to the public and the national forest than providing vehicular access. Allowing camping and vehicles in this canyon may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, the jaguar (MALLAA) – as stated by your own environmental assessment.

***How can the wants of a few humans to take their vehicles into an area outweigh the biological treasure chest that is John Long Canyon and the inherent dangers that will be created?? Especially in these times with habitat shrinking and the ill effects of humans upon the earth, we really need to check our affinity for tearing up more habitat simply for human convenience of putting wheels on the ground instead of feet.***

Finally, I understand that funding from Arizona Game and Fish is driving this project. Projects should NOT be initiated simply due to funding being provided by another agency. Projects should be initiated when they benefit a large portion of the public – trail maintenance, road maintenance, opening closed campgrounds, for example. Projects should NOT be initiated to provide access for a limited subset of the public, in response to special interest money.

In closing, if you have never been to the canyon, you should visit it, and you will see how unique and sensitive it is - please don't bend to the wishes of a very, very small minority, and put at risk a natural gem of the Coronado. It's a place that soothes the mind and releases the stresses of life by letting you quietly recreate – a stated goal of the Coronado National Forest and in the forest plan. It is also a place where our endangered and threatened animals have elected to make a home – without human interfering.

With appreciation and hope for John Long Canyon,

*Elizabeth Taylor*

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Cc: Michiko Martin, Regional Forester  
Joseph Harris, Project Contact

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