



Mr. Kerwin Dewberry, Forest Supervisor
Coronado National Forest
300 W Congress St
Tucson, AZ 85701
E-M: kerwin.dewberry@usda.gov

August 8, 2023

Re: Chiricahua Public Access Project

Dear Supervisor Dewberry:

Please be advised of the serious concerns of Archaeology Southwest regarding the proposed road construction project. The Coronado NF has plenty of roads already, only a small percentage of which are maintained for public access. Adding another 4wd road into a highly sensitive area in a mountain range held sacred by the Apache Nation is a bad idea. Please do not authorize this or any other new road construction without much greater deliberation, including truly meaningful consultation with the affected Tribes and Nations.

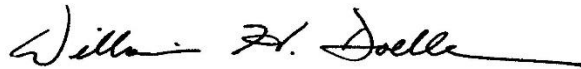
Archaeology Southwest is the Tucson-based nonprofit organization dedicated to collaborative preservation of heritage places and landscapes in the U.S. Southwest and el Noroeste de México. Our mission centers on working with Tribes, Tribal communities, and other place-based and local communities as we learn about and preserve our region's extraordinary cultural resources. Cultural resources are places, objects, and traditions created in the past and valued in the present. Fragile, generally irreplaceable, and too often abused or ignored, cultural resources are also vital links across human generations and among people and landscapes at multiple spatial and social scales.

Archaeology Southwest is collaborating with White Mountain Apache Tribe representatives and those of other Tribes to identify mountain ranges having particular religious and cultural significance, and the Chiricahua range is prominent among these. Archaeology Southwest holds lands and conservation easements in the vicinity of the proposed project, and the values of these archaeological preserves are tied to the largely unspoiled condition of the Chiricahuas. The project target area, John Long Canyon, is home to both important cultural resources and a number of species listed as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act, including Peregrine falcon, Mexican spotted owl, and Apache goshawk. Jaguar has been documented nearby. None of these precious and vulnerable species can benefit in any way from road construction.

The need for this road has not been adequately established. And it is clear that its construction would cause harm to multiple extraordinary values. The label "public access," is a misnomer as this 4wd road appears to be a means for enabling access only by hunters and off-highway vehicle users, a very small percentage of Coronado National Forest users. There is no evidence that the "public" at large needs or wants 4wd access to this amazing canyon and its headlands. There is every indication that the road would cater to a small group of forest users and have significant and adverse impacts to Tribes, wildlife, landscape-scale cultural resources, and non-motorized, non-consumptive forest users.

Archaeology Southwest supports and will continue to contribute directly to Coronado National Forest efforts—especially through preservation-focused collaborations with Tribes and state, and community-based partners. We are committed to encouraging and prioritizing the enjoyment, protection, and rehabilitation of public lands. We look forward to learning more about the Chiricahua Public Access Project and would be happy to provide additional information and perspective to you or members of your staff.

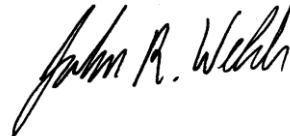
Sincerely,



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