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First name: Anon

Last name: Bstalmann@aol.com

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Draft Santa Catalina Potential Wilderness Evaluation Report PW-03-05-D5-002

I am writing this e-mail to not so much question the need from all evaluation aspects, but to address the need to have a segment of the Arizona Trail that is both accessible to trail stewards or maintainers and the mountain biking community in the greater Tucson area.

Presently the Arizona Trail follows a route on the west side of the Catalina Highway and once it gets into the Sabino Basin to Romero Pass area becomes a challenge to maintain. The 2003 fire has allowed both erosion and blowdowns to occur and the extremely long hikes into this area do not readily allow volunteers to want to do trail maintenance here. Additionally, this is the Pusch Ridge Wilderness Area so power tools cannot be used and mountain bikers can use this segment of the Arizona Trail.

Discussions with the Coronado NF have taken place to move the designation of the Arizona Trail to the east side of the Catalina Highway to allow both mountain bike use and volunteers to more easily have access for maintenance. This process has been ongoing since 2009 and hopefully will have a positive conclusion sometime in 2010.

I think my bottom line is do you really need two Wilderness Areas across the highway from each other?

In conclusion the USDA through the National Forest Service has a responsibility to maintain and support the organizations that maintain the National Scenic Trails. Since the Arizona Trail is now a National Scenic Trail, it is in my opinion, incumbent upon the Coronado National Forest to take positive measures to do this. Considering to make the east side of the Catalina Highway a potential wilderness area does not do this.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernie Stalmann
Southern Region Steward
Arizona Trail Association