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First name: Anon
Last name: dthomp325@gmail.com
Organization:
Title:
Comments: East Catalina Potential Wilderness

The East Catalina Potential Wilderness designation will close many miles of trails that mountain bikers have used for years. The evaluation report blatantly leaves mountain biking out of the summary of recreational uses, even though mountain bikers are clearly the majority users on many of the trails that will be affected, including the Bug Springs trail.

The Bug Springs trail, Green Mountain trail, Crystal Springs trail, and Butterfly trail are used by thousands of recreational riders every year. These trails are some of the most challenging in the area, and they draw significant numbers of riders from throughout the state and the rest of the nation. Closing these trails to mountain biking will have a negative impact on tourism related revenue for Coronado National Forest, the city of Tucson, and the state of Arizona.

For such a huge change to existing land-use priorities in the Coronado Nation Forest, it is obviously necessary to get an estimation of current trail-user numbers, yet the evaluation report contains no such information. How can a decision be made without first evaluating the demographics of current land users?

The land proposed does not require Potential Wilderness designation for protection. Due to the topography and the number of recreational users, there is little chance that the parcel will be under threat from logging, mining, or additional road construction. In addition, other designations such as a BLM "roadless" may be more suitable than Potential Wilderness, while still maintaining access to the current user demographic.

Dave Thompson
2340 W. Silberbell Oasis Way
Tucson, AZ 85747