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Comments: June 13, 2018

533 Suffolk Dr
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Nogales Ranger District
Coronado National Forest
Attn: John Titre, Recreation Staff Officer
303 Old Tucson Rd
Nogales, AZ 85621

Re: Tumacacori Red Springs Single Track Trail Project

Dear Sir:

I wish to provide comments and suggestions regarding the proposed Tumacacori Red Springs Single Track Trail Project and draft Environmental Assessment (EA). I offer these comments from the perspective of one who has enjoyed a variety of both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities in the Coronado National Forest over the past 30 years.

First of all, I would like to commend the District for recognizing the need for this project. As you know, motorized trail opportunities are minimal to non-existent throughout the Coronado. In contrast, there are hundreds of miles of non-motorized trails that attract hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers in a wide variety of scenic destinations throughout the forest. In past years, I enjoyed riding dirt bikes with my son in the Santa Rita Mountains. However, with the Rosemont Mine's footprint and associated closure of roads in the Rosemont Junction area, those opportunities are greatly diminished. Combined with the additional closure of semi-primitive motorized routes that resulted from the Nogales Ranger District's Travel Management process, the availability of opportunities for motorcycle enthusiasts to enjoy riding motorized trails on the forest is virtually non-existent. So, this project will help satisfy an important need that's well overdue.

Based on my review of the draft EA, I wish to provide some specific comments and suggestions as follows.

1. Location. I believe the proposed location is a good choice and should pose minimal conflicts. However, for future plans, I would encourage the District to provide a similar motorized recreation opportunity in the Santa Rita Mountains. This would help mitigate the loss of motorized recreation opportunities due to the Rosemont Mine and would be more centrally located and accessible to population centers east and south of Tucson such as Sierra Vista.

2. Shared Use or Single Use. When you consider the big picture of trail based recreation in the Coronado National Forest, it is very clear that motorized trails are greatly under-represented. In my view, it would seriously degrade the recreational experience for motorcycle riders to share this trail system with non-motorized users such as mountain bikers. Given the narrow trail corridor, it would be a safety hazard in my opinion to allow shared trail use. Motorcycle riders need a longer trail system to enjoy their sport and a reasonable expectation that they can ride the trail at higher (yet still responsible) speeds than the typical pace of non-motorized users. Having encounters with non-motorized users will invariably lead to dis-satisfaction and resentment. Plus the narrow trail corridor precludes safe passing maneuvers. Given the serious lack of motorized single track trails in

the Coronado, I believe the District has strong rationale to designate this single track trail system for exclusive use by motorcycles only. I urge the District to give this serious consideration. If the decision is ultimately made to make this a shared use trail system, then the EA will need to include more details on how the trail will be designed and managed to minimize user conflicts and ensure safety of all users.

3. Trail Design. I strongly agree with the District's plan to use Forest Service trail engineering standards and to use sustainable best practices in designing the trail system. Regarding the trail width, I suggest that in addition to the tread width objective, there also be a corridor width objective to ensure that the corridor has adequate clearance from encroaching vegetation. I like the planned use of contours, rolling dips, and grade reversals to minimize soil erosion. I do have one major concern though. I believe it is critical to keep the trail gradient below (and preferably well below) 10 percent as much as possible. I was the Trail Steward for Passage 1 of the Arizona Trail and experienced a wide variety of challenges keeping the trail maintained. There were three sections of the trail that had to be re-routed because the original trail gradient was too steep and the soils were too erosive despite numerous attempts to improve the trail with steps, 6 x 6 ties, and water bars. So, in my view, I would strongly recommend keeping the trail gradient as mild as possible to avoid problems with water drainage and soil erosion. Also, I would suggest the trail system be designed so that it can be enjoyed by beginner to intermediate riders and include user friendly features such as wide radius turns. There are some good resources about trail building and management guidelines at the web site of the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC). See this link: <http://www.nohvcc.org/Resources/TrailBuilding.aspx>.

4. Directional Signing. I believe the District should consider establishing one way directional signing for this trail system. The narrow trail corridor could pose a safety hazard for riders if they encounter on-coming riders, particularly where there are short sightlines. Plus a one way trail can provide a more predictable experience and reduce the number of passes between users. As a general rule, I suggest the trail be well signed and include signs at the beginning of the trail, at trail intersections, and at other key locations. As needed, warning signs should be used to caution trail riders of upcoming hazards or technical challenges.

5. Partnerships. I commend the District for working with volunteers and user groups such as Trail Riders of Southern Arizona. I believe the Adopt-a-Trail Program is a great venue to enlist volunteers who enjoy using the trail and who take pride in helping to keep it clean and well maintained. Certainly the Forest Service does not have adequate resources to maintain trails without volunteers and partnerships.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. Please keep me posted on future opportunities to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

//signed//

Steve Saway