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Last name: Allen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please see the attached letter from Arizona State Senator Sylvia Allen.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Travel Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

I am requesting that you extend the comment period for another 60 days. I don't believe that the public has been given enough time to fully understand the plan's impact to our forest access and to understand exactly which roads are being considered for closure. My family, like many families in my district, love to camp, hunt, fish, and hike in our forestlands. I am very concerned that the proposal to close 60% more roads will impact our ability to recreate in our favorite spots. This is a rule which will force more people into fewer areas.

I have been in contact with the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization, which has been a cooperating agency in the formulation of the plan. Several good things have resulted from this cooperation, but there are still a number of issues that are concerning to me and the citizens of my district.

1. Fire has become a major concern and impacts the forests every summer with more damage to our forestlands and affecting our rural economies. Dirt roads and tracks provide quick access to the fires and can be used for fire breaks. I would ask that you design your road closures to be spread out so as not to lock up large areas of forest and so that fire control access can more easily be obtained.

2. The more restricted the forests become causes more people to use smaller areas of the forests, which in turn causes a greater negative environmental impact to these areas. Most campers/hunters/hikers, unless they are with a specific group of like-minded people, do not like to camp near or "on top of" other campers/hunters/hikers. Again, I would ask that you design the road closures so the public can still access most every part of the Apache-Sitgreaves, from Alpine across the Mogollan Rim Area. Also, authorizing the use of all the 2,600 campsites, as inventoried by the Arizona Game and Fish Department's field survey, would go a long way toward solving this issue. Additionally, the plan should authorize motorized camping within 300 feet of all legal roads.

3. Right now, the plan allows for motorized big game retrieval for only Elk, and even that is limited to one mile off the road. All other game animals must be packed out. This is a serious detriment to Arizona's senior citizen and disabled hunters. I would ask that you change the plan to include motorized retrieval of deer and black bear and eliminate the restriction of one mile off road.

4. Ultimately, I believe that the travel management plan should keep ALL well established and commonly used roads open to the public. Road closures should be clearly posted on the actual roads, not just on the Forest Service website. Ticketing people on existing roads without clear and convincing signage, and then expecting them to know what is open and what isn't, could be considered entrapment and is definitely tyrannical.

I would like to request that you keep the following roads open and accessible to the citizens of Legislative District 6 as well as the entire citizenry of the State of Arizona: the roads in Alpine behind Escudilla Mountain, as well as the roads to Gobblers Peak, Tenney Mountain, and Black River from Terry's Flat, and all roads along the Rim Road, FR 300.