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First name: Jim

Last name: Driscoll

Organization: Coconino County Sheriff's Office

Title: Sheriff

Comments: Coconino National Forest Plan Revision

Comments & Suggestions

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Coconino County Sheriff's Office. For questions or any additional comments, the point of contact is:

Coconino County Sheriffs Office

Jim Driscoll, Chief Deputy

911 Sawmill Road

Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Jdriscoll@coconino.az.gov

Comments & Suggestions:

1. The size of the "Draft Land and Resource Management Plan for the Coconino National Forest" along with the "Draft Environmental Impact Statement" (three volumes) is much too complex and difficult to navigate for many people not in the land management business. The use of acronyms and references throughout the documents make it very difficult for the lay person to find, understand, and utilize the information.

Suggestion: Format the plan in a fashion that is easier to understand with more thorough summary of the Plan Alternatives, comparisons of the alternatives, and specific descriptions of changes from existing policies.

2. The alternatives include more restrictions on dispersed camping, motor vehicle travel, recreational shooting, and additional area closures. All of these restrictions have a direct impact on the ability of the Coconino County Sheriffs Office to provide accurate information requested by the public, especially after business hours and on weekends when the public calls our office because they are unable to get in touch with a USFS representative. No consultation was conducted with the Coconino County Sheriffs Office by the Coconino National Forest during the plan development.

Suggestion: Although the planning process is nearing its conclusion, there still are impacts of the forest policy on a broad base of stakeholders, especially those having legal responsibility, public information responsibility, or public safety roles on those forest lands. During the implementation phase of the plan, collaboration with these stakeholders would be beneficial in providing public education, community understanding, and compliance.

3. The closing of additional roads in the "Draft Land and Resource Management Plan" coupled with the already significant road closures and camping restrictions from the "Travel Management Rule" (TMR) force a large number of people into the "corridor use areas" for recreation activities. The potential for recreational user conflicts will certainly increase and impact public safety response. Although TMR is not the primary focus of the "Draft Land and Resource Management Plan," the management plan includes topics that cross over with travel management, complicating and confusing many issues. This overlap and confusion should be addressed.

Suggestion: Signage on forest roads should be clear and consistent among all forests in AZ. All roads that are closed should be consistently marked as "closed." All other roads would be considered "open." Dispersed camping/parking standards should be reasonable and provide for safety, welfare, and comfort of forest users by

allowing for camping/parking up to 300 feet from open forest roads. Camping should be allowed at all sites showing an established history of use including those camp sites on minor access roads connected to open forest roads.

4. There is an obvious lack of hunter related participation and reference throughout the "Draft Land and Resource Management Plan" and the "Draft Environmental Impact Statements." The tens of thousands of hunters utilizing the forests in Arizona should contribute more to helping plan for the future use of our National Forests. Although many hunter conservation groups were listed as being contacted, it is questionable whether they were really provided adequate opportunity to participate or have representation during the planning process.

Suggestion: Utilizing the broadest range of individuals as advocates and allies in resource protection and forest use would provide a great benefit to the land managers. Realistically, among every group of forest users there are a few who engage in illegal activity or resource damaging activities; however, there are greater numbers of people who value their forests and access to it. Hunting goes hand in hand with healthy land management, and hunters can be an asset to forest lands and of assistance to land managers. The largest group of recreational users in the forest is hunters. Greater efforts should be made to involve them in helping to determine the future of our forests.