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Comments: On behalf of the Arizona Preservation Foundation board of directors, I am writing to express our strong support for the Comprehensive Plan for the Arizona National Scenic Trail. As an organization dedicated to historic preservation and the conservation of Arizona's cultural and natural heritage, we recognize the immense value of the Arizona Trail and the importance of ensuring its long-term protection and stewardship.

The Arizona Preservation Foundation is committed to safeguarding the rich history and diverse landscapes of our state for future generations. Our mission is rooted in the belief that historic preservation is a vital conversation with our past about our future. Through the preservation of significant sites and landscapes, we not only honor our heritage but also enrich our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

The Arizona Trail holds a special significance for our organization and the communities we serve. It serves as a living testament to Arizona's natural beauty and cultural heritage, traversing diverse ecosystems and connecting us to the stories of indigenous nations who have called this land home since time immemorial. As stewards of Arizona's past, we recognize the importance of incorporating indigenous perspectives and knowledge into the management and interpretation of the trail.

The Arizona Trail is central to our organization's mission, vision, and values. It provides a tangible link to our collective history and offers opportunities for education, recreation, and reflection. We fully support the Comprehensive Plan's commitment to consultation and collaboration with indigenous communities, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their perspectives respected.

We applaud the establishment of a 1-mile-wide corridor surrounding the Arizona Trail, encompassing over 430,000 acres of additional protection. This corridor not only preserves scenic views and natural resources but also safeguards the integrity of the trail experience for future generations. We echo the Arizona Trail Association's recommendation for special consideration of preserving scenic views and minimizing impacts on trail values.

The inclusion of the State Trust Lands issue in the Plan is a crucial step towards ensuring the long-term viability of the Arizona Trail. By prioritizing the purchase of State Land parcels along the trail route, we can mitigate threats to the trail and support Arizona's rural communities and outdoor recreation economy.

We extend our gratitude to the USDA Forest Service for the opportunity to comment on the Comprehensive Plan for the Arizona National Scenic Trail. The Arizona Preservation Foundation is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the plan as soon as it's finalized.

Together, we can ensure that the Arizona Trail continues to inspire and enrich the lives of Arizonans and visitors alike for generations to come.