



Copper Canyon Fire & Medical District

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January 18, 2021

Sandra Watts
Red Rock Ranger District
333 Broadway Blvd., SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Ms. Watts,

The Copper Canyon Fire and Medical District desires to submit public comment on the final draft of the Fossil Creek Comprehensive River Management Plan.

Copper Canyon Fire and Medical District provides rescue and emergency medical service to Fossil Creek from the Camp Verde entrance off of Arizona Highway 260.

First, I am pleased to see that the final draft plan recognizes the need for the Forest Service 708 Road to remain maintained and open to at least public safety agencies and the Forest Service commits to that effort.

This road has been closed by the U.S. Forest Service over a number of times over the past many years. When closed, it prevents the closest emergency medical service agency, the Pine Strawberry Fire District, from responding the water fall trailhead and eliminates a 20 minute response time. The emergency call is then forwarded to my fire district for a mutual aid backup. Because of greater distance than the Pine Strawberry Fire District, our response time is about one and a half hours. More important to my community, my paramedics are out of service on the Fossil Creek incident for several hours and preventing service to my community.

As the above discussion demonstrates, it's important that the Forest Service 708 Road remain open, maintained and available for use by emergency service agencies.

I also recommend that the plan be revised to address/resolve the emergency access needs related to another road known as the Flume Trail.

The Flume Trail is really the old Irvin hydro-electric power plants service road that goes 4 miles up hill to the old dam that allowed access for maintenance on the dam and flume infrastructure. The road is in better shape for UTV access than the 708 road. It is presently closed to rescue agencies at the 3-mile mark because a small bridge has been removed.

At the 2019 meeting with Tonto National Forest officials and the Forest Supervisor, rescue agencies requested to have UTV access to the bridge location. This would entail moving a few boulders off the road near the entry point and modification of the pedestrian gate to allow UTV passage.

To date, no action has been taken on this action item. Rescue agencies are still requesting access to reduce rescue response and extraction times.

The Yavapai County Board of Supervisors, as well as the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office and the Copper Canyon Fire and Medical District, continues to advocate emergency vehicle access to the Upper Springs Trail/road and the Flume Trail/road.

These roads provide a means for the public to access the Fossil Creek Wild and Scenic River wilderness area and the importance having rapid public safety access to medical emergencies should not be ignored in the Fossil Creek Comprehensive River Management Plan.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to submit these comments!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terry Keller", with a stylized, cursive script.

Terry Keller
Fire Chief