

TO:

Kerwin S. Dewberry  
Forest Supervisor and Reviewing Officer  
Coronado National Forest  
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Tucson, AZ 85701  
[objections-southwestern-coronado@usda.gov](mailto:objections-southwestern-coronado@usda.gov)

ATTENTION:

OBJECTION: South Fork Day Use Area.

OBJECTOR INFORMATION:

Catherine Gorman and Philip Hedrick (lead objector)



Dear Mr. Dewberry,

We filed comments on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the South Fork Day Use Area project of Cave Creek which are listed under your Comment List as “Name” - Gorman, P.H., “Acronym” – 82, “Project File Document Name” - 20200924Comx1Gorman1x. Below are our Comments on the Draft Decision Notice for “South Fork Day Use Area.”

## **PROTECT SOUTH FORK**

We think that a primary responsibility of the greater Cave Creek community and US Forest Service should be to protect the South Fork of Cave Creek. It is a unique place where people from all over the world come to see the unusual birds there including, trogons, quetzals, Mexican spotted owls, breeding raptors, and other species. South Fork has been recognized for its biodiversity and designated by the US Forest Service as a Zoological-Botanical Area and as a Birds of Prey Zoological-Botanical Area. Many other areas in Cave Creek and the Chiricahuas are available, or could be developed, to provide for the activities proposed in the EA and the Decision. South Fork is a relatively small area and the proposed new construction would fragment and potentially damage the area, and could negatively influence biodiversity, including the bird species that attract visitors.

We support the development of an overall Plan for Managing Cave Creek Canyon with South Fork as a part of this plan. The development of this plan should have participation from all members of the community, including US Forest Service, FOCCC, and other community members. The present EA and Decision for South Fork appears to have been developed because of the fund-raising efforts by a few members of the community, some of whom are now also opposing aspects of the Decision. We think that if this Decision is adopted there will be strong opposition from the community and little support. This would cause substantial controversy in

the community and be a big mistake for the US Forest Service which has come to depend upon community members for support and to volunteer at the VIC.

## **PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION**

We are pleased that the proposed amount of new construction has been reduced to some extent in the Decision compared to the EA, such as eliminating the handicapped trail. However, we strongly **OBJECT** to the proposed new construction in the Decision and do not think that facilities for picnic tables, parking, and toilets should be constructed at the lower end of the South Fork Road. The area proposed for this new construction is an important Mexican spotted owl area and the increased activity would negatively impact them. The undesirable activity includes that of both people and noise at the site and the impact on the surrounding area of new social trails.

We do support installation of **VAULT TOILETS** or **LESS UNSIGHTLY PORTAPOTTIES**, as in John Hands, at a site near the berm where there is already parking and existing portable toilets. From the experience of the 2014 flood, there are areas near the berm for toilet installation which do not flood in high water events. If toilet flooding were still a concern, toilets could be installed that are appropriate for a site where there might be flooding, as in other sites under US Forest Service jurisdiction. This would be the most convenient toilet site for hikers, birders, and others going into South Fork.

## **CLOSING OF SOUTH FORK BETWEEN MARCH 1 AND JUNE 30**

We strongly **OBJECT** to the seasonal closure of the South Fork Road between March 1 and June 30. First, the closure of the South Fork Road between March 1 and June 30 would greatly impact visitation of South Fork by the many visitors who come to South Fork in birding groups and the many other older visitors with limited mobility. Many people in the birding public are unable to walk the length of the road to the berm to view the unique bird life in South Fork. As a result, this closure will be opposed by most members of the community including those who had supported the proposed US Forest Service development in the EA because they had hoped their area businesses would benefit from more tourists in South Fork. Second, this closure ignores that a critical time of the development of spotted owl fledglings is in July and August when they are learning to hunt. If limiting negative impacts on spotted owls was the goal of this closure, then it should also include July and August. This would make the proposed closure an indefensible 6 months of the year.

Thanks for considering our comments,

Catherine Gorman and Philip Hedrick