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**From:** cavecreek@vtc.net  
**Sent:** Monday, August 2, 2021 10:38 AM  
**To:** FS-objections-southwestern-coronado  
**Subject:** South Fork Day Use Area

Friends of Cave Creek Canyon is a partner of the US Forest Service, and has worked on the South Fork Day Use project for years. This iteration of the project was brought to the Forest Service's attention with a proposal in 2019 by Friends of Cave Creek Canyon. Most aspects of the current Day Use Project incorporate features of the original FOCCC concept. However, the inclusion of a gate and four-month road closure completely precludes all the intended good features of the rest of the concept. The lack of any true scientific evidence, and vague generalities given to back up such a drastic road closure, eliminate the opportunity for FOCCC to continue its support for the project. Therefore, Friends of Cave Creek Canyon must object to the entire plan in Alternative B in the DDN.

South Fork is the most visited area of the Forest Service administered part of the Chiricahua Mountains, with most of the visitors in March, April, and May. The South Fork Trail is the destination for most of the visitors. It is also the most heavily used Trail in this part of the National Forest.

These peak visitation months are precisely the time period affected by the proposed road closure. Therefore, this closure will deter a large percentage of the South Fork's springtime visitors. In addition, many regular trail users are senior citizens, and many of them and others have mobility issues. This proposed closure effectively renders the South Fork Trail inaccessible to these people during peak hiking times, as the trailhead would be three quarters of a mile beyond the proposed gate.

The road closure seems like a solution in search of a problem. There is no documented problem requiring road closure.

There are Mexican Spotted Owl PACs in South Fork, as there are elsewhere in this range. There has been no documentation produced that visitation has affected these owls. The owls have nested here for decades, even when visitation via vehicle was noticeably higher. The owls nest higher up the canyon walls above the creek in the spring. The parents bring the young down to the creek area in the summer to hunt - NOT during the spring.

The existing road isn't perfect, but its defects (dust, speeding) can be easily remedied in other ways as delineated by the Forest Service.

We oppose the Road Closure element of the Final Environmental Assessment, and therefore the entire plan in Alternative B. The very real negative and measurable impact to the public and to the community far outweighs the vague evidence given in support of the closure.

Separately, there is a public perception of a lack of notice. Many people did not know that commenting on the Draft EA would not keep them in the loop to be notified of further developments. They did not realize that they had to enroll to be notified. This has created unnecessary ill will. Please consider an amendment to your process: when someone comments on a proposal, send an automatic response informing them they will only receive updates if they enroll.

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