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Comments: Cibola draft forest management plan comments

Regarding the draft revised forest management plan, posted on-line July 2016, for the Cibola National Forest:

I am a resident of Socorro, an avid mountain biker and rock climber, and a frequent (often weekly) visitor to the Magdalena district of the Cibola FS. I am heartened to see rock climbing and mountain biking in the Cibola explicitly discussed of the draft plan, but am also concerned by some aspects of the draft plan and plan alternatives.

The first concern is the locations and extents of potential new recommended wilderness areas for the Magdalena and San Mateo Mountains outlined in alternatives B and E. These areas cover trails with established mountain biking use, and a wilderness designation would rob the local and visiting biking community of access to these trails. There is a potential economic impact as well, as these mountains, particularly the Magdalena Mountains, are a retreat for mountain bikers from the larger cities to the north and south who then visit the nearby towns. There appears to be no specific management goal for these areas requiring wilderness designation, no specified resources needing protection via wilderness designation, and no unmanageable multiple use conflicts for these areas. Hence the impacts to the local community would be unnecessary. In addition, in the case of Alternative E, much of the recommended wilderness would improperly force only "Primitive" uses of valid "Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized" areas on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum map. For these reasons, I strongly oppose Alternative E, and I request that the recommended wilderness areas shown for the San Mateo Mountains for the Alternative B proposed action be removed (D3_ADJ8, D3_ADJ8.b, and D3_ADJ8.c); if that is not feasible, then I oppose Alternative B as well for unnecessarily impacting the biking community.

The second concern regards potential new management areas under alternatives B and D. The Sawtooth/Monument Rock MA (alt B) and Enchanted Towers MA (alt D) both mention management for climbing and falcons, and the former mentions forming a team to discuss the rock climbing value of the area. I request that it be added to these descriptions that the local rock climbing community will be involved in the teams that discuss the value of and possible conflicts in these management areas. My experience with these areas is that 1) route development has been dispersed and often undocumented, and the locations of climbing resources may not be readily apparent without input from the local community; in addition, the impacts to the community by management decisions may not be readily apparent; 2) information is often shared word-of-mouth for these areas, and hence involving the community would improve the spread of information; 3) climbers are among the most frequent visitors to these areas and can be excellent "eyes on the ground" if involved; and 4) we would simply appreciate the better understanding of the management of these areas that would come from being involved in the process. Some specific local organizations that would be interested would be the New Mexico Tech Rock Climbing Club, with which most of the local climbing community is affiliated, and NMCRAAG, a state-wide rock climbing advocacy group that works with climbing access issues.

I suspect similar concerns exist for many of these potential new management areas, and suspect that in general involving the public in the management of any new MAs would assist in managing for multiple uses and achieving objectives. Please consider adding involvement of the public to the general guidelines and/or standards applicable to new management areas.

A final request is that GIS (shapefile) or .kmz files be released for the alternative plan map elements. I and others had trouble determining what trails and resources were beneath proposed new management designation polygons on the pdf maps.

Thank you,

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