

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/20/2020 7:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Subject: Please Do More to Protect and Restore Our Rivers I'm writing to urge you to reconsider your draft plan for the Tonto National Forest to better protect our remarkable rivers for the future. Right now the plan doesn't do enough to safeguard wildlife, water supplies or quiet recreation. And I'm concerned that in the coming years, with the added stress of drought, climate change and invasive species, our streams will suffer under this plan and be harmed by livestock grazing, offroad-vehicle use and water pollution. These threats would be mitigated, of course, if more river miles on the Tonto were rated as eligible for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 or if they were protected within recommended wilderness areas. But right now your draft plan slashes potential 'wild and scenic' protections for rivers found eligible under the Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report. And your agency has disqualified from consideration more than 40 worthy Tonto river segments by comparing them to other rivers in the state that are on state, private, military and tribal lands [mdash] and therefore not eligible for protection. This is a mistake. With twice as much open water as the rest of Arizona's national forests combined, the Tonto is the best place to protect our water supply. Specifically I urge you to: 1) Reconsider your elimination of protection eligibility for segments of the East Verde River, Pinto Creek, Cherry Creek, Parker Creek and Spring Creek; 2) Extend eligibility to all rivers listed as eligible in the Forest Service's 1993 Resource Information Report; 3) Enlarge the region of comparison to highlight the national significance of the Tonto's rivers and creeks, since their type is only found in Arizona; and 4) Do everything in your power to help get cows and offroad vehicles out of our rivers. Together these changes to the draft plan will help protect the Tonto's water and wildlife for future generations. Please move forward with these revisions knowing you have my full support.