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Comments: I am largely in agreement with the Board of FoCCC on this issue. There are some points I would like to emphasize.

Closing the gate for four months: Is there a good current estimate of the use the South Fork trail is receiving during the four months March 1 through June 30? Intuitively I would think the period April 15 through May 15, one month, would see the most visitor activity, primarily by birders during the spring bird migration. If years of visitor activity and driving to the berm have done no permanent damage to the environment, riparian strip, road and trail, why is closure necessary at all? I would like to see flexibility on this issue through dialogue with FoCCC and local residents and businesses.

Location of the gate: The window mentioned above draws visitors, as you are aware, from many states and other countries for opportunities to experience spectacular bird migration through the Canyon. Activities range from simple observation, to photography and increasingly sound recording. It often requires heavy, expensive equipment to meet visitors needs and expectations. To install a gate and force visitors to walk the mile in to the berm, then a further distance up a now treacherous cobbled trail, and then back out again, would tax and discourage many older visitors who do not qualify as impaired. Older visitors may well make up the bulk of visitation at times. Recordists want to be there even before daylight in order to catch the most active part of the day for bird song, called the dawn chorus, or to pick up the vocalizations of the trogons. To my mind, a gate that requires this much walking even before reaching one's destination is draconian. It would eventually reduce visitation to this part of Southeast Arizona, since the Canyon is the largest draw.

Impacts of these changes on the fragile economies of Portal and Rodeo: Both my previous points are directly related to the economy of Portal and Rodeo. The presence of year-round lodging and dining is critical to visitation to the Canyon and to the Southwestern Research Station. The economic multiplier from these amenities directly affects jobs and the prosperity of these otherwise fragile and dependent businesses. Otherwise well-intentioned changes and improvements to the South Fork trails by USFS need to keep these critical factors foremost in mind.

Border Wall - If my calculations on Google Maps are correct you are over 80 miles from the border. What could a border wall possible have to do with the Cave Creek Canyon?