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Comments: It is rather painful to disagree with community members whose knowledge and wisdom I have always had the deepest respect and with whom I have virtually always agreed, but I strongly believe that the South Fork Cave Creek Day Use Project is not only commendable but essential for the long term public use, enjoyment and protection of Cave Creek Canyon and its wildlife.

The less than 1 acre size of the main site to be developed for facilities does not seem excessive, especially when more than a third of that area would be occupied by a 3-4 foot wide circular pathway to the creek and back, located to minimize vegetation removal. It would be the only trail on the east side of the Chiricahuas suitable for mobility impaired people.

Most of the opposition I have heard has been directed at the two-vault handicapped accessible restroom. Its location here seems definitely preferable to having people use the forest or having to use downstream campground restrooms. Occupants of those campgrounds, particularly those with children or pets not on leashes, probably would not appreciate people driving through the campground just to use the restroom.

An alternative of having folks drive 2+ miles down canyon to the restrooms at the Visitor Information Center may sound plausible but those restrooms are locked all winter when freezes are possible. Pre-pandemic they were also locked whenever the VIC was closed, and the old septic system cannot stand much additional use without major expensive overhaul.

The portable toilets at the berm are very expensive to rent and service, are not handicapped accessible and are not accessible for children who need an accompanying parent. Accessible portable toilets are much more expensive to rent and service. Portable toilets may not be allowed indefinitely by the Forest Service.

Nine parking spaces planned for the site may seem excessive, but during peak spring use the presence of fifteen parked vehicles at the former day use area was probably regular. The road edge at the turnoff from the paved highway and near the day use area can hold excess vehicles, but at some risk to passengers from vehicles speeding up South Fork Road.

Three picnic tables does not seem excessive number for the day use area.

The planned staging area with four benches shaded early in the day by two large pines should be a good facility

where tour groups and school groups could be held all together for a brief talk not only about the great diversity nearby but also about good forest behavior (silence, etc.) and the few hazards to watch for (rattlers, rabid foxes?).

The greatest threat to the canyon is fire. A fire with 50 mph winds could sweep the length of the canyon with no trouble. But with much lower winds, could a fire be slowed enough to be put out by a fuel break as narrow as the planned day use area? I do not know, but perhaps it is worth keeping in mind.

Apparently there is some opposition even to having 2-3 benches along the road. Being able to sit quietly for long periods and watch wildlife come to the creek is extremely appealing, especially as the creek dries up and wildlife is concentrated. For some us older folks, looking high onto trees while standing may give rise to feeling about to fall over, and sitting on the ground may not be a problem but standing up again with nothing firmer than poison ivy to grab on to may be.

I have also heard that some in the community are opposed to FOCCC's efforts to bring in small, local school classes into the canyon. Carol Frischmann and Cecil Williams have done an outstanding job, along with local experts, of increasing the awe and knowledge of the forest in those kids. The leaders are proceeding with their task with due caution to avoid imitating Madera Canyon, where large, noisy school groups can be a real distraction. A few well educated school kids who love the woods more than video games are likely to be essential if the Canyon is to survive far into the future.

Nearly 70 years ago I had the extreme fortune of having Aldo Leopold's son, Starker Leopold, as my major professor at Berkeley. He predicted to our class one day that Golden Gate Park in San Francisco would never be developed because of all the people who visit it and love it. To my knowledge it still has no strip malls or condos.

We probably all prefer being in Cave Creek Canyon when it has very few visitors and we hope that it will never have as many users as Golden Gate Park. We may need to insure that it continues to serve the basic needs of many visitors at times if we hope to have enough fighters to protect it from some high official who thinks it might be a prime location for a luxury home project, a hotel, or a golf course.