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First name: Richard

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Folks,

Thank you for all your hard work in protecting and maintaining the Cibola National Forest. The Sandia Mountains are a special area and of particular importance to me. I spend a great amount of time hiking and watching nature in them at all times of year. They support an impressive array of wildlife, both native and migratory. Many species breed here. There are aspects of the proposed Coaster Project which worry me and should be addressed, not the least of which is your uninspired idea to omit the EA or EIS.

I understand the need to be more inclusive in providing opportunities for more of the general public to enjoy the mountains. Anything we can do to increase awareness of this special area are critical in protecting it. Nevertheless, I believe that the wilderness should be left as wilderness. Those who do not wish to hike or bike its trails will be far less likely to conserve the mountain and will have a negative impact on the areas they contact. As Edward Abbey said, "In the first place you can't see anything from a car; you've got to get out of the goddamned contraption and walk, better yet crawl, on hands and knees, over the sandstone and through the thornbush and cactus. When traces of blood begin to mark your trail you'll begin to see something, maybe. Probably not." We would be much better off increasing access around the tram and using the funds to make sure that people are responsible for their visit before giving them more opportunities.

Furthermore, the Sandias are home to an amazing diversity of wildlife, some of it rare or endangered. The reckless, and very Trump Forest Service inspired idea of doing away with an Environmental Assessment is just plain irresponsible. Every effort ought to be made to assure that the diversity of life here is protected. Rosy finches and other birds overwinter in that area. If an EA or EIS is deemed too expensive, then forgo the project.

Again, I support anything that brings more awareness to the area, but I fear this project will be like snow in the Sandias and bring with it lines of cars, trash and people with no desire to truly appreciate this amazing wilderness.

Thank you for taking my opinion into consideration. It is an educated opinion not based on how much fun I might have on such a ride.

Rich Wagner

Conservationist first and foremost