

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/15/2020 4:41:19 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Re: South Fork Day Use Area Draft EA

Dear Ranger Ruppel and Planner Reynolds:

We are opposed to Proposal B as submitted so have no choice but to vote for Proposal A, No Action. Most of the development is based on desires and the proposal has not sufficiently defended the need for recreational and educational facilities along South Fork Road.

Claiming that this development 'replaces' is misleading and should be omitted as the proposal is in a completely NEW undisturbed area.

We believe Proposal B will increase harm to the environment along the South Fork Road not decrease as the proposal suggests. There is no justification for selecting an area that is undisturbed to replace a bathroom and a few picnic tables that were lost during Hurricane Odile at the South Fork trail head 1 1/2-2 miles away.

It is known among local birders that the proposed area is used by the Mexican Spotted Owl for feeding young and at least one pair nests nearby and is designated a MESO PAC (protected activity center). This area should be further protected not developed. There is no mention of this in the proposal. Please explain why this information has been omitted.

We are not in favor of additional development in Cave Creek Canyon, we believe the existing facilities at the Visitor Information Center (VIC) provide plenty of educational opportunities and the nearby nature trail at Sunnyflats or the Silver Peak trail head could be enhanced to accommodate wheel chairs and others who are challenged by dirt paths.

If the Forest Service demonstrates that the VIC can not accommodate increased use by educational groups then we believe ONLY already disturbed areas in Cave Creek Canyon should be used for any further development. All of the proposed 'enhancements' for: education groups, handicapped access to the creek, bathroom and parking can be accomplished at existing disturbed and developed areas at the Visitor Information Center, Sunny Flats Campground, Silver Peak Trailhead and along the Nature Trail. For example Sunny Flats Campground already has Handicapped parking, 5 additional parking spaces, a 2 vault toilet, a day use box, a trail head to the nature trail for exploring by school groups and a social trail to the creek that could be enhanced to accommodate wheel chairs and walkers. Additional Parking could be added by using a section of the circular area in the middle.

An argument against using Sunnyflats is that at times the creek floods a portion of the campground but the EA acknowledges that the proposed development area along South Fork Road remains "subject to inundation." Again, using existing facilities that may be subject to flooding versus a pristine and protected area seems a more prudent use of resources (whether private or federal funds).

There is no explanation for the Forest Service proposal (FOCCC is opposed) to close the road seasonally. Is this to mitigate the disturbance to a new area? Or because Mexican Spotted Owls use this area to feed fledglings? There needs to be more public input and explanation before a road closure is included in any

proposal. We are not opposed to a road closure seasonally or permanently. But believe there should be more public input and perhaps a separate EA to determine the best way to manage the closure of the road. As many others have suggested closing the road will protect and enhance bird and other wildlife viewing along the South Fork Road by eliminating car traffic disturbance. We believe a seasonal road closure discussion is a good beginning to future plans to protect the environment along South Fork Road.

We support placing a toilet somewhere in the south fork road area but not at the proposed site. We feel that the Forest Service should investigate further putting removable toilets at the berm site.

Shelli Vacca and Anne Hinnendael