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Comments: We are very concerned about the proposal in the Environmental Assessment (EA) to develop the South Fork of Cave Creek that is being advocated by Friends of Cave Creek Canyon (FOCCC). We are members of FOCCC but do not support many aspects of this plan which appears to us to be an effort to put a city park in South Fork, a wildland area.

## PROTECT SOUTH FORK

We think that a primary responsibility of the greater Cave Creek community and US Forest Service should be to protect the South Fork of Cave Creek. It is a unique place where people from the world over come to see the unusual birds there including, trogons, quetzals, Mexican spotted owls, and other species. South Fork has been recognized for its biodiversity and designated by the US Forest Service as a Zoological-Botanical Area and as a Birds of Prey Zoological-Botanical Area. Many other areas in Cave Creek and the Chiricahuas are available, or could be developed, to provide for the activities, such as picnicking, handicapped trails, or educational information that this proposal advocates. In particular, South Fork is a relatively small area and the proposed new construction for these activities would fragment and potentially damage the area. This could negatively influence biodiversity in the area, including some of the bird species that attract visitors.

## PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION

The flooding in 2014 greatly altered South Fork. Although this was thought to be a once in a lifetime event, in recent years such events have been occurring more frequently. For this reason, any construction should not be considered permanent. Below are our opinions about some of the proposed construction.

We support installation of VAULT TOILETS at a site near the berm where there is already parking and existing portable toilets. This would be the most convenient site for hikers, birders, and others going further into South Fork. Installation at the site proposed in the EA is not desirable because it is an important Mexican spotted owl area, parking would have to be developed, and toilets would not be convenient for many people using South Fork,

Further EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION about Cave Creek (and perhaps South Fork) could most easily be developed at the Visitor Information Center that is run by the Forest Service and FOCCC. If further educational information is desired, then kiosks could be placed in the nearby campgrounds. We oppose construction of educational facilities in South Fork as proposed in the EA because it would increase disturbance in the important area used by birds and other wildlife in South Fork.

We support the construction of a HANDICAPPED TRAIL somewhere in Cave Creek but not in South Fork. There are a number of other areas, either near a campground or the visitor center, where such a trail could be constructed without the negative impact on South Fork.

We support the construction of a PICNIC AREA WITH TABLES in Cave Creek but not in South Fork. There are a number of other areas, either near a campground or the visitor center, where a picnic area would be appropriate. We oppose construction of a picnic area in South Fork as proposed in the EA because it would increase disturbance in the important area used by birds and other wildlife in South Fork.

## OUR OVERALL OPINION

We support the development of an OVERALL PLAN FOR MANAGING CAVE CREEK CANYON with South Fork as a part of this plan. The development of this plan should have participation from all members of the community, including US Forest Service, FOCC, and other community members. The present plan for South Fork appears to have been developed by relatively few members of the community, some of whom have pledged significant

financial support and/or appear to potentially profit financially from new developments in South Fork.