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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I support the Forest Service proposal to replace the picnic area, bathroom, and benches in the South Fork Day Use Area.

I deeply enjoy the hiking trails in the Chiricahua Mountains, and to me the benefits of the proposed improvements are tremendous.

Too often I have encountered human waste and accompanying toilet paper just lying on the ground in the forest and along the banks of streams. A real bathroom would provide what is obviously a needed service, and help prevent pollution of the forest's water sources.

Along these lines a proper trash can is also a welcome means to encourage people not to litter in the forest.

The addition of educational signage to the picnic area would also be beneficial to educating newcomers about the special value of this place. I have lead nature hikes for children and find that there is no better education of the natural world than that which couples knowledge with experience. In my observation, children have always been respectful of nature when taught the importance of it - and even educate their elders with what they have learned. Signage helps educate everyone.

A nature trail for the mobility impaired should be a given. None of us know what accidents may occur in our lives to impair us, only that we are all impeded by the inevitability of age. Such a trail benefits some of us now and all of us later.

As to the issue of gate closure from March to June - I agree with the stance of FOCCC that the stated reasons do not warrant a four month closure. Additionally, to my understanding the area in question has a special designation of a botanical or zoological area. The stated purpose (FSM 2300 - RECREATION, WILDERNESS, AND RELATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT WO AMENDMENT - 2372.02-Objective) of the National Forest Systems special designation of a botanical or zoological area is "to protect and manage for public use and enjoyment, special recreation areas with scenic, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, archaeological, or other special characteristics or unique values." A key time of year for "public use and enjoyment" of the Chiricahuas is the same time proposed for closing the park for four months. This time, for instance, is a high time for birding. Could this part of the proposal be softened to be less restrictive to the enjoyment of the area?

Given the regular use of the Chiricahuas and South Fork area I see no disadvantage to the proposal in plan B (sans the plan for road closure) and enthusiastically support it. It will provide important amenities towards the enjoyment and protection of the forest.