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First name: Sara

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear District Ranger,

I am writing to express concern over the Chiricahua Public Access proposal, and to urge you to abide by road decisions you made in the 2017 Travel Management Plan.

The Chiricahua Mountains are a unique and special place, for me personally as well as for countless other people, wildlife, and plants.

John Long Canyon is a favorite destination for its combination of scenic beauty, sense of biological richness and ecological health, opportunity for solitude, ease of walking, and car access to the trailhead. The EA's claim that the proposed action would "restore public access to John Long Canyon" is misleading; motorized access to the trailhead, and foot travel beyond that, already exist. In its current state, by being able to drive to the start of a wide trail (the old dirt road) in beautiful area, this site provides an experience I and others interested in quiet recreation have a hard time finding elsewhere. Opportunities for quiet, low-impact recreation are declining across the National Forest system. Sacrificing one of the region's best quiet recreation sites for more motorized use is a poor tradeoff. Sacrificing the well-being of a uniquely high-value wildlife area makes this tradeoff even worse. Access to the John Long trailhead has become more difficult in recent years as the road segment from Rucker has degraded. Putting the funds for this project into road maintenance instead, to make the road segment from Rucker to the head of John Long accessible to passenger cars, would be of far greater value to the public, with less impact on wildlife.

In Horseshoe canyon, it simply does not make sense to add a redundant road where one already exists. Either make do with the existing road, or decommission and restore it in favor of the new route.