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Comments: Helicopter Use in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness NEPA

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I am writing to express my concerns about allowing helicopters to monitor desert bighorn sheep in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness.

My first concern is about impacts on wildlife, specifically large mammals. The overflights will cause stress triggered by the flight mechanism. This stress compromises the immune system, making all large mammals more susceptible to disease. It could seriously upset what small semblance of balance in the wilderness.

My second concern is impacts on human activity. Having backpacked the Grand Canyon and experienced helicopter overflights, which impact the no-fly areas as well as near their flight path, I know them to be a significant disruption to the wilderness experience. While there may be legal distinctions that allow the USFS to permit this in a Wilderness Area, from a practical perspective there is little difference between sharing a wilderness with helicopters overhead to sharing it with quads, motorcycles, snow machines and chain saws.

In short, permitting the helicopter overflights will result in disturbing and killing wildlife, and it will destroy the wilderness experience for human visitors. It's a terrible idea.

Mark Flint

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