

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/26/2015 5:25:43 AM

First name: Mark

Last name: Bottjer

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Proposed Cibola Wilderness Areas

To Whom It May Concern:

I have recently become aware that several areas commonly used for responsible mountain biking, around the Magdalena and San Mateo mountains near Socorro, and around Sandia mountain near Albuquerque, are being considered for Wilderness recommendation. Designating these areas as Wilderness would exclude mountain bikes from them, breaking with a long history of responsible use.

Socorro, for example, hosted a mountain bike festival for 20 years which relied heavily on trails in the Magdalena and San Mateo mountains--trails which are now threatened with closure. The festival may be gone, but mountain biking in Socorro still has a large and loyal following. Most of these riders are responsible trail users, honor the land upon which they ride, and seek to educate those who might abuse it.

The threatened trails are not easily replaced. Socorro is surrounded by private and State land, and BLM land is often inaccessible due to a high density of historical sites. The creation of new mountain bike trails--really, any trails at all--anywhere close to Socorro is quite involved, and usually stalls. Worse, many of the go-to trails of yesteryear have been closed off, or repurposed by landowners for motorized vehicle use. Such trails as we have left are a crucial and cherished recreational resource, and would be sorely missed.

Mountain biking's impact on well-designed trails is minimal. As organizer of the Socorro mountain bike festival for many of its years, I have first-hand experience of the minimal level of impact long-term mountain biking has had on the threatened trails. I encounter damage due to off-trail hikers and equestrians (the ATV-riders of the non-mechanized crowd) far more often than damage by mountain bikes. What bike-related damage I do see is generally the result of unsustainable trail design--e.g., improper switchbacks, which erode whether or not used by bikes. Furthermore, mountain biker culture promotes contributing to trail maintenance; it is not uncommon for bikers to leave trails in a better state than they found them.

Mountain biking's impact on wildlife is minimal as well. What little noise is made by mountain bikes is fleeting, and unlikely to disturb wildlife any more than two- or four-footed visitors do. Many mountain bikers, myself included, have inadvertently "snuck up on" wildlife that did not hear them coming. A quick moment of surprise, and the wildlife is back about its day.

Many of these same arguments apply to the lands around Albuquerque, where I routinely both ride and run while in town. It is quite common to see other mountain bikers while out in the Foothills, and I usually encounter them elsewhere around the mountain as well. As in Socorro, most bikers using the trails are respectful and courteous; the trails see at least as much damage from foot traffic as from tires. Since Albuquerque doesn't have very many mountains close to it, the loss of any current trails would be keenly felt.

I strongly urge the Cibola District USFS to continue allowing mountain bike use in these established, beloved, and irreplaceable areas by removing them from Wilderness consideration:

Bear and Magdalena Mountains:

D3\_5K1 14337.7 ac

D3\_5K3 7059.8 ac

D3\_Lang 33685.2 ac

Sandia Mountain:

D5\_ADJ4 1664.2 ac

D5\_ADJ4.c 6.3 ac

D5\_ADJ5 1216.7 ac

D5\_ADJ6 735.6 ac

D5\_ADJ10 79.5 ac

Thank you.

-- Mark Bottjer

-- PO Box 148, Socorro, NM 87801