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Comments: Feedback - Draft of Forest Plan Revision

In general, I like the overall plan and approach. I support keeping the plan broad and conceptual.

I also support the concept of lightly roaded back country areas. Initially I was concerned that this would lead to wilderness designations, but I believe instead that the back country areas can meet the same needs as wilderness without hampering efforts to improve or maintain forest health. I feel that establishing these back country areas reduces any need for more wilderness designations.

I am adamantly opposed to any further wilderness designations for several reasons. Coronado National Forest already has more than enough wilderness designations to satisfy the needs of true wilderness enthusiasts. I've hiked and hunted some of these areas and can tell you from experience that they are not crowded with backpackers reveling in the knowledge that they are within the boundaries of designated wilderness. We need to have controlled burns, trash cleanups and wildlife transplants in some of the areas that have been identified as meeting wilderness criteria. Existing wilderness designations such as Pusch Ridge already pose very serious obstacles for activities such as a potential bighorn sheep re-introduction. Wilderness designations make pro-active and remedial efforts more difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. Additional wIlderness designations in Coronado will do more to harm the forest and wildlife habitat than to protect it.

During the scoping process, forest officials were informed that the public considers access to the forest be a primary concern. I am pleased that the draft plan includes an objective to increase the number of permanent legal access points. However, I would like to see the process expedited. An objective of one to two a year for the next 10 years is not satisfactory, particularly when one considers that developments outside the forest boundary can be expected to further reduce options over time. It's doubtful that access opportunities will improve over time.

Due to the lack of permanent legal access to some forest roads, I feel Coronado should resist locking up any forest land as wilderness as it could become necessary in the future to build new roads through the forest to link up with cherry stems in the event that traditional access points are lost. Until Coronado establishes an adequate system of permanent, assured access points, all options should be kept open. Wilderness designations only serve to reduce those options.

Larry Audsley