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Comments: Comments on the Forest Plan from Margaret Abbott, Portal AZ

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Dear Jennifer Ruyle and planning staff,

I really do commend all the work you have put into this plan. After all your work, I wish I could support the current plan. But I find that it falls short to address the tasks we have to protect the amazing biological diversity inherent to this region. It falls short in providing state of the art visitor services that match the style of a new (wired) generation. It falls short in securing quietness, wilderness protection, education for the public about resources and more. The omission of assessing and planning for climate change is serious.

The plan needs to address problems on its lands that are a result of larger border security issues, illegal immigration and visitor safety. We have serious criminal elements on our forest lands. We have people camped at most of the major springs on a nightly basis in the dry season. How are these uses affecting wildlife, watershed, and other values that the Forest should protect. These problems are not going away. The problems are many, but they need to be assessed and we need more rangers on the trail. This illegal use is use and it needs to be addressed. I hope we get some baseline data on this as we need to know the impact on wildlife and environmental health when people displace them at springs, foul waters by bathing and defecating, make trails, leave garbage, etc.

Access issues are complex but they need prioritization and set goals for accomplishing working out problems. My number one priority for access is Skeleton Canyon in the Peloncillos.

Please give strong protection to Reddington Pass with respect to residents and quiet recreation. There is no reason to sacrifice this area - it is settled, and it provides a very important corridor on that side of ever-growing Tucson. I support the concerns of the Friends of Reddington Pass.

I am concerned about management on east side of the Santa Rita Mountains. There are some prime riparian habitats here, and grasslands that are in good condition. Again, I think quiet recreation is appropriate here.

We need education to be a stronger part of recreation, to be an expressed goal. Forest land use and issues are evolving. Young people are wired - we need to look at how to reach the public through informational podcasts, Blogs, whatever it takes to keep people interested and involved in their

public lands. I think Cave Creek Canyon is a crown jewel and deserves a world-class interpretive center such as the Discovery Tower Center on Pipeline Road in Panama. We need to present science, conservation, experience. I urge Coronado National Forest to be bolder in their approach to the Visitor experience and set some trends for the nation. Encourage private partnerships to accomplish this. Each community adjacent to trailheads and use areas should have a visitor facility (public or private), a visitor education program (public or private) and day-use guides available to enhance the experience of the visitor (public or private). Interpretive signage is needed. Viewpoints need to be maintained - our Vista Point in Cave Creek Canyon has so much tree growth the view will soon be gone.

Visitors need access to their forest. I see NO reason to limit low-impact guided outfitting on the forest in Cave Creek Canyon or in any other location. Coronado National Forest is not issuing permits on the Douglas district and our community of Portal is suffering economic impact from this arbitrary decision. Why restrict Cave Creek and not other canyons. Why restrict all of the drainage when there are three branches and a lot of area that gets light use. Guided birding and hiking opportunities are much-sought after and provide public service that the Forest is not providing. It protects the resources and enhances Visitor experience. We need public input on this and we need to keep permits open, flexible to needs of ecotourism operators that have a high regard for resource protection. Local operators are needed to work with lodges and bed and breakfasts to provide visitor services. In our community a permit with 400 use days is sitting idle, not re-allocated or re-issued before the prime visitation season and this has resulted in loss of income to our community. I have sent the Forest Supervisor further comment on this issue.

We may have wolves on this forest and in the Sky Islands in the next ten years. I hope that grazing management systems are flexible enough to allow wildlife managers to work with land owners to avoid conflict, move animals around if needed in response to denning activities, etc. We need educational signage about reintroductions, from Turkeys to Leopard Frogs - get the word out. People need to connect to wildlife to care. Wildlife-based tourism revenue helps communities to care - encourage it. Work with Arizona Game and Fish. Work with private companies, university students. No educational group should be denied a permit to bring students to learn about this area - that to me is unacceptable.

Climate change is real and it is here. New Mexico has done just an amazing job looking at its rare species, assessing scenarios for climate change and predicting impacts. We need this type of analysis. We barely have accessible baseline data let alone monitoring projects. We need these in the plan so when funding is tight this still gets done. It's essential. The New Mexico analysis provides a tool for quick assessment of priority areas. They are ready. Coronado is not.

I support several Special Management Area proposals that have already been submitted. There are many special places on this Forest that deserve

recognition and protection. Again, THINK BROADER. This region has global significance. Its listed as a Global Diversity Hotspot by Conservation International, one of the few such designated areas in the US. Coronado National Forest is not being managed to enhance or recognize globally important attributes. Bring in outside biodiversity experts to make recommendations. Use the Special Management Area designation to recognize these values. I know that Scientist and Conservationists working with the Coronado Planning Partnership have identified 11 areas and submitted detailed reports on each of them. The Coronado National Forest should give serious consideration to all of these.

The community of Portal wants sustainable ecotourism and I support the concept of quiet recreation opportunity. This is what our visitors are looking for. I imagine this is true throughout much of the Sky Islands. I support additional Wilderness designation and several areas have been identified for consideration. I urge you to move forward to analyze and protect these areas. I think 10 is a just a good start, and we need to look at adding acreage to additional areas. We also need to actively pursue adjacent landowner conservation easements to ease pressure on our forest service lands and enhance their bio-functions. Work together. Think BIG. Sky Island Alliance was thinking BIG when they created a series of Wilderness Suitability reports identifying 290,000 additional acres that should be evaluated. Coronado National Forest should use these reports and additional acres in potential wilderness evaluations.

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