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BUREAU OF LAND MGT  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

BLM Phoenix District Office  
Attention: LS-SDNM Draft RMP/EIS  
21605 North 7th Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85027

Dear Sirs:

I am writing to offer some comment on BLM's draft resource management plan as it affects the Sonoran Desert National Monument. You may not need the kind of general comment that I write here, but the SDNM is important to me as a recreational resource in the cooler half of the year. I want to see it preserved, enjoyed in ways that do not damage it, and appreciated more by the public.

I use the SDNM for day hiking and astronomy, particularly the South Maricopa Mountains. Less often, with an Air Force permit, I have visited the Sand Tank Mountains. In general, the "Alternative E" does seem to protect the wilderness areas and protect the limited access that currently exists. There's a bit of a contradiction, here, in that I want the wilderness preserved but I also want to be able to drive my SUV to the edge of it so I don't have to hike too far!

My own concerns are as follows:

**Access:** I hope I continue to have access to Big Horn and other gates on both sides of I-8, particularly for the jeep roads that go north into the South Maricopa Mountains. Not to drive onto the wilderness area, of course, but to access its boundary. Page 742 of the draft plan appears not to interfere with gate access too much, but I'm not sure. I also need the drivable culvert under the railroad tracks near Highway 238, about 11 miles east of Gila Bend. It is not easy to drive legally across the railway--that culvert helps.

**Astronomy and smugglers:** I know BLM put criminal activity beyond the scope of the draft plan, but it's keeping some of us out of the Vekol Valley and Table Top areas. In 2010 the East Valley Astronomy Club, based in Mesa, stopped using its long-time Vekol Road observing site. I occasionally do telescope observing near the above railroad culvert location, but it's not as dark for astronomy as the Vekol Valley. I hope Vekol becomes safer in coming years.

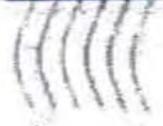
**Highway 238 as a scenic byway:** A nice idea! Especially west of Mobile. It might help residents of my town, Maricopa, better appreciate the SDNM. Too many know Highway 238 only as the route used by trash trucks on their way to the Butterfield landfill.

**Palo Verde Hills:** The city of Buckeye is planning to lease land from BLM for a future regional park. I would like to see Maricopa someday do the same thing with the Palo Verde Hills. Meanwhile the Palo Verde Hills have suffered a bit from ATV use, trash, and--in places--thousands of spent ammo casings. But it has potential for Maricopa.

Generally, "Alternative E" should allow good protection of the SDNM. Thanks much for your work on behalf of Sonoran Desert public spaces.



South Maricopa Mountains



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