

**From:** Lower Sonoran RMP  
**Subject:** SDNM Route Designations

From: Colby Turner[SMTP:COLBY.TURNER@GILABENDAZ.ORG]  
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2011 4:44:49 PM  
To: Bickauskas, Thomas V  
Cc: BLM\_AZ\_LSFO\_SDNM\_RMP; Fredrick Buss; Eric Fitzer; CTurner; RHenry;  
Steve Holt; Tommy Lee Sikes External; FFernandez; AGonzalez; DYoung;  
Hanson, Richard B; Foreman, Penny J  
Subject: SDNM Route Designations  
Auto forwarded by a Rule  
Tomas Bickauskas  
Travel Management Coordinator  
Bureau Of Land Management

Tom,

After BLM's presentation on proposed route designations, I reviewed the information that was provided. Upon further review, discussion with local experts, historians and study of the trail maps vs. actual trails in the field, I have found the following to be the most scientifically and historically factual.

In general, the designations create the following issues: Lack of Handicap/Elderly/Youth Accessibility, Cultural Insensitivity, Lack of Interconnectivity, and Needless Waste of Finite Resources (cutting off connection points to complete loops). Other points of concern were the closing of bladed roads that have been in place since the early 1900's and the term "trail redundancy" used to explain some closings of trails. On a map, these trails can appear redundant, however in the field they provide connectivity to local residents miles apart from other trails, make shorter loops possible on long expeditions, and provide accessibility to views not possible by other trails.

The designations also fail to address the true nature of the problem, Illegal Drug and Immigrant Traffic Damage which leads to further damage by Government Enforcement Agencies (Border Patrol, Pinal County, Maricopa County) as they monitor the area and pursue suspects. Law abiding citizens are concerned that they are being targeted and punished while criminals are still out damaging our beautiful desert resources. These citizens pay taxes, license their vehicles accordingly, and purchase various tags/permits to prove 1)their dedication to the sustainability of our trails and wildlife and 2)their willingness to abide by reasonable laws.

Finally, some of the apparent reasoning behind certain closings are scientifically inaccurate. The closing of washes during the summer because wildlife use these areas to escape the heat is only partially correct. During the summer, desert animals either estivate or become nocturnal. During estivation these animals sleep for long periods of time, away from naturally disturbed areas. Washes during the summer are naturally disturbed by our monsoons and spring rains. Which brings us to the nocturnal wildlife. These animals do indeed seek cooler areas (vegetation, washes, mountains) to rest during the day, but are active at night. The people around this part of the country are not much different than their animal friends. They are not seeking recreation during the day, disturbing animals in need of rest. Point of fact, people use the cooler nights to travel the trails and washes to enjoy the active wildlife and star gazing. The only disturbance during the day comes from Illegal Drug and Immigrant Traffic and Government Enforcement Agencies. There are also over a dozen washes still available for wildlife in that immediate area alone. Furthermore our washes, due to their naturally disturbed characteristics, make them excellent sources for trails. Every time it rains, they get repaved by mother nature.

I have included the following trails by number, a brief notation to support keeping them open or adjusting their hours of closure.

- 8008H- "Accessibility" "Cultural Sensitivity" "Historic" Sand Tank Well
- 8008I, 8009E- "Interconnectivity" "Accessibility" Game Catchment
- 8013A, 8019A- "Local Resident Interconnectivity" "Accessibility"
- 8013, 8017, 8018, 8019- "Interconnectivity" "Accessibility" Local Residents Use These To Access Points Of Interest "Scientifically Inaccurate" Estivation, Nocturnal Wildlife, Multiple Wash Availability (worst case scenario could adjust summer closures to night time use only)
- 8016A- "Interconnectivity"
- 8016B- "Interconnectivity"
- 8016C- "Interconnectivity" "Cultural Sensitivity" "Historic" Farley's Pass

Should time permit our committee will have another meeting to discuss trails to the north of I8 and east of Freeman Road as well. On another note, I've heard that the Gila Bend Mountains were indeed going to become a Wilderness Area, but in the BLM meetings it was stated "not true". Is there any validity to either of these statements? Thanks again for the maps you sent and your time visiting with me. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of service.

Thank you,

**Colby Turner**

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