

From: Lower Sonoran RMP
Subject: RMP Objections

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2011 2:11:23 PM
To: BLM_AZ_LSFO_SDNM_RMP
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Auto forwarded by a Rule

Over the last couple of years, I have had the opportunity to work for the BLM and see all the great things that we have to offer the public, in regards to our public lands. I definitely have a greater appreciation for the ideas and activities that BLM puts together to maintain the land that we, as the public, utilize on a daily basis. However, I am torn about the proposed alternatives that are provided in the current RMP, in regards to the "Decision Area", particularly, the surrounding Ajo area. I was born and raised in Ajo and so were my parents. I have a lifetime of experience with the surrounding areas around Ajo, and know that the BLM has good intentions with the new RMP. But, I have great concerns with respect to what the land will become. Growing up in Ajo and visiting frequently, I have only ever known there to be one Ranger located in Ajo. With that being said, over the last few decades, up until the spike in illegal activity, I can assume that not too much needed to be regulated within the Ajo Block, over that stretch of time. To turn the area into something that it is currently not, would only make it a target for more objective behavior. If roads are closed, they would still be traveled on. If cultural resources are designated, they would be looted, if known about. If areas are designated off-limits, they would still be accessed, maybe not by the public, by certainly by DHS and CBP. If areas are deemed as biological and critical, then why not leave them pristine and untouched, rather than mark them out on a map for inquiring minds to explore.

Until recently, I had never been on or through the Sonoran Desert N.M, and I was taken aback at how restricted it was. Designated roads only, blocked off arroyos, etc. You can literally drive right through it! Now I know that it is a designated National Monument, and the proposed decision area around Ajo is not, but the feedback and understanding that most of us Ajoites have, is that it will turn into such a place, without regard to the public's best interest. With that being said, Ajo is already surrounded by restricted land, with Barry Goldwater to the north, Organ Pipe N.M to the south, Cabeza Prieta N.R to the west and Tohono O'Odoham Nation to the east. The availability to these lands is already highly restricted and has always been that way. Because of those restrictions, our BLM land is highly utilized by locals and travelers alike on a yearly basis.

Some of the main concerns about the proposed decision area are the Batamote/Coffeepot Botanical and also, the Cuerda de Lena critical environmental areas. These roads and areas have always been utilized by recreation enthusiasts and hunters for decades without fear or regret of damaging any flora species. I was just out there this October, and the area is still as pristine as it was twenty-five years ago. Another proposal listed is that of road closures, or route mitigations, in one of the alternatives. To this day, every single designated inventoried BLM road is utilized tremendously, even those washes and arroyos that are not yet designated as roads. To shut down any current road, would hamper the ability to get to those hard to reach areas on foot or horseback, which are sought after and have been enjoyed for decades by families and friends. Yet another major concern, that I personally do not like, is the proposed reintroduction of the Sonoran Pronghorn area. The current seasonal area closure that takes place during the summer months from the area just south of Ajo's scenic loop, all the way to the Organ Pipe N.M and Cabeza Prieta N.R., has been an eye-soar to recreation enthusiasts since its inception. To believe that it could happen to the area north of Ajo would collapse the moral of the residents. That imposition alone, severed yearly family traditions of heading out to the desert, by closing off the area.

Furthermore, in recent years we have seen an increase in undocumented aliens and Customs and Border Patrol activities throughout all of the current parks and monuments in the Southwest. BLM's desire to implement preferred alternatives to governing and maintaining the land would merely go unnoticed with DHS and CBP's overruling authority on the land. Currently, all these lands are subjected to daily degradation with disregard to rules and regulations. I've seen it with my own eyes, and so have many residents. They violate many standards already, such as creating new

roads, destroying flora in the process, and even cutting fence, allowing horse and burro onto roadways causing safety concerns. All of these things should not go unnoticed, when it is vital towards the BLM's initiative of preservation.

In conclusion, I think that the BLM's strategy is a positive one, and that we are working towards an overall goal for the future. I do believe and recommend that more of a BLM presence is needed in the area and in the community, from Law Enforcement to resources. However, the surrounding Ajo area is the only pristine, untouched land around Ajo, that Ajoites claim as their own. To further encapsulate them with more regulatory land use objectives, would only hurt the nostalgia of a hidden treasure. I have looked at most of the RMP, and although it covers a great many topics, I would personally like to see every Alternative selected for the Ajo Block, as "not being changed." The best wilderness characteristics are those that are left untouched...

Sincerely and Respectively,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes.