

From: Lower Sonoran RMP
Subject: LS and SDNM Draft RMP Comments

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2011 9:42:03 AM
To: BLM_AZ_LSFO_SDNM_RMP
Subject: LS and SDNM Draft RMP Comments
Auto forwarded by a Rule
Lower Sonoran Field Office
LSD SDNM Draft RMP

To Whom it may concern;

The Friends of Saddle Mountain (FoSM) have reviewed the draft RMP and would like to offer the following comments from our perspective. Thank you in advance for taking the time to hear our thoughts.

- In regard to "**Lands Managed to Protect Wilderness Characteristics**", we feel that the preferred alternative showing Saddle Mountain on Map 2-4E is too small. The land mass allotted does not adequately protect the wildlife and cultural resources found at Saddle Mountain. In particular Desert Bighorn Sheep and Desert Tortoise are found at Saddle in considerable numbers outside of the area preferred as is several natural water catchments being used by them. FoSM would like to see the land area increased to reflect what has been suggested in the current Sonoran Desert Heritage Campaign proposals and/or the proposal submitted to BLM by the Arizona Wilderness Coalition in 2004 and being used by the BLM in alternative D.

- **Desert Tortoise Habitat** in the preferred alternative E, lists Saddle Mountain and the Palo Verde Hills as being categorized as "level 2". While we do not have much data for the Palo Verde Hills, the FoSM has found the tortoise population at Saddle Mountain to be intact, abundant and healthy. In recent inventories, we have found and photographed numerous Desert Tortoises and as a result would like to see the Saddle Mountain area upgraded to Category 1 to aid in their management and further protection. Documentation of our findings is available upon request.

- **Wildlife Corridors** as shown on Map 2.2 D are preferred by the FoSM. While we understand the BLM is not able to manage State Trust lands, we feel that showing and/or at least acknowledging corridor "C" shown on this map is crucial even if the majority of lands are managed in corridor C is the responsibility by other agencies. FoSM has documented and continues to monitor Bighorn Sheep and Mule Deer Movement through this linkage as well as a host of other species. We feel that keeping this linkage open is crucial to the long term survival of Saddle Mountain's Bighorn sheep and is the sole remaining corridor north of Saddle Mountain.

- **Travel Management.** Map 3-24 of alternative E shows Road 8201 to remain open and encircling Saddle Mountain. The FoSM has made considerable effort over the years to close and manage this road at the half way point on both sides of Saddle Mountain per the recommendation of the BLM and AZGFD. Closing the southern portion of this road is needed to protect multiple cultural resources and archaeological sites just off the roadway and to keep motorized vehicles away from the water catchment placed by the Desert Bighorn Sheep Society and the AZGFD. FoSM would like to see this particular road remain closed on the southern half of the loop per AZGFD's recommendations. Exact closure points would remain where the BLM has already placed closure signage.

- The **Community Interface** shown on Map 2-12E at the north side of Saddle Mountain is of concern to the FoSM. As our group moves forward with trying to gain wilderness protection for Saddle Mountain as outlined in the Sonoran Desert Heritage Campaign, we feel that further development in this area would be detrimental in our protection efforts. The FoSM would like to see this area removed from the draft in order to keep the lands at Saddle Mountain as natural and free of human building as possible.

Respectfully,

Chris Meachum
President

Friends of Saddle Mountain
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