

LS_SDNM_RMP_1-18661

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Why you shouldn't close off land to the public

Comment Number: 1

Cited Section ID: Lower Sonoran and Sonoran Desert National Monument

Comment Title: Why you shouldn't close off land to the public

Issue: 10756

Comment:

I recently attended a meeting put on by the Sonoran Desert Heritage Coalition. I have several comments to make on this proposed area of land you would like to close. First, this area is an area frequented by my family several times a year (8 - 12 times). We hunt in these areas, we camp in these areas, we enjoy camping in these areas and we hike in these areas. In the last 10+ years, I have noticed very little change to the lanscape or environment out there. Many of our trips to Yellow Medicine and Fourth of July Wash areas are were we camp for 4 -7 days at a time. During this time, we see an average of 2 -3 vehicles on Agua Caliente Rd. the entire time we are there. There is very little traffic. BLM has laws to protect the roads and trails out there and we abide by those laws so what would be the rush to close it off. The area I have mentioned takes aprox. 1+ hours to get to from Phoenix and is not off any main road, so it is not a heavily trafficked area. We also have our children and their friends that we have taught to take care of the land. We have a game we play to see who can pick up the most trash not left by us while out in the desert. This is actually a struggle because finding trash out there is difficult. So, in a nut shell, my family hunts, camps, target shoots, rides ATV's and jeeps and enjoys the desert. Now that you know about my family, I want to make a few points for you to take into consideration: If BLM has these laws that we abide by and Game and Fish protect the wildlife, then why would you close these areas to the general public that enjoy the land and follow the laws? We pay for OHV stickers on our off road vehicles, we pay for our hunting licenses. All these costs go to help BLM and Game and Fish in their efforts to keep the desert and the animals prestine. Why do we continue to allow builders to buy up land and build when there are thousands of homes that sit empty. The reason I ask this is because the Coalition made a statement that there is an antisipated growth in 20+ years of double what we have now. I personally don't see it. They also said this 10 years ago and it did not happen. And even if it did, there is still not the urgency for the area they are proposing to close to close. Why not re-evaluate the land and its surrondings in another 10

years? I realize that things are different than they were 30 years ago, but many of us still believe in teaching our children and grandchildren about how to live off the land and respect and enjoy their surroundings and the land. With all the closures that have already taken place, you are making it impossible to do this with the young. And it is because of that that the young grow up and destroy our land. As far as hunting goes, everyone in my family from the children to the elderly are all avid hunters. They prefer to stay close to home if possible. My parents own a Polaris Ranger because my Father has bad knees. He will not be able to hike to hunt, so you are discriminating against the elderly and anyone with a disability. But I need to mention that even with the Ranger, he stays on the trails and will set up a blind within 1/4 mile or less from his vehicle. I also have a relative with another disability with his legs and feet. He can not hike at all, so we drop him off to sit and hope for a target while we move the vehicles and then we return with the vehicle when he is done. In short, this is not how this is supposed to be. We should be able to enjoy the land and use it accordingly to the laws set forth for our purposes. Now I want to get to the point of closing the area and making it Wilderness. If that happens, you have now opened the area up to be a perfect destination for drug running. Since it will not be heavily patrolled and the fly zone will be at a higher altitude, how would you stop this from happening. To some of us, this is in our back door and we have concerns about this happening. Also, if this happens, the desert will get more destroyed by the drug runners than the general public using the land for multi purposes. I also want you to know that the entire area you are proposing is an area frequented by my family throughout the year. We hunt and camp in the Aguila area as well. I could go on an on, but I'm hoping you take what I have said into consideration.