

CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Because life is good.

COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST

In 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt pieced together four separate national forests to create the Coconino National Forest, which occupies more than 1.8 million acres in northern Arizona and is home to the Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, American pronghorn, and bald eagle. The forest also contains the San Francisco Peaks, Verde River, Fossil Creek, East Clear Creek, and Mogollon Rim, and spans the high-desert red rocks of Sedona to alpine tundra, making it one of the most diverse national forests in the country.

This forest provides habitat for 16 native fish species whose populations are in decline primarily from the negative impacts of roads and poorly managed land uses. On March 18, 2010, the Coconino National Forest released an environmental analysis of its plan to manage off-road vehicles and roads. Unfortunately, this analysis falls far short of taking a hard look at the serious negative impacts of roads and ORV use and would leave thousands of miles of unnecessary roads on the ground. The plan would also leave open more than 45,000 acres of land to unlimited cross-country driving for car camping — an area three times larger than the Cinder Hills off-road-vehicle play area that already exists just north of Flagstaff.



Photo © Zachary Crumbo

East Clear Creek and its tributaries provide vital riparian habitat for the forest's diverse wildlife.

The Coconino National Forest's plan by the numbers:

- **59,384**: number of acres of land open to continued destruction;
- **3,536**: number of miles of proposed motorized roads and trails in Alternative 4;
- **602**: number of miles of road the Coconino can afford to maintain;
- **1**: percentage of forest visitors who use the Coconino National Forest primarily for off-road motorized recreation.

Contrary to recent pronouncements by the secretary of agriculture regarding protection of forest watersheds

FOREST ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK

“Habitat destruction and the spread of alien species have been ranked as the two greatest threats to biodiversity. Off-road vehicles contribute to both of these.”

Wilcove D.S., D. Rothstein, J. Dubow, and A.L.E. Phillips, 1998.
Quantifying threats to imperiled species in the United States. Bioscience 48:1-15.

and restoration of resilient lands confronted with the uncertainties of climate disruption, the Forest Service admits its plan provides only a “slight increase in water quality” while continuing to hurt streams and wetlands.

The forest’s excessive, unsustainable open-road system equals a road trip from New York City to Los Angeles and back to Albuquerque — a haphazard spider web that will continue to adversely affect wildlife including pronghorn, deer, mountain lions, and countless aquatic species.

The time to act is now. The Forest Service must do its job: protect our forests for future generations.



Photo © Kim Crumbo

Trails closed to motorized use, such as this one in Barbershop Canyon, suffer due to lack of law enforcement.

National Off-road Vehicle Management

Scientists have recognized the impacts of off-road vehicles for decades. Effects on wildlife, habitat, vegetation, soil, air, water, and other forest users

are often severe, far-reaching, interconnected, and obvious to even the most casual observers. Motorized access is increasing on public lands and our national forests are being subjected to unprecedented damage. Finally, nearly 30 years after the signing of a presidential order designed to protect our forests from off-road vehicle abuse, the Forest Service is putting regulations in place to protect our public lands from further off-road vehicle damage. The Travel Management Rule forces the Service to manage off-road vehicles and protect our natural heritage for future generations. The rule requires the formal designation of routes and areas open to off-roading — reserving other areas for the benefit of wildlife, plants, and quiet recreation.

Off-road Vehicle Management in Southwestern National Forests

The Center for Biological Diversity has been working to protect wildlife habitat throughout New Mexico and Arizona from the ravages of off-road vehicle users for more than 15 years. The Center is committed to being a key part of the implementation of this rule in Arizona by working with conservation groups, government agencies, and off-road vehicle riders to minimize damage and preserve natural resources.



More information on protecting public lands from off-road vehicle damage can be found on the Center for Biological Diversity’s Web site at

http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/off-road_vehicles/travel-management_planning/index.html.

To learn more, contact Cyndi Tuell at ctuell@biologicaldiversity.org or (520) 444-6603, or Kim Crumbo from the Grand Canyon Wildlands Council at kcrumbo@grand-canyon.az.us.