



January 17, 2022

Mr. Todd Willard, District Ranger
Prescott National Forest
300 East Highway 260
Camp Verde, AZ 86322

Submitted electronically to:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?project=61156>

Re: Scoping for Verde Recreation Action Plan

Dear Mr. Willard:

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) is a 501c-3 non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat work, youth recruitment and retention, as well as educating outdoor enthusiasts on issues important to their passions. AZSFWC consists of 40 member, affiliate, and associate groups that reach across the spectrum of hunting, angling, shooting, outdoor recreation, and businesses from across Arizona. Our member groups represent more than 16,000 people from Arizona.

AZSFWC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Verde Recreation Action Plan (VRAP) that is being developed for the Verde Ranger District of the Prescott National Forest (Forest). Many of the areas included in the plan are visited by a number of our members as well as others pursuing wildlife-associated recreational activities.

We understand that this planning effort is in part a consequence of the recent, unprecedented recreational impacts affecting public lands across Arizona, particularly those proximate to urban areas. Information in the scoping packet makes it clear that existing camping corridors, including those along Highway 260, have been severely degraded by non-recreational camping, illegal dumping, accumulation of human waste, and other irresponsible behaviors.

AZSFWC supports efforts by the Forest to reduce the associated impacts to wildlife habitat and public safety. However, in doing so, we feel it is critical to maintain an appropriate balance between public access and resource protection. In moving forward with VRAP, we ask that the Environmental Assessment (EA) analyze the degree to which impacts to specific dispersed camping areas can be addressed through more effective enforcement, rather than closure.

AZSFWC Scoping Comments on Verde Recreation Action Plan – 1-17-21

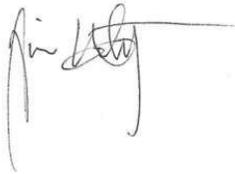
Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation
PO Box 75731 New River, AZ 85087

If closures are required, we encourage the Forest to implement a "no net loss" approach for dispersed camping opportunities on the District. With respect to other aspects of the plan, we support the provision of additional opportunities for non-motorized trails, trailheads, river access, and developed campgrounds.

Lastly, we are aware of at least one Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) wildlife water development located in the planning area (AGFD #404, Mingus Mountain #6). We ask the Forest to work with AGFD to ensure that actions undertaken under VRAP do not adversely affect the operation and maintenance of this facility or any other wildlife waters on the District.

We appreciate your consideration of these concerns as the Forest moves forward in preparing the VRAP EA and Draft Plan.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Unmacht", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Unmacht
Executive Director