



August 14, 2019

Ms. Christa Weise, Manager
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge
9300 East 28th Street
Yuma, AZ 85365

RE: Castle Dome/McPherson Pass Road in Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

Dear Ms. Weise:

On behalf of Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC), thank you for taking the time to discuss the Castle Dome/McPherson road issues with me on August 9th. The Southwest Wildlife Foundation (Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club) is one of our Member groups, and I have also been updated by them on some of what is happening on the Kofa relative to these road issues.

First and foremost, thank you for your efforts to make the By-Pass Road around the private property along the Castle Dome Road a reality!

Preserving access to our Federal public lands is extremely important to sportsmen and women specifically, and outdoor recreationists in general. The last few decades have seen way too many roads closed, and access restricted, including on the Kofa. It's easy to lock a gate and say no more, but that is not a prescription we believe is fair or appropriate in many cases.

That takes us to the 1.25 miles of the old Castle Dome Road north of the private property and locked gate, to where it intersects with the By-Pass Road. We understand this 1.25 mile section of road is slated to be closed to public access. If we understand the situation correctly, the proposal emanates from the private landowner's desire to eliminate any member of the public from driving on the road leading up to the gate he has erected on the north side of his property, restricting any further access.

We respectfully disagree with that proposition!

AZSFWC finds it ironic that this 1.25 mile section of road survived all the wilderness road closures in 1994, only to now be subjected to a closure because a

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private property owner doesn't want the public to drive down the road and turn around at a gate he erected, on a road that has been open to the public for decades!

On a personal level, while my experience on the Kofa is rather limited, I have several friends that have literally spent decades on the Refuge. They lament the prior restrictions, but have adapted to the changes, even if some of those restrictions and closures make no sense at all.

The proposed closure of this section of road lands even more on the level of unnecessary. There is no good reason a private party should be able to unilaterally dictate to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that he doesn't want anyone to drive on a public road that happens to lead up to "his" gate, which requires them to turn around.

This section of road is not in the wilderness, and has no biological reason for closure. This section of road allows for dispersed camping that is important to recreationists on the Kofa. It also enhances access in the Kofa to the west and south portions of Castle Dome Peak.

Finally, AZSFWC requests the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leave the 1.25 miles of the old Castle Dome Road north of the private property to the intersection of the new By-Pass Road open.

Thank you!

Yours in Conservation,



Jim Unmacht
Executive Director

CC: Rep. Paul Gosar, D.D.S.
Senator Krysten Sinema
Senator Martha McSally

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 sportsmen and women on issues important to their passions. AZSFWC consists of 39 member, affiliate, and associate groups that reach across the spectrum of hunting, angling, shooting, outdoor recreation and businesses from all across Arizona. Our member groups represent in excess of 10,000 sportsmen and women from Arizona.

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