



November 17, 2022

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**RE: Middle Gila South Access and Transportation Plan**

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) appreciates the opportunity to provide input for the Middle Gila South Travel Management Planning area in southeastern Arizona.

AZSFWC is a 501c-3 organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat improvement, youth recruitment and retention, as well as educating outdoor enthusiasts on issues important to their passions. AZSFWC's 40 member, associate and affiliate organizations reach across the spectrum of wildlife conservation, hunting, angling, shooting sports, and outdoor recreation groups from across Arizona, representing more than 25,000 people.

AZSFWC has been a longtime advocate for multiple use recreational activities on our public lands as well as supporting enhanced access to those lands. These issues are increasingly more important as Arizona's population continues to grow and the pressures of development gain traction.

AZSFWC appreciates the partnership between the BLM and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) when it comes to outdoor recreation, access issues and of course wildlife management in Arizona. We encourage that dialog to continue through the planning process to conserve what exists and find opportunities where warranted across this approximately 212,000 acre planning area.

AZSFWC echoes AZGFD's request that the BLM work with them on the route by route assessment and supports the points made in their November 8, 2022 comment letter:

1. Consistency and enforceability of regulations with respect to motorized big game retrieval, dispersed camping, and off-highway vehicle use.
2. Recognition of valid and responsible forms of outdoor recreation on public lands, including hunting, angling, shooting, wildlife watching, camping, OHV use, etc.

AZSFWC comments on the BLM Middle Gila South Transportation Plan – 11-17-22

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation  
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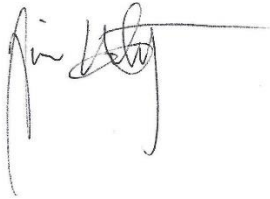
3. Allowing motorized big game retrieval up to one mile from a designated roadway except for riparian areas, streams, or other sensitive habitats.
4. Maintaining dispersed camping opportunities up to 300 feet from designated routes and in previously disturbed campsites.
5. Keep the public lands open and accessible for outdoor recreation unless there are scientific reasons not to.
6. Physically mark roads and trails that are subject to closure, not relying on mapping alone to convey the intent.

This planning area presents a number of challenges, but also has some opportunities for the BLM to enhance access for recreational activities as well as wildlife management. AZSFWC has identified three areas where we ask you to take a hard look to open access both for the public and AZGFD, they are:

- Mescal Mountains and Needles Eye Wilderness
- West side of the Galiuro Mountains along Tom Rhodes Ranch Road
- Cats Hills area south of the East Florence-Kelvin Highway

AZSFWC looks forward to continuing to engage throughout the planning process and provide additional input accordingly.

Thank you!



Jim Unmacht  
Executive Director

CC: Luke Thompson, AZGFD Branch Chief – Habitat, Evaluation, and Lands