

Coronado Forest Plan Administrative Changes

Administrative Change per Appeal Resolutions

Administrative Change #1

December, 2019

Introduction

This Administrative Change #1 to the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Coronado National Forest (NF) carries forward modifications and clarifications to the Forest Plan as a result of the decision made on appeals of the plan, as well as the resolutions accepted in appeal resolution meetings with the appellants.

There were two appeals of the revised plan, from the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter. The Forest Service worked with the appellants to resolve their appeal issues and as a result of the appeal issues resolution agreements described below, the Arizona Game and Fish Department withdrew their appeal in its entirety. The Sierra Club informed the Forest Service that three of their appeal points have been resolved. The remaining appeal issues from the Sierra Club were reviewed by the Reviewing Officer for the Chief, and the decision was made to affirm the revised Coronado Forest Plan, with instructions given to add clarity on two appeal topics. The forest has followed these instructions and is publishing this administrative change that addresses them as well as the appeal resolution agreements made with the appellants.

The decision on the appeals of the revised Coronado Forest Plan has been made by the Chief of the Forest Service, and all parties to the appeals have been notified. This appeal decision is the final administrative determination of the Department of Agriculture unless the Secretary elects to review the decision. The appeal decision and enclosure are available on the Coronado National Forest's planning webpage https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/coronado/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fswdev7_018702.

Administrative Change and Errata per Appeals Decision and Resolutions

To address the instructions given in the appeal decision and provide the resolutions the Coronado National Forest agreed to in discussions with the appellants, the following modifications and clarifications are being made to the revised Coronado Forest Plan. The alterations made as part of this administrative change are listed below. Additions are indicated by *italicized text*; deletions are indicated by strike-through text. An updated version of the Forest Plan and Appendix H will be posted to the forest planning website https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/coronado/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fswdev7_018702. Pages which have been changed will be identified in the page footers, along with the date of this administrative change.

Instructions from the Appeal Decision

I am instructing you to:

- Correct citations to the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act of 1988 in all Plan related documents;
To address this instruction, modify the LRMP to accurately reflect language in the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act.

- On page 155 of the Revised Plan (page 156 of the updated Revised Plan) modify current language by deleting reference to the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act: “~~Designated in 1989 by the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act, This area encompasses 2,937 acres in the highest elevations of the Pinaleno Ecosystem Management Area.~~”
 - On page 110 of Appendix H of the FEIS modify current language to read: “~~Designated in 1989 by the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act, the Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Area (2,937 acres) is a designated special management area. The University of Arizona manages the Mount Graham International Observatory.~~” This involves an errata to the FEIS.
- Define all suitable uses found in Table 14 of the revised Forest Plan in the glossary.

To address this instruction, modify the LRMP glossary on page 183 of the Revised Plan (page 184 of the updated Revised Plan) to define Forest Products (traditional) and Fuelwood Products.

- **Firewood products:** Wood removed for firewood. *This term can be used interchangeably with fuelwood products.*
- **Forest products (commercial):** *Plants or plant parts harvested for commercial gain.*
- **Forest products (traditional):** *Plants or plant parts harvested for traditional and cultural purposes, and not used for commercial gain.*
- **Fuelwood products:** *Wood removed for firewood. This term can be used interchangeably with firewood products.*

Appeal Issues Resolution Agreements

Sierra Club Issue 2, Visual Quality: 1982 Planning Rule, section 219.21, requires the Plan to identify visual quality objectives (VQOs). Appellants are unable to find any VQOs, or standards, in the Plan and claim this failing is a violation of NEPA, NFMA, the 1982 Planning Rule, and APA.

- The explanation provided by Regional Forester Cal Joyner, that the Scenery Management System SIOs (Scenic Integrity Objectives) have replaced VQOs, was sufficient to withdraw this appeal issue. No modification to the plan or EIS will occur for this appeal point.

Sierra Club Issue 7, Human Migration: It is improper, immoral, and unethical for the Plan, the EIS and ROD to improperly identify human migration as causing "unprecedented" impacts. Remove the statement regarding “unprecedented impacts” from the Plan, EIS, and ROD, and all such references. There is no evidence in the EIS, ROD, or Plan to support the statement that migrants and drug traffickers are having unprecedented impacts on the Forest.

- Forest Plan: Modify language on pages 7 and 8 under Visitor Experiences (no similar “unprecedented” language is found in the FEIS/ROD) to read: Other unanticipated forces have come to bear in the region, notably ~~illegal~~ activity associated with the international border with Mexico. ~~Undocumented immigrants crossing into the United States through the Coronado National Forest from Mexico, as well as drug smuggling activity,~~ cause *causing* unprecedented resource damage as well as public and employee safety issues.
- Forest Plan: Modify Miller Peak Wilderness Area Management Approach Two (2 (page 112 of the Revised Plan, page 113 of updated Revised Plan) to read:

Working with volunteer groups, partners, and agency personnel to clean off-trail sites where discarded refuse from illegal immigrants has collected and degraded the wilderness character.

Sierra Club Recommendation 14, Special Uses Management Approach: Clarify Special Uses Management Approach #2 (page 86 of the Revised Plan). Not clear what the Forest means by "[c]ontinuing to establish user groups or organizations for each site."

- Forest Plan: Remove Management Approach #2 from the revised Plan (page 86).
~~2. Continuing to establish user groups or organizations for each site.~~

Arizona Game and Fish Department Issue 1, Reintroduction and Non-Indigenous Species: The Department believes the Forest Service has exceeded its authority by promulgating Standards and Guidelines which encroach the authority of the Commission and Department to manage fish and wildlife populations in Arizona as a public trust responsibility. The Department also objects to the footnote to Standard no. 1 which implies that the Forest Service will determine whether a species is indigenous to an area. The Department believes that this is not consistent with Forest Service policy, Forest Service Manual, or the Master Memorandum of Understanding.

- Forest Plan: Modify footnote 34 (attached to Standard #1 on page 107) as follows: "Determination of whether a species is indigenous will be ~~made in consultation and coordination with~~ *determined by State game management agencies.*"
- Forest Plan: Add an additional footnote to Standard #1 (on page 107; apply to Standard #2 as well on page 107) stating the following: *Nothing in this guidance restricts the ability of AZGFD to conduct species reintroduction according to their enabling laws.*

Arizona Game and Fish Department Issue 2, Introduction of Non-Indigenous Species into Areas Adjacent to Wilderness Areas: The Department objects to Guideline no. 1 under Wildlife in Wilderness. The Guideline is not in conformance with the Wilderness Act of 1984 that no buffer zones are to be created around designated wilderness areas.

- Forest Plan: Add a Management Approach under Wildlife in Wilderness (page 107), as follows: Work with the AZGFD, as non-indigenous species are proposed for new introductions, to determine appropriate locations and means for such introductions to ensure that such introductions will not conflict with the direction governing nearby wilderness areas.

Arizona Game and Fish Department Issue 3, Special Uses Permit – Animal Collection: The Department objects to any requirement for a special use permit for animal collection as included in Standards and Guidelines for specific special management areas. The requirement does not appear to be authorized under the Forest Service regulations for special use permits.

- Forest Plan: Add a footnote to each of the above identified standards & guidelines (on pages 131/136/144 of the Revised Plan, pages 131/136/145 of the updated Revised Plan) defining the term "animal collection":
- Animal collection refers to the collection of species that are not legally hunted or fished pursuant to state regulations or licenses.

Arizona Game and Fish Department Issue 4, Motorized Transportation System – Signage: The Department requests that all open roads and motorized trails be signed or marked as open, and that all roads and motorized trails to be closed or restricted be clearly marked as such.

- Revised Forest Plan: Under Motorized Transportation, add the following Management Approach to page 76:

Work with interested parties when opportunities arise to evaluate roads, trails, and areas closed or restricted from public motorized vehicle travel to determine where signage is appropriate to avoid confusion by the visiting public. Signage guidance will be obtained from applicable documents to include the EM-7100-15, "Standards for Forest Service Signs and Posters".

Arizona Game and Fish Department Issue 5, Recommended Wilderness Area Designations: The Department opposes the recommended Wilderness Area Designations (pages 118-120 of the Revised Plan) as they impact the Department's ability to fulfill its public trust responsibilities. The Department is concerned that the Wilderness Area Designations obstruct common Department management activities in recommended and designated wilderness.

- Forest Plan: Add a footnote to the Guideline section of Recommended Wilderness/Wilderness Study Areas (page 120 of the Revised Plan) to clarify as follows: *Existing uses within WSAs and recommended wilderness will be allowed to continue so long as the effects of those uses will not preclude the maintenance of the presently existing wilderness characteristics of the area that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation.*