

**Sonoran Desert Trail System Project**  
USDA Forest Service  
Mesa Ranger District, Tonto National Forest

**Background**

This project was developed in cooperation with “Friends of the Goldfields”, “Friends of the Tonto”, Pinal County District 2 Supervisor, City of Apache Junction, City of Mesa, Superstition Horsemen Association and Maricopa County. Proposed recreation activities were derived from the Maricopa County Regional Trails Management Plan, comments from the “Friends of the Goldfields”, “Friends of the Tonto”, and the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team.

**Purpose and Need for Action**

There is a need to provide designed and maintained designated trail opportunities in the project area to offer an alternative to wilderness-dependent recreational opportunities. Currently an unmanaged system of user-created social trails fails to provide adequate public recreational opportunities and is leading to unnecessary resource impacts.

**Proposed Action**

The following actions are proposed below and detailed on Exhibit A:

- Designate public access points for non-motorized use to ensure ongoing, unimpeded public access to National Forest Lands. Evaluate parking and access points to provide sufficient thoroughfare for public and wildlife.
- Designate a system of non-motorized multi-use trails within the project area to be open to foot, horse, and bicycle traffic, yet closed to motorized traffic. Combining the approximate proposed 38.5 miles with trails currently on the Forest Trail Atlas, the product would be an easily accessible, continuous, non-motorized trail system of approximately 60 miles.
- Designate trail and trailhead names to promote awareness of the sonoran desert.
- Evaluate existing user-created social trails for conversion to system trails and rehabilitate any remaining redundant or unsustainable social trails or roads.
- Provide an ADA accessible interpretive trail (‘A9’)
- Reclaim prospecting pits and open mines near proposed and system trails that may have public safety issues.
- Install fencing, barriers and signage as necessary to prevent motorized use of the non-motorized trail system. Existing, legal motorized use will not be affected.

**Decision Authority**

This project will be evaluated in an environmental analysis (NEPA) and associated Forest Plan amendments (NFMA) if needed. Both are within the Forest Supervisor’s authority for approval