



**File Code:** 2300  
**Date:** January 12, 2016

Dear Interested Trail User,

The Forest Service would like to hear from you regarding a proposal to develop non-motorized recreation trails in the areas described below. Your comments are most effective if submitted by February 29, 2016. Please submit comments to the attention of the Red Rock Recreation Trails Lead Francisca Adrian, at [fcadrian@fs.fed.us](mailto:fcadrian@fs.fed.us) or via mail at PO Box 20429, Sedona Arizona, 86341 or on-line at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/coconino/>

Over the past three years the Forest Service has been in dialogue with the public, Yavapai and Coconino Counties, cities of Sedona, Camp Verde, and Cottonwood and trail user groups to prioritize socially and environmentally responsible non-motorized trail projects. Some projects have been evaluated and approved, while others have been deferred—mostly due to the Forest Service needing more specific input from the public and environmental review.

It is the mission of the Forest Service to provide for appropriate levels of trail-related recreation and forest access. This use must be balanced with the development and long-term maintenance costs for trails and trailheads. Issues such as who pays for the development and maintenance of trails and trailheads, as well as determining the appropriate levels of trail development continue to be at the heart of any discussion about National Forest trails in the Verde Valley.

The projects shown on the attached vicinity map, three specific maps and described in Attachment A include trail development ideas that need more input from you. In addition, the Forest Service continues to seek your ideas about how to secure the resources to develop and maintain these trails if a decision is made to add them to the official National Forest trail system.

Thank you for your interest in the National Forest.

Sincerely,

NICOLE BRANTON  
RED ROCK DISTRICT RANGER

ATTACHMENT A --- Proposed Trail Descriptions



**Western Gateway trails – refer to Map 1**

There is a need to plan for trails in the area of National Forest land west of Sedona and north of SR89A, to avoid the continued haphazard growth of user created routes and instead plan and create a purpose built and sustainable system of trails.

Trail related public meetings held in 2013 and trail public comment in 2014 showed high interest and support for an improved trail system in this area. Many user created routes currently exist with some segments causing resource damage. User created routes include aka Western Civilization, Ledge n' Aerie, and Last Frontier and other routes emanating from several neighborhoods. Private development associated with the Aerie subdivision and the area known as Sedona' "western gateway" (the old Cultural Park area) will affect "traditional" access to routes on National Forest currently used by bikers, hikers, runners, and equestrians. There is increasing demand for trail access from nearby residential neighborhoods. Currently there are only two National Forest system trails in the area: Girdner and Centennial trails.

The proposal for this area includes trails emanating from the Girdner Trailhead to accommodate multiple user types and offer a variety of challenge levels and experiences. Loops, connectors and vistas are proposed. Connectors would tie in with trails to the north (Cockscomb/Rupp) and to the south (Red Rock Loop/Schuermann Mountain/Scorpion and Skywalker trails). One objective of trail development for the area is to accommodate some of the Red Rock areas growth in mountain biking, running, and hiking by creating an area that may pull some of the use away from more sensitive and heavily used areas while providing a range of trail difficulties connected to a full service trailhead and vista.

Proposed trails for this area west of Sedona are described below, along with the conditions and features of each of the proposed trails and estimated mileages. Also refer to Map 1.

1. Cockscomb Loop (1.3) – Intermediate – This trail would provide connections between trails to the north and south, and also a loop option around the Cockscomb formation. An existing unsustainable user created route to the east of Cockscomb formation would be elevated on the Cockscombs east side to move it away from private property and to improve views and tread drainage. This loop would make an easy hiking access from the Aerie Trailhead for a trip around the Cockscomb formation. Views from the west side of the loop encompass Mingus Mountain and the Verde River; views to the east take in the formations of the Red Rock Secret Mountain Wilderness. On the west side of the Cockscomb, the route would contour on the lowest exposed rock layer, adding variety to the experience.
2. West Dry Creek Trail (1.8) – Intermediate – Trail follows a low gradient alignment from the south to the north to link with Cockscomb and Rupp trails. The alignment would contour along the west side of Dry Creek until a side drainage allows it to contour up to its north west most tip near the new Aerie access road where it connects with Cockscomb Trail. This trail is important for cyclists to provide an easier option route to travel from south to north. It is also key for creating multiple loop options in the Western Trails area and creates a quicker way to travel

- from the Girdner Trailhead to the north and connect with existing trails such as Aerie, Rupp, and Cockscomb.
3. Western Civilization (1.2) – Intermediate – This alignment would follow a user created route currently used for getting out away from Sedona and connecting the existing Cockscomb and Rupp trails with trails south of 89A. This route is enjoyed by runners and bikers for its gradual southerly downhill gradient and long sweeping corners. The northern end of the route requires a reroute to avoid the private Aerie subdivision.
  4. West Boundary (1.8) – Intermediate – The alignment travels through rock bands and up and over three high points for added vista features. Trail would leave W. Civilization near Cockscomb formation heading south and connect to the southern part of Last Frontier Trail. This is a key trail for creating more loop options in the area and creates a more direct way to travel through the Western Trails area for users seeking access to other trail systems to the south and north.
  5. South Last Frontier (2.2) – Advanced – Parts of this route are well established user created and sustainable. Some rerouting is proposed to provide better alignment and challenge, keeping the unique character of slickrock shelf within the “canyon”. The “golden stairs” section would be rebuilt for sustainability. A lower addition or reroute could be possible keeping the trail in the canyon longer and keeping the unique style of this trail on a rock shelf. This section would be more labor intensive to construct than other trails in the area, however, the rock shelf features of this trail are unique and add amazing views into Dry Creek.
  6. North Last Frontier (2.0) – Advanced – The existing northern section of this user built route that descends into Dry Creek is unsustainable and a reroute is proposed. The reroute continues contouring along Dry Creek north adding nearly 2 miles of new trail where the trail descends down a south facing bowl and intersects with Girdner Trail on the west side of Dry Creek.
  7. Tim’s Climb (0.7) – This trail would create a new route out of Dry Creek to the east as an alternative to the steeper and more difficult Girdner Trail. This trail would make a lower gradient, and easier to maintain climb and avoid the more difficult eroded steep rock ledges on Girdner. Addition of Tim’s Climb provides an opportunity to make Girdner a recommended downhill route and Tim’s Climb a recommended uphill route. As trail usage increases in this area, user numbers may increase in and out of Dry Creek. Providing recommended directional routes in and out of Dry Creek will help alleviate user conflict and provide a safer trail experience.
  8. Ledge n’ Airy (2.5) – Advanced – This is an existing user created route that offers very unique technical slower speed mountain bike obstacles not found on any other trail. Trail follows a contour around a side drainage off of Dry Creek and offers good views. There could be optional segments to allow bikers to further test their skills.
  9. Easy Loop A (0.9) – Beginner -- Trail purpose is to provide a short beginner trail loop easily accessed from the Girdner Trailhead.
  10. Easy Loop B (1.4) – Intermediate – Trail purpose is to create a loop from the parking lot with good intermediate challenge level without having to drop down and cross Dry Creek. Trail alignment would travel into and out of a drainage on the southern end of the area, then connect to an existing user created route.

11. 89A Connector Trail (0.9) – Intermediate – The purpose of this route is to provide a connector that avoids private property while connecting the Girdner Trailhead and View Loop with Easy Loop A and B and other trails in the area including the main crossing point of SR89A where the Red Rock Loop Trail can be accessed.
12. View Loop (2.5) – Beginner – Tread would avoid rock bands as feasible to make for a smoother trail surface. This trail would serve many users who want an easy trail experience close to a full service trailhead. It would provide two overlooks into Dry Creek canyon and basically encircles the area containing the Girdner materials pit and access road. Tread would be low gradient and wide to accommodate easy passing for all users.
13. Color Cover Connector (2.0) – Intermediate – Trail climbs up a ridge line heading north toward Color Cove residential area. Trail is designed on a southwest facing slope to make a gradual 150 – 200 foot elevation change for a fun, “flowy” biking and running experience. Trail would be ideal for long in sloped corners to help carry momentum with a mix of smooth dirt and rock bands to descend down. This trail would avoid the more difficult segment of Girdner including the sandy segments by Dry Creek for users who want to connect to Girdner/Az. Cypress to the north.
14. Dove Wing (0.2) – Intermediate – This short segment of trail would enhance the existing “neighborhood” link between Forest lands and the residential area. Trail follows existing route of a gas pipeline and has a dedicated city public easement.
15. Short trail connector (0.25 mile) between Scorpion Trail and Old Post Trail. This link will provide for a trail connection so that people can safely connect these two trails in the vicinity of the junction of Chavez Ranch Road and Red Rock Loop Road. Not shown on map.

#### **Cliffrose Trail – refer to Map 2**

This trail is intended to link the Cliffrose Trailhead (managed by City of Cottonwood) to National Forest Land to the east of Mingus Avenue and ultimately to the Lime Kiln Trail, as a longer primarily non-motorized trail opportunity for hikers, runners, bikers and equestrians. The proposal includes 0.7 miles of new trail construction on National Forest that would link to existing Forest Service dirt 4x4 routes and existing unsurfaced routes located on land managed by City of Cottonwood and State of Arizona.

#### **Montezuma Crossing Trail – refer to Map 3 and Map 4**

The proposed Montezuma Crossing Trail is intended to link the two parts of the Rimrock community (north of Beaver Creek and South of Beaver Creek) via a non-motorized trail connection. The proposal includes a quarter mile of new Forest Service trail construction to connect between the south and north sides of Wet Beaver Creek. There would be an unbridged crossing of Beaver Creek. Ultimately this would create a trail connection with Rimrocks new Sunset Trails on the south side of the creek to Montezuma Well National Monument and Kramer Drive to the north. Kramer Drive is a public right-of-way, which provides a continuous, legal transportation corridor between the community of Rimrock and National Forest land at the proposed crossing point.