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News Release

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Kaibab National Forest returns easement application to Town of Tusayan

Williams, Ariz., March 4, 2016—For Immediate Release. The Kaibab National Forest notified the Town of Tusayan today that its application for road and utility easements on National Forest System land is being returned and will not receive further evaluation and processing.

According to a letter to Tusayan Mayor Craig Sanderson signed by Kaibab Forest Supervisor Heather Provencio, the proposed project does not meet agency requirements for initial and second level screenings and, therefore, is being returned to the town, as the Forest Service may not process such an application for authorization.

The Kaibab National Forest has been working to address the Town of Tusayan's application for authorization to improve and maintain roads on National Forest System land and to install various utilities. The roads and associated infrastructure would provide improved access to the Kotzin and Ten-X ranch properties, and would allow significant residential and commercial development. The first step in that process was to notify potentially affected federal, state, and local government agencies and the public of the proposal and provide them an opportunity to comment.

During this initial scoping process, the Forest Service received 2,447 unique comment letters, 85,693 form letters, 86 comments connected to a blog, and two petitions with 105,698 signatures. After the close of the initial formal scoping period, the Forest Service received in excess of 35,000 additional comment letters. The vast majority of the commenters opposed the Forest Service authorizing the proposed roads and infrastructure.

"Based on the comments received, and considering the other information I have regarding the proposed project, I have decided to reconsider application of the screening criteria to the proposal," Provencio wrote in the letter to the mayor.

Provencio goes on to cite specific agency requirements that the town's application fails to meet under both initial- and second-level screening criteria including consistency with the Kaibab Forest Plan, the necessity that the proposed use not create an exclusive or perpetual right of use or occupancy, the requirement that the proposed use must not unreasonably interfere with the use of adjacent non-National Forest System lands, and the provision that a proposal must be rejected if the proposed use would not be in the public interest.

"Based on information received in the record, I have determined that the Tusayan proposal is deeply controversial, is opposed by local and national communities, would stress local and Park [Grand Canyon

National Park] infrastructure, and have untold impacts to the surrounding Tribal and National Park lands,” Provencio wrote.

The letter closes by advising that if another application were to be submitted, it should address the specific concerns and criteria outlined.

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