Southwest Energy Options
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From: Bill Carlis

Date: JULY 28, 2014

To: REGIONAL FORESTER - APPEAL DECIDING OFFICER

FAX # 505-842-3173

Pages to follow: 3

Re: PLEASE RECORD THIS APPEAL

+ FAX TO ME A VERIFICATION OF RECEPTION AT THE ABOVE NUMBER

RECEIVED
JUL 2 [illegible] 2014

TO: Regional Forester, Appeal Deciding Officer
Southwestern Region
333 Broadway Blvd. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
FAX (505) 842-3173

FROM:
Bill Carlis
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Signature: Bill Carlis

REGARDING:
Gila National Forest "Travel Management Plan"
Record of Decision and FEIS issued June 5, 2014
Kelley M. Russel, Forest Supervisor

REGULATION UNDER WHICH THE APPEAL IS BEING FILED:

The copy of CFR 215.14 (5) which I obtained through Senator Heinrich's office says to list this: therefore I declare 215.14. Curiously, the copy I received from Lisa Mizuno of the local office did not mention this requirement in CFR 215.14 (5).

COMMENTS SORTED BY SUBSECTIONS (Based on Lisa's copy):

CFR 215.14 (5) "Specific Changes..." I believe that this decision is flawed and should be changed to an option that is not as draconian when evaluated by the regional Governments and forest users. The National Forests should not be treated like National Monuments or National Parks, or like extensions of the Nature Conservatory's corporate vacation sites for the wealthy. To so drastically change the way the working class and poor access and use their local forests is unconscionable, considering:

1. 40 years ago there were no reports of jaguars or coatimundis in the Gila. Now, sightings and reports are common, especially in the Burro Mountains. This expansion of range occurred despite the existence of the former (supposedly destructive) freedoms that users enjoyed. Maybe most of these people respected the Gila and tried not to create irreversible damage.

2. The Wolf Reintroduction Program is doomed from a funding point of view. One in seven Americans is on food stamps. This Wolf program has squandered ten's of millions of dollars and created negligible employment. Our local "food bank" people use a ratio of 7 to 1 to explain how every dollar they get can procure $7 of food. "Wolf" expenditures need to cease and nature will determine their future. (They were in the Apache N.F. before the program began- I heard them multiple times).It should not be listed as a 'reason' to select Alternative G.

3. Many new people have noticed that citizens of the 4-county region most impacted by this Decision have a very limited choice in theaters, museums, major galleries, water slides, winter activities, restaurants, etc. Subsequently, it's this forest that people have come to for decades for recreation, to escape the heat, to gather fuel for subsistence heating and cooking, and to relax and unwind from the inevitable stresses of everyday life. Group gatherings are common on holidays. This Alternative will dramatically increase the likelihood of contact and confrontation with fellow campers and/or FS Law Enforcement and I, like many citizens, would not be surprised to see this Decision lead to violence. I would recommend that Independent Sociologists be included in the list of preparers to evaluate the stresses imparted on communities by such drastic and unnecessary changes.

4. People will only be allowed to travel on numbered roads. In my 42 years of traveling the dirt roads of the Gila, Apache, and Coronado NFs, I have noticed road number signs missing routinely from mapped routes (they're easy to take), and on return trips would still find them missing. Will campers be busted if they're on a legal road missing its number? Should not the F.S. guarantee a rapid replacement?

5. Both Lisa and Kelley (phone discussion) insist that their new camping and hunting restrictions are not that bad, because we can just carry or drag in our gear past the 300' limit, thereby opening up the rest of the forest for camping. What poppycock! I doubt these 2 have spent much time (if any) packing in ice chests, regular food, bedding, family-sized tents, tables, etc. a few hundred feet from their vehicle. Let's suppose you're young and athletic and your camp is, say, 300' from your car. How many females, armed or not, would feel secure far away from their means of escape? From a security point of view, an intelligent camper would much rather have their vehicle and camp not visible from the main drag. This is just common sense. The selected Alternative will have you, your vehicle and your camp on display for all to see. Remember the sides of the designated roads will no doubt be "thinned" back closer to your site. Shaded campsites (without ants) will be rare. Since more vehicles will now be hurrying on these designated roads to get to the limited camping areas, clouds of dust will no doubt make the new Gila camping experience especially enjoyable for some roadside inhabitants. This will inevitably, in my opinion, lead to people going elsewhere, a phenomenon which will affect tourism and the economies of the regional counties. The Gila has always been known for its wildness and sense of adventure. This Alternative destroys this concept for vehicle-accompanied explorers and travelers.

6. I am not a hunter and abhor trophy hunting that wastes meat, but I feel that hunting science and skills are important traits in a society that finds itself with minimal farming experience and record-setting droughts. This Alternative seems to be more interested in punishing hunters than coming up with reasonable game-retrieval options. There are many older citizens, women, and children who hunt regularly; elk and large deer are not easy to pack out for this demographic. It seems the intent of this Decision is to diminish hunting by increasing the complexity and work required to complete the hunt.

7. What we are really observing with Alternative G is the "californization" of the Gila.(I'm told Alternative G was also selected for the Santa Fe NF). The Project Leader, Lisa Mizuno, has a B.S. in Oceanography with an M.S. in fisheries and estuaries and lists years of work in these fields in California's coastal forests. Seems like a strange choice for a travel management coordinator in a southwest high-desert forest. The boss, Kelley, is brand new to the area and is not even listed in the Draft EIS. Not much time to get to know your forest or your communities.

Let's look at what our regional Southwest Forester's office is doing in Arizona in the Coronado and other NF:

a] You have to pay (was $5) to drive up to the top of Mount Lemmon. This spot has always been loved by the "locals" as a place to escape the heat or play in the snow.

b] By Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon you can walk and cool off in the rare, natural rock pools, but to park on the main roads you need to pay (was $5).

c] South of Tucson, in Madeira Canyon, a popular birding area, to walk anywhere you must pay (was $5) to park and don't plan to park on the side of the road. Tickets can be given.

d] Private Campground concessionaires replaced the "informal" camping that used to be allowed on the East Fork of the Black River.

e] Expansion of the "Rooms with a View" cabin rental program.

f] Other Fee Demonstration Programs requiring the public to pay.

I believe this Alternative is actually the next phase in what is a thinly disguised conversion of the National Forest System from "free use of the Public Lands by the (generally) tax-paying public"to a "Pay to Play" format that is anticipating the time when an annual Federal permit will be required to exit the main paved roads and walk, drive, bicycle, ride horses, etc. in the Forests. Until then, "free" camping will be made more and more difficult until Private Campground Concessionaires appear to save the day. They'll get to set the fee amounts. More people will be driven to use the FS cabin rental program. Some Forest Administrators will probably develop "special relationships" with vendors (this is the US) and we wind up having another venue for money-driven corruption. The proposed camping, hunting and road restrictions are really designed to facilitate the inspection of permits, collection of fees, and locating of control stations and gates.

CFR 215.14 (8)"How the Decision…violates law, regulation or policy" When I first attempted to glean the actual deadline date for this appeal I immediately ran into unusual obstacles. The local office (Kelley Russel included) would only say "45 days from publication" They gave me that date, but no mention of what was considered day 1, or explanation of deadlines occurring on weekends. My next call was to the Regional Forester in Albuquerque, where the receptionist repeated the same thing. When my quick math indicated a Friday or weekend deadline (depending on whether day 1 was the date of publication or the next day) she was of no help. I had to contact both NM Senators offices to acquire the pertinent data. Dara Parker of Senator Heinrich's Las Cruces office spent almost an hour on the phone with me until she found the appropriate federal sites that revealed how the deadline was officially calculated. Melanie Goodman from Senator Udall's Las Cruces office called a day or two later with the results of her detailed research; she was impressed with the degree of difficulty to achieve it. I believe she made a negative comment to the Regional Forester regarding her experience.

"Directives from above" were proffered by the FS as an explanation for this strange and confusing lack of a date. It seems more likely that they were hoping this would cause some "appealers" to become confused as to the deadline and possibly miss it. It made no logical sense to the Senator's aides or me. I cannot cite any actual CFR or other law, but it seems likely that these obstacles violate some provision requiring the open transmission of information regarding issues as important as this without having to tie up the valuable time of Senator's assistants. I feel these FS administrators should be censured for their behavior.

IN CONCLUSION: Take this decision back to the drawing board and replace it with something more humane to the regional populace, considering you are in what in actuality is the poorest state in the US, during an economic downturn (some say depression). This is not California or Arizona.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Bill Carlis