

Coconino National Forest Plan Revision

Dispersed Recreation

Forest-wide Direction

Background and Description

- Dispersed recreation is activities that take place outside of developed camping or concessionaire-operated facilities, excluding motorized recreation. This may include dispersed camping in designated sites or corridors that lack substantial improvements.

Desired Condition

- The diverse landscapes of the Coconino National Forest (NF) offer a variety of settings for a broad range of recreational opportunities in all seasons and in quiet, natural places. Landscapes range from primitive settings that provide opportunities for solitude, to more developed, rustic settings that provide opportunities for social interaction and greater human comforts.
- Recreation opportunities exist for people with a variety of abilities. Although development and population in the region continue to grow, dispersed recreation settings are stable, retaining their natural character, including remote, undeveloped settings.
- Recreation activities create minimal user conflicts. The Coconino NF fulfills a unique and vital role as a place of learning and caring about the environment.
- Growing demand for recreation is accommodated within the capacity of the land to support it. Recreation use stays within this capacity with the exception of higher holiday and weekend use levels, where resources can recover from the pressure of short-term use increases in use. Dispersed recreation enhances the quality of life for residents and provides tourist destinations, which contribute to local economies. Forest Service communication and interpretive messages show respect for the diverse backgrounds and needs of visitors.
- The Forest Service communicates accurately and honestly and conveys a land ethic to visitors. Visitors not only understand how to reduce their impacts on the natural and cultural environment, but actively protect natural and cultural resources and wilderness values. Low-impact recreation principles and activities are promoted and widely practiced by the visiting public.
- As a result of public stewardship and education, effective enforcement, patrols and use of refuse and recycling facilities, recreation impacts are minimized.

Working Draft – text under development, subject to change
Public input is welcome and would be most useful if received by December 10, 2010.
No text is final until Plan approval in Fall 2012.

- Dispersed recreation activities are diverse and include scenic driving, hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, boating, water-play, mountain-biking, horseback riding, and camping. Activities such as mountain-biking, geo-caching, and rock climbing do not detract from the natural character of the forest, impact resources such as aesthetics, soils, vegetation, and wildlife, or contribute to user conflicts.
- Forest-wide dispersed recreation sites are small, evidence of human waste and litter is minimal, and resource damage is minimal. Where resource damage has occurred, especially in high traffic locations, sites are rehabilitated to reduce impacts and discourage expansion of impacts.
- Designated motorized camping corridors provide opportunities for dispersed camping with recreational vehicles and car camping. These corridors provide opportunities for camping in groups or individually in a natural setting with adequate space to allow for some privacy. There is a range of choices available for dispersed camping in terms of natural setting and location of the Forest. Most corridors are not overcrowded and the naturalness of the corridor is maintained. In camping corridors trees are healthy and intact and soil erosion is minimal.
- A system of well-marked and well-maintained trails provides opportunities for visitors to explore the Forest. Construction and design of trails promotes sustainability of recreation opportunities. Access roads to trailheads are open and maintained, and trailheads provide adequate parking and vehicle turnaround space. Trails provide access to scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities with varying levels of physical challenge and experiences for different user groups. Damage to resources from trailheads and trails is minimal and within the ability of the forest to rehabilitate and prevent further damage.
- Meadows and riparian areas are visually attractive and free from evidence of physical, mechanical, or vegetative damage due to recreation activities. Physical impacts to meadows and riparian areas are confined to engineered road crossings, trail crossings and access points. These structures minimize damage to meadows and riparian area.
- Historic trails and routes are preserved and adapted for contemporary use, where appropriate and feasible. Unplanned social trails are rare and off-trail use is discouraged in ecologically-sensitive or high traffic areas. National Forest trails adjacent to urban areas connect to municipal and county trail systems to allow for continuity in recreation experience. Trails in areas with resource concerns, where high user conflicts occur, or in conjunction with other resource management activities, are rehabilitated or mitigated. Markers on winter sport trails are visible in winter. Mountain biking occurs on safe, multi-use trails which provide adequate opportunities for a challenging and scenic recreation experience. Where safe sight distances or trail design features cannot be provided to mitigate user conflicts, consider single use trails to accommodate varying trail user experiences, including downhill and free-riding where appropriate.

Draft revised plan language for Dispersed Recreation – November 2010. For more information on Forest Plan Revision, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/plan-revision.shtml>.

- Trailheads are easily accessible and do not interrupt the traffic flow of access roads. Infrastructure at trailheads is made of durable material and harmonizes with the landscape. The boundaries of trailhead parking areas are clearly defined to discourage parking outside of the trailhead. Interpretive information provided at the trailhead is appropriate for the uses of the trail and provides information on low impact trail use. Trailhead signing, brochures, and directional signing are visible and allow for easy navigation of the area, especially at trailheads near private land and communities. The level of development at trailheads is consistent with the development character of the surrounding area (Recreation Opportunity Spectrum setting), except where higher use require a higher level of development. Trailheads that are critical for multi-season recreation access accommodate snow removal and storage as well as safe for dispersed winter sport activities. Ample access to snowplay staging areas is available. Trailheads intended to accommodate horse trailers or motorized recreation are wide enough for vehicles with trailers to turn around and have a firm, stable surface to prevent resource damage in wet conditions.
- Recreation opportunities at rivers and lakes emphasize day-use, nature-based activities, such as hiking, picnicking, bird watching, photography, boating, swimming, fishing, and interpretation. These activities in and near riparian areas and water do not contribute to bank erosion, vegetation or soil compaction, trash or sanitation issues, or the transport or establishment of invasive non-native species. Camping only occurs on hardened or developed sites, where recreation activities have damaged riparian, shoreline or aquatic resources. Angling opportunities are provided at remote sites and in a natural landscape.
- Snowplay activities occur in a safe environment where conflict between motorized and non-motorized activities is mitigated through signing and design considerations. Downhill snowplay activities, such as sledding, do not occur where there is a potential conflict between the activity and traffic on paved roads, especially along the I-17 corridor. Snowplay activities are strategically located to disperse use, reduce congestion on major highways, and to provide a spectrum of snowplay opportunities from semi-primitive to developed settings.
- A diverse range of hunting opportunities are available. Blinds, stands, cameras and other structures are temporary and portable and do not have long term effects on vegetation and wildlife. Quiet areas provide opportunities for non-motorized hunting experiences with minimal disturbance of wildlife.

Guidelines

- Designated motorized dispersed camping access routes should be located away from floodplains and environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.
- Adverse recreation impacts should be minimized or removed from occupied, suitable or

Draft revised plan language for Dispersed Recreation – November 2010. For more information on Forest Plan Revision, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/plan-revision.shtml>.

Working Draft – text under development, subject to change
Public input is welcome and would be most useful if received by December 10, 2010.
No text is final until Plan approval in Fall 2012.

potential Southwestern willow flycatcher or Mexican spotted owl habitat as well as other listed and sensitive species. Methods may include area closures (seasonal, year-long, or permanent), limits on group-use size, road closures, interpretation and education, fencing, special use permit requirements, and trash management.

- Interpretation should follow the themes established in a District Interpretive Strategy.
- Where necessary, National Forest visitor activities should be restricted from restoration sites, which may include soil, plant, watershed, and fire-related sites.
- Trailhead locations should reduce private land conflicts and avoid impacts on archaeological sites.

Management Approach

- Provide leadership to coordinate recreation and visitor information planning among major recreation providers, such as National Parks and monuments, State Parks, concessionaires, the Chamber of Commerce, and city and county governments.
- *[Will update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Park Service and the Coconino National Forest. The MOU sets up 1) how the agencies communicate when situations arise, and 2) what criteria will be used to make decisions together. For the Flagstaff Area National Monuments some considerations should be included for: Native American access for traditional uses, law enforcement cooperation, personal use plant gathering, outfitter/guide parameters, commercial filming parameters, boundary management, fire management, location and management of NPS facilities on Coconino NF lands, National Historic Preservations Act (Section 106), National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act compliance coordination, shared services for monitoring, and cooperative efforts in managing interpretation and visitor services.]*
- Provide input to the design review of new developments (especially when they are adjacent to National Forest System lands), share public outreach and education tools, and share information about future plans in order to encourage uses on adjacent lands that are more compatible with the Forest Plan.
- When conducting trail planning include discussions and input from other land management agencies, non-profit organizations, special use permit holders, and local government trails coordinators, as well as other interested members of the public. Balance demands for non-motorized and motorized trails and provide opportunities for both.

Working Draft – text under development, subject to change
Public input is welcome and would be most useful if received by December 10, 2010.
No text is final until Plan approval in Fall 2012.

- Coordinate trailhead parking with future development on adjacent private lands, in order to take advantage of the opportunity to be proactive in designing trails and trailheads to maintain access to public lands. Cooperate with local governments to provide for snow removal, sanitation facilities, trash disposal and safe conditions for travel to and from winter outdoor activities.
- Collaborate with State Parks to better meet visitor needs and protect resources in the vicinity of Slide Rock State Park and Red Rock State Park.
- Future recreational trends and technology are evaluated for their effects to natural resources. Management Strategies are adapted and implemented as appropriate to prevent new recreation activities from having widespread and unmanaged impacts.
- The Forest Service coordinates with other agencies, non-profit-organizations and concessionaires to provide free-riding and downhill mountain biking experiences, while being sensitive to resource concerns and issues. Snowplay opportunities use a similar strategy to disperse use and reduce congestion on major highways and to provide a spectrum of visitor experiences.

Management Area - Specific Direction

Urban-Rural Influence (Flagstaff Neighborwoods) **Desired Conditions**

- Along Woody Ridge, there are large tracts of unfragmented habitat and remote recreation opportunities. Remote characteristics are maintained as new residential development occurs. Woody Ridge has semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities that are compatible with walk-in hunting.
- Recreation opportunities near Flagstaff emphasize day and overnight-dispersed recreation opportunities with few developed facilities, except in established developed campgrounds. Trails are accessed through strategic located access points with an interconnected trail system. The NFS trail system connects to the Flagstaff Urban Trail and Coconino County trails system to provide continuous access to a wide range recreation opportunities from throughout the urban area.

Lake Mary **Desired Conditions**

- The primary focus of this area is water based recreation management. Camping occurs in designated dispersed camping sites and developed recreation facilities in the Lake Mary

Draft revised plan language for Dispersed Recreation – November 2010. For more information on Forest Plan Revision, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/plan-revision.shtml>.

and Marshall Lake areas. Adoption of user-created trails is unlikely in this area. Dispersed recreation activities in this area include picnicking, cycling, fishing, wildlife and scenery viewing and other day-use activities.

- Roads, trails, camping, and grazing are managed primarily to improve watershed condition particularly within grasslands, springs, and drainages. Protecting water quality in Upper and Lower Lake Mary is a priority to protect local drinking water. Proper waste disposal within this area is emphasized in management and interpretive signs and material.

Schultz Management Area **Desired Condition**

- The varied topography of Mt. Elden and Dry Lake Hills offers a variety of trail experiences for hikers, mountain bikers, climbers and equestrians.
- The Dry Lake Hills Trail system provides non-motorized recreation trail opportunities. The trail system is stable and does not increase significant in mileage over time.
- The base of Mt. Elden is primarily used for non-motorized recreation in order to protect deer winter habitat and cultural sites and to provide for high levels of non-motorized recreation. Extensive signing, brochures, and patrols allows visitors to easily find trails and facilities. This area receives a great deal of day-use recreation, primarily due to the close proximity to Flagstaff.
- There are opportunities for climbing on the west side of Mt. Elden, including outfitter-guide led activities. Existing trails are aligned to increase their sustainability and new trails are developed to disperse users and increase safety and sustainability. Trailheads provide access to a wide variety of trails for different types of recreation visitors.

Guideline

- Maintain the Waterline Road as a high traffic non-motorized recreation corridor.

Management Approach

- Partner with the City of Flagstaff to relocate the Schultz trailhead and create new trailheads as necessary.

Walnut Canyon **Desired Condition**

- High-quality daytime recreation activities are available with few developed recreation facilities. Recreation use is concentrated along main corridors with few roads, trails, and people away from main corridors.

- Demands for non-motorized and motorized trails are balanced and opportunities for both are provided. North and west of Walnut Canyon NM emphasize daytime recreation activities, primarily non-motorized. Remote dispersed recreation is the dominant type of recreation south and east of Walnut Canyon NM with day and overnight opportunities for motorized and non-motorized users. Balance recreation use and demand with protection of the soils, water, vegetation, and sensitive species.
- Unneeded trails and off-trail use is minimal. The area has a primary trail system that serves as a collector for trails that originate in neighborhoods. Areas near to residential private lands may have large numbers of people on some occasions. Daytime activities are emphasized with some designated overnight camping opportunities.

Management Approach

- In and around the steepest portions of Walnut Canyon, primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities are emphasized.
- The values of Walnut Canyon National Monument are maintained and adjacent land uses complement National Park Service goals for the Monument as described in the National Park Service's General Management Plan.

Sedona/Oak Creek Desired Condition

- A variety of self-directed, day-use activities emphasizing hiking, scenic viewing and learning about the natural and cultural history of the Sedona/Oak Creek Ecosystem are encouraged. National Forest camping continues to be an important recreation experience. There is a range of nature-based recreation opportunities that provide a wide array of benefits by meeting people's needs and preferences while sustaining the Sedona/Oak Creek Ecosystem.
- A high-quality visitor experience is provided, enhanced by unaltered vistas of the redrock cliffs. Recreation opportunities are primarily nature based. Opportunities exist for individuals, families or small groups and opportunities for experiencing solitude, scenic beauty and natural quiet. Both short and long visits are supported by recreation opportunities on the Forest. Appropriate degrees of natural quiet are restored and maintained.
- Visitors have access to high-quality trail experiences. The strong demand for inspirational and contemplative benefits in the natural landscape and settings that contribute to these benefits is recognized. Some recreation sites receive high levels of visitation and meet the demands of day-use activities, emphasizing scenic viewing, hiking, experiencing, and

learning about the natural environment and cultural resources. Most places provide an uncrowded setting.

- Most National Forest visitor activities occur at developed sites and on trails designed for high levels of use. Recreation site fees are maintained at an affordable level for families to access recreation opportunities in the Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon areas. Non-necessary non-system trails are discouraged. Trails that duplicate system trails or cause damage, such as erosion or plant loss, are rehabilitated.
- A network of primarily non-motorized trails provides diverse opportunities for hikers, Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreationists, mountain bikers and equestrians while helping protect fragile natural resources and community relationships. Non-motorized trails provide access to enjoy the red rock landscape for the community, including people with disabilities.
- Outstanding interpretive opportunities increase understanding of and appreciation for the area with emphasis on geology and natural history. Opportunities for wildlife viewing are available. Opportunities are provided for contemplative reflection and scenic vistas, and are accessible to older people and people with disabilities seeking opportunities for regenerative reflection.
- Dispersed camping is limited to locations that protect resources, provide neighborhood security and protect the National Forest visitor's quality of experience.
- Although the ROS objectives at Palatki and Honanki are the same as those of the surrounding Management Area (MA), the maximum desired number of social encounters is 3 to 4 groups per hour because of the lower capacity of these sites to handle visitation without damage to cultural values.
- A high level of interpretation and personal contact is provided at cultural interpretive sites. On-site personnel and interpretation provide opportunities for interactive learning through: protection, documentation, and restoration projects at archaeological sites; appropriate access to site etiquette information; appreciation of archaeological conservation, native cultures and history; and visitor education about archaeology and historic resources that are fully protected. Full-time hosts are located at significant cultural interpretive sites. Information directs visitors to places that can sustain visitor use.

Objectives

- Develop Schnebly Hill Vista as a viewpoint, interpretive site and possibly a trailhead within 10 years of plan approval.

Guideline

- Sensitive plant populations should be protected by placing trails and trailheads out of sight of sensitive plants, such as Verde Valley sage and Delmaters agave.

Management Approach

- Methods of creating and maintaining user friendly trails include: providing well-defined trails that encourage people to stay on designated routes; designing trails that provide a reasonable degree of access; installing trail markers and defining trail edges; and providing orientation maps.

Sedona Neighborwoods Desired Condition

- Relatively quiet, easily-accessed NF supports wildlife, scenic viewing, and experiencing nature. A system of trails and pathways surrounds the City of Sedona and the Village of Oak Creek and provides trail recreation opportunities and a means of non-motorized travel off busy streets.
- Damaged recreation sites are restored, with priority given to sites adjacent to Sedona and the Village of Oak Creek. Local neighborhood concerns about the impacts of visitor use on residential quality of life are addressed by a variety of methods, including night-time closures, improving signs, and limiting motorized access and the number of visitors.
- Volunteer partnerships have high resident participation and provide opportunities for exciting stewardship with a strong learning component.

Guideline

- Access at neighborhood NF trailheads should be managed to discourage visitor parking along residential streets and to encourage alternative forms of transportation.

Management Approach

- Collaborate with the Arizona Game & Fish Department (AG&FD) to educate residents about urban wildlife, such as deer, snakes, raccoon, skunk, and coyotes.
- Special hunting and shooting regulations should be developed collaboratively with the AG&FD, the Yavapai and Coconino County Sheriff offices, and City of Sedona Police Department.

Working Draft – text under development, subject to change
Public input is welcome and would be most useful if received by December 10, 2010.
No text is final until Plan approval in Fall 2012.

- Use the Redrock Trails and the Sedona Urban Trails and Pathways Plans as guides for future trail planning efforts. (Refer to Map 6 - Redrock Trails Plan)
- Partnerships should be expanded with neighborhoods to promote trail and resource stewardship and to obtain assistance in trail maintenance and planned trail construction.

DRAFT