

**File Code:** 2400
Route To:**Date:** August 5, 2022**Subject:** Coronado NF Policy on Product Permits for Cactus Skeleton Gathering**To:** District Rangers

The Sonoran Desert is one of the unique ecosystems found on the Coronado National Forest and home to the iconic saguaro cactus. There have been recent inquiries from the public about gathering cactus skeletons from saguaros and other species through a Forest Products Permit. Cactus skeletons are the internal woody portions of a cactus that persist for some time after the plant dies. After consulting with internal specialists and external partners, I have decided to not allow the issuance of Forest Product Permits for gathering cactus skeletons. The reasons behind this are twofold; both the important ecological role that cactus skeletons play in an arid desert environment and concerns with the sustainability of the resource. Cactus skeletons provide wildlife habitat, serve as a source of organic matter and protective cover for the soil, and provide a microhabitat for germinating seeds. They are relatively rare on the landscape and take many years to develop as cactus die naturally. Our Forest Plan desired condition is to have a sustainable supply of forest products provided within the capacity of the land. We have not inventoried this resource across the forest and as such cannot develop recommendations for sustainable levels of harvest. Please do not issue any District-specific Forest Product Permits for the gathering of cactus skeletons after the date of this memo and share this information with your front-line personnel that communicate with the public. Exceptions to this guidance can be considered for members of Tribes to collect forest materials for traditional, cultural, and religious uses. These exceptions would be approved by the Forest Supervisor or Deputy Forest Supervisor.

If you have any questions, please contact Christine Thiel, Natural Resources Staff Officer, Christine.thiel@usda.gov.

KERWIN S. DEWBERRY
Forest Supervisor

cc: Angela Dahlby, Kathryn Kennedy, Jena Trejo, Adam Brzostowski

