



Friends of Ironwood Forest

A How-To Guide: Commenting on the BLM's Ironwood Forest National Monument Draft Resource Management Plan

Prepared by the Friends of Ironwood Forest
www.ironwoodforest.org

Set Up: Sign in on the BLM's sign-in sheet. The BLM will have staff waiting to discuss the plan with you and take your comments. They will be divided into several "stations" to cover several major topics, such as the transportation network, wilderness character, recreation, and so on. The BLM will have comment forms and a table available where you can write your comments, and will conduct a short presentation summarizing the plan and comment process. Digital and printed copies of the plan will also be available.

- As you talk to BLM staff, begin your conversation by describing your interest and history with the place. **State the kinds of activities you and your family enjoy, or expect to enjoy, in the Monument or surrounding area.** For example, do you seek quiet and lower-impact recreation such as hiking, camping, backpacking, bird-watching, etc? Include why these activities are important to you as an Arizonan, and why you care about this wild landscape as a place to enjoy these kinds of activities with your friends or family.
- Keep in mind that the Monument was designated for the **primary purpose of protecting the resources** (termed "monument objects") that were described in the Presidential Proclamation. Other uses, such as recreation and grazing, may be allowed in the Monument, but **only if they do not jeopardize or negatively impact the resources the Monument was created to protect.**

What to Write: Explain that you are concerned because the **Preferred Alternative does not provide sufficient protection for wildlife, native vegetation, fragile cultural resources, and rapidly dwindling primitive areas.** The plan's focus on promoting extensive motorized travel will surely do harm to the Monument's resources and values. For instance, ATVs and dirt bikes can do extensive and lasting damage to the desert landscape, harm wildlife, and invite motorized activity into sensitive areas where it may be inappropriate. Allowing these activities backcountry areas of the Monument does not provide the best protection for the monument objects or these special public lands.

Wilderness character & primitiveness

Protect the full 36,990 acres of wilderness-quality lands in the Monument (the preferred alternative protects only one-quarter of the eligible lands, or 9510 acres). Once primitive areas with wilderness characteristics are compromised, they are usually lost forever. In a fast-growing state, we need to preserve these areas for our children and grandchildren to experience, and managing for wilderness character is the best way to protect the monument objects as required by the proclamation.

All 36,990 acres of the wilderness-quality lands should be managed as VRM Class I lands, maintaining their current visual character.

Recreation & target shooting

All 36,990 acres of wilderness-quality lands should be managed as primitive recreation management zones in order to maintain the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Target shooting is not an appropriate use of the Monument, as it often harms monument objects, presents safety risks, and disrupts solitude and primitive recreational activities, such as bird-watching. A myriad of target shooting opportunities, from developed shooting facilities to other BLM and public lands, are currently available outside the Monument.

Transportation

In order to meet Goal 1 (page 2-76) that reads "*Provide a comprehensive transportation system for the monument that is protective of monument objects,*" the BLM should reduce the number of miles of motorized routes in the monument, and limit the need for administrative use of non-motorized trails.

Designate motorized travel on only 71 miles of existing routes. These routes provide sufficient public access to the monument, reducing the significant negative impacts that roads and their use can cause to the monument objects while enhancing the primitive recreational experiences I seek in the monument.

BLM has failed to adequately consider the impacts that these travel routes could have collectively over time– they will disrupt wildlife habitat, invite damage to cultural sites, help spread invasive weeds, and create significant dust & air quality issues. There are already thousands of miles of roads available to off-road recreation in the region; the Monument should serve as a refuge for wildlife, native flora, and those seeking natural solitude.

Other issues to consider:

- How will BLM prevent resource damage from the effects of immigration/smuggling? What management changes did they incorporate to deal with the cumulative impact of these activities?
- How will BLM ensure that grazing does not affect monument objects? They should actively seek to buy out and retire allotments and not renew existing permits that aren't meeting standards.
- BLM should put a high priority on reducing the existence of non-native plants in the Monument and take active management steps to prevent the spread and impact of noxious weeds, including requiring that all Monument vegetation projects utilize only native species.

How to send in your comments:

It's best to submit a comment during the open house, even if you plan on sending in a more detailed and thoughtful response later. If you do submit additional written comments, you must send them by **May 30, 2007**. You can mail them to Mark Lambert, IFNM Planning Lead, BLM Tucson Field Office, 12661 E. Broadway Blvd, Tucson, AZ, 85748-7208, fax them to 520-258-7238, or email them to AZ_IFNM_RMP@blm.gov.

For additional information, or help with writing your comments, please contact:

Lori Andersen, (520) 388-9925, lori@ironwoodforest.org

Scott Jones, (602) 570-0658, scott@ironwoodforest.org

Murray Bolesta, (520) 207-8452, murray@ironwoodforest.org