

Attn: Doug Ruppel, District Ranger, Douglas Ranger District, Coronado National Forest; and  
Kerwin S. Dewberry, Forest Supervisor and Reviewing Officer  
Comment on: South Fork Day Use Area

Dear Doug Ruppel and Kerwin S. Dewberry,

After reading the Final draft, I support Plan A – do nothing.

There were many well-thought out letters of objection submitted regarding the Draft EA, a number of them from scientists & naturalists with a long history in this area. I felt like a lot of their objections were not addressed in the Final EA.

Regarding the Picnic Area: one of the biggest objections many of us had was the addition of a picnic area. I see tables in the diagram of Plan B, but I cannot find them addressed in the text anywhere. I like a picnic table in a beautiful spot, but I don't think South Fork should be the spot. Picnickers attract corvids for one thing, which are known predators of many of our breeding birds. Also: picnickers (myself included) have a different frame of mind than naturalists, hikers, botanists, birders, people seeking quiet solitude – the visitors that I think South Fork deserves at this point in its history. I don't want to stereotype, but I'm thinking about dogs, radios, kids splashing in the creek, feeding the squirrels & jays, etc. There is room on the forest for this type of recreation, but I don't think it should be on the South Fork. There are many other places in Cave Creek Canyon for picnickers.

*“Allow other occupancy and use of the area's resources to the extent they neither interfere with the primary values for which the area was established nor negatively affect the visitor's experience.”*

We apparently have 33% less birds on the planet (and this seems to be reflected by the numbers on South Fork). We have 58% more human visitation in the canyon (this supplied by statistics from the VIC). We're experiencing an extraordinary drought, further stressing plants and

wildlife. We need to **protect** this jewel in our canyon, instead of increasing facilities so that every recreational need is met.

Regarding the pay box: the diagram of the plan shows a pay box & signage, but I can't find it mentioned in the text. Would this be a fee area, or a donation box? Locals and people that have been coming here for decades will not want to pay \$5 to park so they can go for a morning walk.

Regarding the toilet: there is a toilet less than ½ mile away in Sunny Flat campground. Could the money FOCCC wishes to donate help pay for increased use there instead of tearing up a new area? Maybe a few free parking spots with a 5-minute minimum? If that's too much trouble, the EA mentions *"The portable toilets provided by FoCCC may eventually be removed from South Fork, leaving this area with no facilities."* Why remove them? People will not want to pay \$5 to use the toilet when there is one at the VIC, one in Sunny Flat Stewart, Idlewilde, Herb Martyr, and one next to the SWRS gift shop (if reopened next season).

*"It is likely that new facilities in the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon would contribute to already increasing visitation."*

*"Current parking is inadequate to meet visitor demand"*

Regarding parking: the increased facilities will increase visitation (admitted in the document), so 9 more spaces won't solve the problem. If there is parking at the berm (assuming no road closure), parking at the start of the road, and some barriers (rocks) blocking the pull-outs, people will have to go somewhere else if all of the spots are full. It may encourage locals & groups to car-pool, and limit the pressure on the road and trails.

Regarding the kiosk: I think that most of the interpretation for South Fork could be supplied at the VIC, with perhaps a simple, updated sign at the beginning of the road, informing visitors about the ZBA and Important Bird Area status; change the statement to "no playback" instead of "no recording"; advise people where they can use a bathroom, etc.

It was also unclear if the development of a day-use area and the road closure are related: if the Day Use area, then the closure? If U.S. Fish & Wildlife decides that it would be important to have a seasonal road closure to further protect South Fork in the future, I would approve of it to protect the resource, even if it inconveniences visitors (and myself).

Additionally (and unfortunately), this proposal has opened a Pandora's box for our community. As well meaning and generous as the FOCCC has been to offer to pay for "Plan B", I think it was shortsighted to think that they represent the thoughts and hopes of the entire community at this juncture. It has been a very divisive and upsetting issue for many of us.

I strongly support Plan A.

Respectfully,

Elaine Moisan