

CHIRICAHUA REGIONAL COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER

No. 1

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This is the first of a series of newsletters to be issued irregularly and intended to keep members of the organization (formerly the Chiricahua Mountain Council) and other concerned persons informed of developments within our sphere of interest.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

THE FOREST SERVICE HAS ANNOUNCED A WORKGROUP MEETING FOCUSING ON THE DOUGLAS RANGER DISTRICT AREA: SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 9 TO 11:30 A.M. AT COCHISE COLLEGE. THE STATED PURPOSES OF WORKGROUP ARE:

- 1) to provide information about the proposal to designate a National Recreation Area on the Coronado National Forest; 2) to work to build a consensus on designation and start development of long-term support among the diverse people who use and care about the forest; 3) to have the public and Forest Service employees help build the special designation proposal.

Other workgroup meetings are scheduled for Tucson (Mar. 23), Sierra Vista (Mar. 24), Green Valley (Mar. 25), and Safford (Mar. 26). Contact the Forest Service for details.

THE CHIRICAHUA REGIONAL COUNCIL WILL HAVE A MEETING ON SATURDAY, MARCH 14 AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER IN RODEO, NM, AT 10 A.M. TO DISCUSS THE FOREST SERVICE MEETING ON MARCH 28, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOREST SERVICE PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE THE REGION AS A NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, AND OTHER TOPICS INCLUDING THE BLM-PELONCILLOS CONTROVERSY.

Please plan to attend. This can be the beginning of a regional organization that will have a positive influence on plans and policies affecting the area.

Summary of the February 15 meeting of the CRC held in Rodeo, New Mexico

This was the second public meeting of the Council. Notices were sent to a large number of residents in the southwestern New Mexico-Southeastern Arizona region. Those present were not limited to the conservation community; the notice specifically invited everyone interested in the management of lands in the region under Government jurisdiction. Approximately 80 people attended.

The meeting was intended to describe the new organization's purpose, and several people were asked to speak. Alden Hayes spoke first of the history of multiple use in

the Chiricahua Mountains and expressed the Council's opinion that the best management strategy for the area is one of balanced multiple use.

Rene Blondeau, also a member of the Council, emphasized that the people of this region have a common problem, insensitive management of the land by Government agencies, and that the residents should work together to achieve satisfactory solutions to problems and issues. Rene expressed that if the diverse interest groups could cooperate to find common ground, they would have a far greater influence on Government agencies. He concluded by introducing the remaining speakers: David Mullon, Jr., Wade Sherbrooke, Ed Roos, Noel Snyder and Scotty Anderson.

David Mullon stated the need to bring together people who often have seen themselves as adversaries. This could counter the agencies' tendency either to ignore public comment or to play one group against another to justify their preferred course of action. The results are often not what any of the affected people want.

Mullon indicated that the Forest Service has ignored the findings of the Open House they sponsored at the Gadsden Hotel last spring. They suggest that people want intensive recreation development, whereas the questionnaires from that survey reveal a nearly unanimous and strong opinion that the area should be "left alone." (In addition, all of a number of written responses from people unable to attend the February 15 meeting in Rodeo repeated that the area should not be developed additionally for recreation.)

Wade Sherbrooke, Director of the Southwestern Research Station of the American Museum of Natural History, described the history of the Research Station in Cave Creek Canyon and the role it has played in sponsoring ecological research in the Chiricahua Mountains. Although the Station is not, as an institution, a formal participant within the CRC, Wade also stated that careful multiple use management of the area is a desirable goal.

Noel Snyder, a biologist who has worked in the Chiricahua Mountains for many years, confirmed that the Council should promote a management strategy of harmonious multiple use values.

Next, Ed Roos, a rancher on the New Mexico side of the line, recounted his recent experiences with the BLM when it proposed Wilderness designation for certain areas in southwestern New Mexico. With little, if any, notice of the BLM's Wilderness boundary proposals, Ed learned that one alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement would have included some of his patented land in the Wilderness. The BLM apparently then took the position that this was a mistake.

Scotty Anderson, a rancher and outfitter on the Arizona side, stated that he recently has had a cutback in his grazing permit on Forest land. This was a result of complaints made by only a few regional residents, and did not reflect a balanced view of the issues.

David Mullon commented that the incidents described by Ed Roos and Scotty Anderson illustrate the need for more effective input from those who are most affected by agency decisions, namely, the people who live on or near the land administered by these agencies. He repeated the Council's position that this input would be harder to ignore if delivered by a unified, balanced "grassroots voice." The mechanism for gathering and disseminating information provided by the Council would help avoid surprises of the kind experienced by Roos and Anderson.

