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USDA Forest Service
Attn: Appeal Reviewing Officer
1400 Independence Ave
SW EMC, Mailstop 1104
Washington, DC 20250

appeals-chief@fs.fed.us

NOTICE OF APPEAL filed pursuant to the OPTIONAL APPEAL PROCEDURES for the CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST REVISED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN ROD AND FEIS

Dear Appeal Reviewing Officer,

In accordance with 36 C.F.R. § 219 Appendix A, the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club, Cuenca Los Ojos, Natural Allies, David Hodges, Defenders of Wildlife, the Mount Graham Coalition, and the Center for Biological Diversity hereby submit this appeal of the Revised Land Management Plan (LRMP), the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Record of Decision (ROD) for the Coronado National Forest.

Our organizations have a long history of participating in decisions concerning the management of the Coronado National Forest and other federal public lands. Our organizations represent staff and members who use and enjoy the waters, public lands, and natural resources of the Coronado National Forest for recreational, scientific, spiritual, educational, aesthetic, and other purposes. Our staff and members enjoy fishing, hiking, camping, hunting, bird watching, nature study, photography, solitude, and other activities in and around these public lands and this appeal is submitted on their behalf.

The organizations that have signed on to this appeal are all members of The Coronado Planning Partnership, sharing a common interest in the natural and cultural heritage of the Coronado National Forest and promoting the protection of wild species, their habitats, and ecological communities, as well as the processes that sustain them on the Coronado National Forest. We are dedicated to preserving threatened and endangered species, wild areas, and protecting forests, grasslands, deserts, rivers, and wetlands. Our goal is to assure protection of important places and creatures that depend on these places for survival. We work to preserve public lands so that future generations will enjoy the clean air and water, wildlife, beauty, quiet and solitude, and opportunities for recreation and renewal that abound. We have been actively engaged in Forest Plan Revision since 2006.

The Sierra Club is one of the oldest grassroots environmental organizations in the country. The Sierra Club's mission is "to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; and to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environments." Inspired by nature, the Sierra Club's more than 3 million members and supporters—including approximately 50,000 in Arizona—work together to protect our communities and the planet. Sierra Club members have long enjoyed and worked to protect the Coronado National Forest.

The Cuenca Los Ojos Foundation works to preserve and restore the biodiversity of the borderland region of the United States and Mexico through land protection, habitat restoration and wildlife reintroduction. The Foundation seeks to support these programs through scientific research and sustainable resource management practices.

Natural Allies defend the landscapes that sustain our cultural and natural heritage. With grassroots organizing, Natural Allies advocate for permanent protections for threatened places. We work with communities of shared interest, forge new partnerships, and advise on conservation strategies.

David Hodges is a long-time activist and advocate for natural resources in the Coronado National Forest and a founding member of the Coronado Planning Partnership.

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. Founded in 1947, Defenders of Wildlife is a major national conservation organization focused solely on wildlife and habitat conservation and the safeguarding of biodiversity. We believe in the inherent value of wildlife and the natural world, and this singular focus defines our important niche in the environmental and conservation community and serves as the anchor for our organizational values.

The Mountain Graham Coalition is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide educational and technical assistance to its members and the general public with the goal of protecting natural and sacred areas in the southwest, including Mt. Graham and other southwestern mountains, riparian areas, and deserts.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a non-profit public interest organization with an office located in Tucson, Arizona, representing more than 650,000 members and supporters nationwide dedicated to the conservation and recovery of species at-risk of extinction and their habitats. The Center has long-standing interest in management of the Coronado National Forest.

This appeal is filed pursuant to issues raised by our organizations in prior comments submitted in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on March 6, 2014, and issues raised in our prior scoping comments submitted in 2010 and in 2007.

The legal notice initiating the 90-day appeal period for this Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), EIS, and ROD was published in the Arizona Daily Star on June 22, 2018. The 90-day appeal period for this project ends on September 20, 2018. The Forest Supervisor for the Coronado National Forest is the Responsible Official for this decision.

We have carefully reviewed the LRMP, FEIS, and ROD. Again, there has been some improvement since the Draft LRMP and DEIS were released in 2014, but significant problems we identified in our prior comments remain and remain unaddressed.

We find the analysis for this project deficient in the following ways:

- The LRMP removes the Standard for road density yet provides no explanation of rationale for the removal of this standard
- The LRMP removes the Standard that requires the forest to retain visual quality in those areas where visual quality was determined to be an overarching value on the forest and there is no explanation of rationale for the removal of this standard
- There is little to no rationale for the many substantive changes that have been made to the Coronado's 1986 LRMP
- The monitoring plan is inadequate
- The Forest Service has improperly, and illegally, conflated the Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Areas into a single designation.
- Wilderness recommendations are arbitrary and capricious
- The Forest Service improperly identifies human migration as causing "unprecedented" impacts.
- Recommendations for specific changes to the LRMP due to inadequate Standards, Guidelines, or inaccurate Desired Conditions or Monitoring.
- New Information about Mexican gray wolves requires immediate action by the Forest Service

Simply put, the LRMP is insufficient to protect the rich and unique biological diversity of the Coronado National Forest, the most biologically diverse forest in the nation. After many years of work on this process, we recognize the Coronado National Forest, and the Forest Service

generally, would like to put this process behind them and be finished with forest planning. Unfortunately, the revised LRMP will not achieve the Desired Conditions outlined in the LRMP and considerable additional work is necessary. Considering that this next plan will likely govern actions on this irreplaceable landscape for twenty years or more, it is more important that we end up with the best plan possible, even if this means taking additional time to complete this important process.

Below we have identified several specific areas where the LRMP falls short, but we also want to reiterate our concern that the Standards and Guidelines for nearly every resource and management area will not move the forest towards the Desired Conditions.

I. The LRMP removes the Standard for road density, yet provides no explanation of rationale for the removal of this standard

In our prior comments we strongly recommended that the Forest Service retain the road density standard for the Coronado National Forest and provided science-based rationale for maintaining this standard.¹ We provided specific information on how the Forest Service could calculate road density on a watershed scale in order to best improve ecological conditions in the Forest. We also asked the Forest Service to explain how road density was calculated.² We explained that retaining the road density standard, and even strengthening it, would help the Forest Service move the forest towards the proposed Desired Conditions for many forest resources.³ We specifically recommended Wildlands CPR's Best Management Practices and attached that entire document, including citations to relevant scientific literature regarding the impacts of road densities on wildlife habitat as an appendix to our 2014 comments.⁴ Further, we incorporated our substantive, relevant, and well-researched and cited Travel Management Planning comments into our comments on the Draft LRMP and included those comments as an attachment.⁵

The 1982 planning regulations require the Forest to establish qualitative and quantitative standards and guidelines to attain a plan's stated goals and objectives. 36 C.F.R. § 219.1 to 219.3. Because guidelines have not been interpreted as mandatory, standards are the only planning component that can adequately ensure the protection mandated in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).

Unfortunately, the Forest Service mistakenly placed our concerns regarding road density standards and our request to retain that standard from the 1986 LRMP, into a concern about scenery management, completely disregarding our concerns about impacts to wildlife, air

¹ See our prior comments, March 6, 2014, hereinafter referred to as CPP et al. 2014. "Retain the road density standard of 1 mile of road per square mile of land, include all ML1-5 roads and all motorized trails and exclude all Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wilderness Areas, and other non-roaded areas and calculate the route density at the 6th HUC watershed[.]" CPP et al., page 7, 85. See also CPP et al. 2014, page 80 and 82.

² "[R]etain the 1 mile of road per square mile of land road density standard and add direction on how this density is calculated[.]" CPP et al., page 80, 85.

³ "For soils there are no road density guidelines. Setting road density standards, as existed in the 1986 Forest Plan, would help meet the desired conditions for soils forest-wide." CPP et al., 2014, page 83, 85.

⁴ CPP et al., 2014, page 79.

⁵ CPP et al, 2014, page 83.

quality, watershed function, and water quality.⁶ There is no other explanation about why the road density standard was removed, and no analysis as to how this significant change to managing the landscape would impact natural resources into the future. The EIS and ROD for the LRMP inaccurately state that “the plan provides some guidance for managing roads [and road] density and implies that the Desired Conditions are the mechanism by which road density will be managed.”⁷ This backwards approach leaves no mechanism the Forest Service can utilize to ensure road density in any area of the forest moves the forest towards a more resilient landscape.

We again note that “[t]here is nothing in the Draft Forest Plan addressing reducing route density or off-road vehicle uses, nor any recommendation to limit activities to protect or enhance the landscape. The desired conditions describe vegetation communities that will be improved by limiting certain activities like off-road vehicle uses, but there are no standards in place to actually move the forest in a direction of improving vegetation types by limiting off-road vehicle uses.”⁸ The extensive citations, references, and quotes from relevant scientific literature specific to road density standards we submitted as part of our 2014 comments have not been adequately considered, analyzed, or utilized in the development of the LRMP.

Omitting any standards or guidelines to address road densities is unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious, and contrary to the 1982 planning rules requiring that forest plans provide for adequate fish and wildlife habitat to maintain viable populations of existing native vertebrate species and provide that habitat for species is maintained and improved to the degree consistent with multiple-use objectives. 36 C.F.R. § 219.27(a)(6). Additionally, the analysis ignores and downplays many of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that will result from the omission of any road density standards in these land management plans. The Forest Service fails to consider cumulative impacts of the road system when combined with effects from climate change. And the Forest Service fails to evaluate many impacts of the road system under the different alternatives, as required by 36 C.F.R. § 219.12(h).

Remedy requested

Because the EIS and ROD for this LRMP fail to explain why the road density standard of mile of road per square mile of forest found in the 1986 LRMP was removed, the Forest Service must maintain this road density standard in the revised LRMP. By retaining this standard the Forest Service will be able to manage all forest resources towards meeting the Desired Conditions.

II. The LRMP removes the Standard that requires the Forest to retain visual quality in those areas where visual quality was determined to be an overarching value on the forest and there is no explanation of rationale for the removal of this standard

⁶ “The Coronado National Forest is implementing scenery management. The forest plan contains desired conditions, guidelines and management approaches to maintain scenery. The plan provides guidance for managing road density by setting desired conditions for the various land use zones. In the Roaded Backcountry Land Use zone, the desired road density standard is inferred by desired conditions and a guideline that limit the level and type of development to protect the natural character inherent in this zone.” CNF LRMP EIS Vol 2, page 20.

⁷ CNF LRMP EIS Vol. 2, page 125, 126.

⁸ CPP et al., 2014, page 82.

We recommended that the Forest Service retain the standards for maintaining visual quality and scenic integrity. We noted that the weakening of visual quality standards is an economic threat to businesses that attract millions of dollars each year to southern Arizona, that businesses depend on outstanding scenery and even a small decline in revenue is strongly felt in smaller rural communities.⁹ Visual quality was one of the most important Standards in the 1986 Forest Plan and we strongly recommended that it be brought forward as a Standard in the new LRMP. We noted that the DEIS did not provide any rationale for eliminating this important Standard and unfortunately, the EIS and ROD for the LRMP have failed to correct this problem.

Importantly, the 1982 Planning Rule, section 219.21, requires the LRMP to identify visual quality objectives: “(f) The visual resource shall be inventoried and evaluated as an integrated part of evaluating alternatives in the forest planning process, addressing both the landscape's visual attractiveness and the public's visual expectation. Management prescriptions for definitive land areas of the forest *shall include visual quality objectives.*”¹⁰ However, we are unable to find any visual quality objectives, or standards, in the LRMP. This failing is a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NFMA, the 1982 Planning Rule, and the Administrative Procedures Act.

Remedy requested

Because the EIS and ROD for this LRMP fail to explain why the visual quality standard was removed, the Forest Service must maintain this standard in the revised LRMP as it exists in the 1986 LRMP.

III. There is little to no rationale for the many substantive changes that have been made to the Coronado's 1986 LRMP

The Forest Service must articulate “a rational connection between the facts found and the conclusions made.” *Or. Natural Res. Council v. Lowe*, 109 F.3d 521, 526 (9th Cir. 1997). It fails to do so here for many of its management decisions. Numerous revised plan components weaken protections from the 1989 forest plans but provide no rationale. Above, we have specifically called out two examples: the removal of road density standards despite best available science showing road density is a reliable and crucial measure for preventing harmful impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, aquatic life, and water quality; and the removal of the visual quality standards.

Additional examples include:

Remedy requested: Revise the analysis in the FEIS to accurately disclose the impacts of gutting the only legally meaningful protections for natural resources to allow for meaningful analysis and comparison of alternatives under NEPA. Revise the analysis in the FEIS to provide a “hard look” at the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of removing these standards. Provide a rational connection between the facts found and the conclusions made.

⁹ CPP et al., 2014, page 9.

¹⁰ 36 C.F.R. 219.21(f).

IV. The monitoring plan is inadequate

The 1982 planning regulations require monitoring and evaluation “to determine how well objectives have been met and how closely management standards and guidelines have been applied.” 36 C.F.R. § 219.12(k). Monitoring requirements must provide for a quantitative estimate of performance; documentation of measured prescriptions and effects, including significant changes in productivity of the land; and documentation of costs associated with carrying out the planned management prescriptions as compared with the costs estimated in the land management plans. *Id.* § 219.12(k)(1)-(3).

Our comments urged the Forest Service to improve the monitoring plan components for all resources.¹¹ We noted that the frequency of monitoring should be at least annually and encouraged the Forest Service to monitor species beyond those found by the agency to be economically important.¹² We encouraged a more thoughtful and thorough approach:

“A grassland consists of far more than grasses; a forest is made up of far more than trees. Moreover, most species monitored are common species, with little recognition of the fact that common species are common because they are well-adapted to local climate variability; they are, therefore, poor early indicators of climate change impacts. If the right questions are not asked or if only a narrow view is obtained, the results of monitoring are both biased and narrow.”¹³

We recognized the fiscal realities the Forest Service faces in our 2014 comments and provided a very specific and scientifically supported list of monitoring recommendations.¹⁴

Unfortunately, the Forest Service’s monitoring parameters make clear that our recommendations were ignored and the monitoring in the LRMP fails to comply with the 1982 planning regulation’s requirements. There is a lack of quantitative measures of performance for the few, weak Objectives and there is no way to evaluate whether or not Standards and Guidelines are being implemented appropriately.

It is appropriate that the Forest Service utilize monitoring to attempt to evaluate: 1) whether the agency has done what it said it would do; 2) whether the standards and guidelines are working the way the agency thought they would; and 3) whether the agency’s understanding of the science is correct.¹⁵

But the identified monitoring protocols fall short in several areas.¹⁶ As examples, we find the following monitoring protocols inadequate:

Generally: The monitoring intervals are too long. In an era of rapid climate change, monitoring intervals of 2-5 years will not provide data in a timely manner and will prevent the

¹¹ CPP et al., 2014, page 45-46.

¹² CPP et al., 2014, page 45.

¹³ CPP et al., 2014, page 45.

¹⁴ CPP et al., 2014, page 46, referencing Bertelsen 2014.

¹⁵ LRMP 2018 page 176

¹⁶ LRMP 2018 page 178-180.

agency from identifying the need to take action. Many resource areas have vague or outdated monitoring methods, e.g., Madrea Encinal Woodland methods are identified only as “Rangeland health monitoring.” Specific monitoring protocols should be identified recreational target shooting areas, especially for soil contamination, trash, compliance with visual quality objectives, and improper uses. This is also true for Wilderness areas, which should be monitored for illegal uses.

Desert and Grassland Communities: Species to be monitored are not identified; the monitoring interval should be annually, not every 2 years; the specific monitoring timing (time of year) needs to be identified and standardized to prevent agency staff from selecting monitoring windows that will artificially prop up ecological attributes that can provide a false sense of productivity of the communities; and the plan to monitor only for invasive species is inadequate.

Wet and Dry Mixed Conifer: Mexican spotted owl habitat elements are monitored only post-treatment. This prevents the Forest Service from documenting Mexican spotted owl habitat trends in un-managed areas.

Natural Water Sources: Monitoring this resource every 5 years is inadequate. Natural water sources provide disproportionately important habitat for species in the Coronado National Forest and efforts must be made to monitor these key habitat types annually. Because constructed waters are to be monitored every two years, it is clear the Forest Service understands the importance of this resource. What is unclear is why the Forest Service has prioritized artificial waters over natural waters. This information should have been disclosed in the EIS and ROD.

Riparian areas: Riparian areas are the lifeblood of public lands in the arid Southwest. Virtually all wildlife and many plant and tree species depend on riparian areas for survival. Due to this significant role in the Southwest, riparian areas must be monitored more frequently than once every 10 years.

Recreation: Given the rapid rate at which recreation is increasing in the Coronado National Forest, and the unique status of the Coronado National Forest as an urban forest (for the Santa Catalina Ranger District), combined with the long-lasting and significant impacts recreational activities have on the land, it is important for the Forest Service to monitor the impacts of recreation more often than every 5 years. Additionally, the Forest Service needs to do more than monitor the desire for recreational use of the forest (using NVUMs, INFRA data and other information), but must also monitor the impacts of those uses.

Remedy requested: Revise the monitoring plan to include questions and indicators to track whether permitted and recreational uses on the forest are sustainable, and require annual reporting of enforcement and compliance issues. Ensure monitoring protocols that will provide information in a timely way to ensure adaptive management of the forest can address ecological issues identified by monitoring before resources are lost.

V. The Forest Service has improperly, and illegally, conflated the Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Areas into a single designation.

The LRMP identifies the Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Area as a single special management area.¹⁷ We detailed our concerns with this single designation in our prior comments.¹⁸ We have attached the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act of 1988 to this appeal, and again refer the Forest Service to the section 102 Stat. 4597, Title VI- Mount Graham International Observatory, which identifies just 24 acres for the Observatory. In the 1986 LRMP the Mount Graham Red Squirrel Refugium is described as 1,616 acres.¹⁹

The proposed changes found in the revised LRMP are not insignificant and the impacts of the failure to manage the area as a refugium first, astrophysical area second, could result in the extinction of the Mount Graham Red Squirrel. The language in the chart below is taken directly from the LRMP 2018, Vol. 3, page 166-168, and identifies the unexplained changes.

2018 LRMP	1986 LRPM
<p>Management Area 2A</p> <p>Dispersed Recreation/ Timber Harvest; Proposed Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Area.</p> <p>Management Area 2A provides direction for management of old-growth forest dependent species such as the Mount Graham red squirrel (<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus grahamensis</i>), and operation and maintenance of Mount Graham astrophysical facilities (a special use). These lands in the Pinaleño Mountains comprise 3,071 acres (less than 1 percent of the national forest) of coniferous forest, in which slopes are generally less than 40 percent in the spruce-fir community and greater than 40 percent in the mixed-conifer community.</p> <p>Management Area 2A is reclassified as predominantly the Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Area (Mount Graham Red Squirrel Refugium). This 2,937-acre area encompasses the highest elevations of the</p>	<p>Manage to provide opportunities for astronomical and biological research, perpetuation of wilderness values, and unique wildlife and vegetative species.</p> <p>Provide for an increase in habitat for the endangered Mt. Graham red squirrel while allowing for a minimum level of astrophysical facilities development.</p> <p>Use restrictions will be imposed as necessary to protect physical, biological, and astronomical qualities of the area.</p> <p>Resource management activities will only be done to enhance wildlife or astronomical values.</p> <p>Watershed conditions will be maintained or improved.</p> <p>Summary of Management Emphasis:</p> <p>Wilderness = 442 acres</p>

¹⁷ LRMP 2018 page 124.

¹⁸ CPP et al., 2014, page 75-76.

¹⁹ LRMP 2018, Vol. 3, page 167, referring to the 1986 LRMP page 54.

<p>Pinaleño Ecosystem Management Area. Management of the area emphasizes biological research for the Mount Graham red squirrel and spruce-fir vegetation type at the Mount Graham Red Squirrel Refugium, and astronomical research at the Mount Graham International Observatory. Following is key direction for this area and specific resources.</p> <p>Desired Conditions for the Pinaleño Ecosystem Management Area (page 156):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mount Graham Astronomical and Biological Research Area provides habitat for the Mount Graham red squirrel and astrophysical research at the Mount Graham International Observatory. • Recreational uses or management activities do not degrade these special habitats.²⁰ <p>Guidelines for Pinaleño EMA: Within habitat for Mount Graham red squirrel (page 156):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red squirrel habitat needs should supersede the needs of all other species of plants and animals.²¹ • Vegetation treatments should be designed and implemented to avoid disturbance of Mount Graham red squirrel middens. <p>Rationale for Change(s)</p> <p>The 1986 recommended/proposed special area was designated in 1989 under the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act.²² Therefore, this decision is carried forward and supported by both FW direction and more explicit direction for management areas, vegetation communities, and species.</p>	<p>Biological Research (Red Squirrel Refugium) = 1,616 acres (Mt. Graham red squirrel and spruce-fir)</p> <p>Astronomical/Biological Research = 134 acres</p> <p>Astronomical Use = 16 acres</p> <p>Dispersed Recreation = 863 acres</p> <p>Note: Maintenance and improvement of red squirrel habitat is the primary emphasis for areas considered to be suitable habitat.</p>
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²⁰ It is important for the Forest Service to recognize that Mount Graham does not provide “habitat” for astronomical research and that “astronomical research area” is not a habitat type.

²¹ It is important for the Forest Service to recognize that red squirrel habitat needs should supersede the needs of the unpermitted astrophysical area.

²² This statement is not accurate.

Notably, the actual language of the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act is not accurately reflected in the “Rationale for Change” statement for the proposed designation of the combined astrophysical/biological area.

While there are far more words in the 2018 LRMP for this area, there are far fewer protections for the highly endangered and protected Mount Graham red squirrel. It appears that the Forest Service has made up a rationalization for the proposed change. The basis for that rationalization simply does not exist.

In part because the basis for rationale for the change is imaginary, the impacts of this proposed change have not been adequately disclosed or analyzed in the EIS and the Biological Assessment fails to adequately identify the risks to the squirrel. This is a violation of the NEPA, the NFMA, the Forest Planning Rule, the Endangered Species Act, the Administrative Procedures Act, and common sense.

Here, we are including our 2014 DEIS comments on this issue, verbatim:²³

The Draft Plan and DEIS refers to a Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Research Area. What is the derivation of this area? We are familiar with the Mount Graham International Observatory enacted by Congress and with the Mount Graham Red Squirrel Refugium. The Forest Service needs to explain the derivation of this term, this area, its scope and purpose. The Draft Plan states, at page 154, that the Mount Graham Astrophysical and Biological Area was designated in 1989 by the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act (AICA). We were unable to find this designation. This statement should be fact checked.

We are very much opposed to the conflation of a Mount Graham Biological Research Area and the Mount Graham Astrophysical Site. These two areas have substantially different purposes. The astrophysical area, which has been operating without a valid permit for almost 4 years, in some cases operated in direct conflict with a Biological Research Area unless one is studying the negative impacts of opening forest covering to place large buildings within critical habitat.

Overall, while recreational activities are important, the higher value of all the sky islands in the Coronado Forest is for the rare and fragile assemblages of plant and animal communities and the ecosystem services they provide. These assemblages face more danger now than ever due to fire conditions, climate change, and other factors. The value of the biodiversity should outweigh the recreational value (which, certainly in the case of non-motorized recreation, is substantially compatible), and even more so, the extractive uses of the Forest.

Also in the Pinaleno EMA section, under standards for the Mt. Graham Red Squirrel Refugium, the draft Plan states, “No new recreational residence or developed recreation

²³ CPP et al., 2014, page 76-78

area will be established.” This standard should be “No new development or developed recreation area will be established.” It is obvious that this standard was written to provide a loophole for potential future expansion of the Mt. Graham International Observatory. If a residential development were to be harmful enough to the Mt. Graham Red Squirrel and the integrity of its Refugium that it requires a standard prohibiting such development, certainly an astrophysical development would be at least as damaging, and as such, should be prohibited as well.

More emphasis needs to be placed on quiet and contemplative uses of the Pinalenos. These uses are compatible with the sacred nature of Mount Graham and mostly compatible with the fragile nature of the ecosystem.

Motorized recreation should be prohibited in all backcountry areas (what used to be called semi-primitive areas) of the Pinalenos.

The Plan needs to state that within the Pinaleno Mountains the protection of cultural and biological values is weighted higher than other values. This statement should be clear and unequivocal. This is especially true when it comes to activities such as fire fighting. The protection of cultural and biological habitat should be more important than the protection of structures. The opposite was true of the way several large forest fires were fought on Mount Graham resulting in far more habitat loss than would have occurred had the fire not been fought to protect the Mount Graham telescopes. One way to achieve this goal would be the removal of the recreational residences, the Bible Camp and the Observatory.

The entire range as outlined by its traditional cultural property status, should be withdrawn from mining to protect cultural and ecosystem values.

The Mount Graham recovery plan needs to be finalized and implemented.

A. Specific comments

At page 117 of the Draft Plan: The whole of the 61,315-acre Mount Graham Wilderness Study Area should be withdrawn from mining or otherwise place off limits to mineral entry as a standard.

What is the process for opening trails within the Mount Graham Red Squirrel Refugium and/or the Mount Graham International Observatory for public access (Draft Plan at 154)? Those areas are closed to the public currently without a permit from the University of Arizona. The University is adamant about not giving members of the Mount Graham Coalition or anyone opposed to their telescopes permits for the area.

It should also be pointed out that the Observatory has now been operating on an expired permit for nearly 4 years. The Coronado has not made any attempt to initiate the NEPA process to write an EIS and finish the biological opinion as promised in writing by the Coronado and Regional Supervisors soon after the permit expired.

For protection of red squirrel habitat, the permits for recreation residences should be retired as they expire. This was a condition for allowing the telescope complex that was never acted upon. It was deemed critical for red squirrel survival at the time the decision was made and with the increased fire threat and effects of climate change, removal of the recreation residences is even more imperative.

Mount Graham continues to be a poor place for astronomy. Witness the latest move by the Observatory to compensate for poor condition by the use of high-powered lasers which have health and safety impacts and are a further affront to the sacredness of Mount Graham (Draft Plan at 155). We also note that after 24 years of construction, the Large Binocular Telescope (LBT) is still a long way from completion. Surely with an expired permit, the original rationale for construction is over and the permit should not be renewed and the project ended. It is unclear how observatory employees can learn how to be respectful to the sacredness of Mount Graham when the very existence of the structures are an affront and impediment to the sacredness of *Dzil Nchaa Si'an*...

In the management approach section, the best way to mitigate or reduce the effects of the Mount Graham International Observatory on the traditional cultural property is to remove the observatory (Draft Plan at 156).

In Table 14, timber harvest is not an appropriate or suitable activity within the Mount Graham Biological Research Area (Draft Plan at 168). Further definition needs to be made as to what traditional forest products harvested at what level is appropriate.

We provided additional comments on this management area, but above are the key issues that have not been adequately addressed in the EIS and ROD for this LRMP. As just one example, the response to our concerns raised during the comment period for the DEIS is found in the response to comments section (Appendix A) of the EIS and simply states “The permit to the University of Arizona for the Mount Graham International Observatory only allows use of 8.6 acres.”²⁴ There is no acknowledgment or discussion about the lapsed permit.

The response to our concerns about trail construction in the Refugium says simply, “The Mount Graham Refugium and Mount Graham International Observatory are administered through a special use permit to the University of Arizona. The policy for trail use is described in this permit, not in the forest plan.”²⁵ Again, there is no acknowledgment that the permit has lapsed, nor any distinction between the management for the Refugium versus the Observatory. But more importantly, the Forest Service has made up a congressional designation for this area that does not exist and when the public comments noted this and asked for an explanation, the public’s concerns were ignored.

²⁴ LRMP 2018, Vol. 2, page 110, Appendix A.

²⁵ LRMP 2018, Vol. 2, page 128, Appendix A. *See also* LRMP 2018, page 155.

Given the information on climate change impacts found in the LRMP, it is critical that the Forest Service prioritize protection of habitat for the Mount Graham red squirrel:

“Ecosystems and species that may be particularly vulnerable to climate change include: Sky island forests (spruce-fir, dry and wet mixed conifer, ponderosa pine-evergreen oak, Madrean pine-oak woodland). These high elevation systems contain plant and animal species that are adapted to cooler climates. They are highly fragmented, so species cannot easily migrate to areas that are more suitable. They could become more fragmented in the future as suitable climates shift upward in elevation, reducing overall habitat size. These systems also contain many threatened and endangered species, and can be at particular risk for severe wildfires and insect outbreaks.

Species expected to be negatively affected by climate change. A recent wildlife vulnerability assessment found several vertebrate species to be vulnerable to climate change, including the Tarahumara frog, Mount Graham red squirrel, Chiricahua squirrel, elegant trogon, and Chiricahua leopard frog (Coe et al. 2011). Additional species, including plants and invertebrate species may also be vulnerable, especially those with narrow ranges that are not adapted to frequent disturbance.”²⁶

Clearly, our specific, substantive questions and grave concerns regarding proposed management changes in the Mount Graham Red Squirrel Refugium have not been addressed in the EIS or ROD. Of ongoing great concern is the failure of the Forest Service to address the continued operation of the Observatory for the past 7, nearly 8 years without a permit. This is a violation of NEPA and this oversight must be addressed before the Forest Service can move forward with a ROD for the revised LRMP.

Additionally, in June 2017, the area experienced a major forest fire, the Frye Fire, that burned through 48,000 acres of squirrel habitat and reduced the population to 35 individuals. This single event shows that more needs to be done to protect the squirrel and secure its habitat.

We are particularly concerned about this statement: “University of Arizona’s Mount Graham International Observatory has become an important astrophysical research facility and contributes to the rich multiple-use history of the range.”²⁷

First, this is an overstatement of the Mount Graham International Observatory’s (MGIO) importance to astrology. The large binocular telescope (LBT), in the six years since first light, has performed below other telescopes in the 8/10 meter class (Subaru, VLT, Gemini, Keck) in refereed publications per year. The VLT’s scientific output almost doubled that of Mount Graham’s LBT.

Second, the MGIO is an affront to much of the public, and to Indigenous people who have a history on this land that is much longer than that of the MGIO, the University of Arizona, the Forest Service, and many of the settlers to this land. This is a project that had so little public

²⁶ LRMP 2018, page 18.

²⁷ LRMP 2018, page 153.

support, that it could not gain approval through the normal public process. The MGOI is only on Mount Graham because the University of Arizona not once, but twice, used their institutional influence to get exemptions from compliance with the Endangered Species Act from Congress. These exemptions allowed the University of Arizona to also avoid compliance with all cultural and environmental laws that ordinarily would be required to site such a project on public lands.

Third, as predicted years ago, this project is having significant negative impacts on endangered Mount Graham red squirrels. Firefighting techniques (backburns) designed to protect telescopes, have rendered much of the best red squirrel habitat unsuitable and unusable for several decades.

The section of the LRMP and EIS about Mount Graham is deficient, in part, because it does not discuss fire suppression in the context of the MGOI, despite the fact that it is well known that protecting the MGOI from wildfire has led to severe negative impacts to the endangered Mount Graham red squirrel, to other wildlife (including other listed species), cultural resources, and vegetation.

Negatively impacting Cultural Resources, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Species, other wildlife, and the unique forests found in the Piñaleno Mountains does not contribute to a rich multiple-use history of the range as stated at page 153 of the LRMP and we ask that this statement be removed.

Remedy requested: Retain the language from the 1986 LRMP for Management Area 2A. Cease operations of the Observatory until the permit has either been approved or denied.

VI. Wilderness Recommendations are Arbitrary and Capricious

We submitted lengthy comments regarding Wilderness in our 2014 comments.²⁸ We remain concerned about the Wilderness recommendations and have concerns about how Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) are discussed in this LRMP.

As a preliminary matter, it is important the Forest Service recognize and acknowledge that all WSAs must be managed to preserve their Wilderness character. The Guidelines for WSAs and recommended wilderness do reflect this requirement,²⁹ but they should have been included as Standards. Additionally, we recommended that one of the Standards should be that any WSAs that are not now withdrawn from mineral entry should be recommended for withdrawal.³⁰ We appreciate that the LRMP includes a Standard for WSAs that “[s]alable minerals extraction will not be allowed.³¹ We do request that the Forest Service also make a recommendation that all WSAs and recommended wilderness areas are recommended for mineral withdrawal.

In order to actually manage WSAs and recommended wilderness areas to preserve their Wilderness character, we request that a Standard be included that would require the Forest

²⁸ CPP et al 2014, page 47-69.

²⁹ LRMP 2018, page 120.

³⁰ CPP et al 2014, page 72.

³¹ LRMP 2018, page 119.

Service to prohibit motorized or mechanized activity in WSAs and recommended wilderness areas where those activities are resulting in the creation of roads or routes on the ground.

The Forest Service has failed to explain the process used to decide what areas moved forward as recommended wilderness. The decisions appear to be arbitrary and capricious and we can determine no actual rationale for which areas were recommended and which were not. Especially perplexing are existing WSAs that were not recommended wilderness in this LRMP. The Forest Service has failed to adequately explain how the area or situation has changed to result in the areas no longer being recommended wilderness. We raised this issue in our prior comments at page 52-69 and the Forest Service has failed to adequately respond. Instead, the Forest Service referred to the Potential Wilderness Area Evaluation Report and Wilderness Need Evaluation Report. We explained our concerns with the methodologies in both of these documents and our concerns were not addressed, other than to refer us back to those same documents, though revised in 2017.

In the Wilderness Need Evaluation Report from 2017, at page 19, the Forest Service provides a “summary of factors” for how Potential Wilderness Areas were assigned:

The PWAs were assigned a high, medium, or low rating for each factor. The overall need rating for the PWA was based on the total number of ratings for high, medium, and low. The PWA was rated high overall if the area received three or more high ratings in the individual factors. The PWA was rated medium overall if the area received two high ratings in the individual factors. The PWA was rated low overall if the area received only one high rating in the individual factors. Table 12 below shows a breakdown of the individual scores for each PWA. These ratings translate into the following qualitative values:

High: The area contributes considerably to recreational and ecological needs.

Medium: The area contributes moderately to a recreational or an ecological need.

Low: The area would not add desirable visitor opportunities or contribute to ecological diversity.

For the Bunk Robinson and Whitmire Canyon existing WSAs, we cannot understand, even with the above information, how these areas which were once identified as needed and recommended for Wilderness designation enough to become WSAs with Congressionally identified boundaries are now not worthy of Wilderness recommendation. It does appear that an area with one high, two medium, and two low factors was arbitrarily assigned a “low” value when clearly this is more appropriately identified as at least a medium value. It is unfortunate that if a potential wilderness area was too close to an existing Wilderness area it was discounted, or ranked “low” for one factor. This makes no logical sense and we expressed our concerns about this non-sensical and arbitrary ranking system in our prior comments.³² We specifically asked for additional rationale because the ranking system, which we disagree with from a methodology

³² CPP et al 2012, page 52-55.

standpoint, wasn't applied in a consistent, rational manner. The Forest Service has not provided any explanation. We also specifically asked for an explanation as to why areas that would be additions to existing Wilderness areas were not recommended and we provided scientifically based explanations as to why they should be recommended.³³ No refutation of our recommendations has been provided.

In the Potential Wilderness Evaluation Report, at page 4, the Forest Service notes that in March 2012 both the Bunk Robinson and Whitmire Canyon WSAs were recommended wilderness. The explanation as to why the capability for the Bunk Robinson WSA is not as high as it could be, found at pages 31 and 32, are that the area is close the U.S.-Mexico border and therefore illegal activity detract from Wilderness capability, and that some motorized activity currently takes place. We are not aware of any legal support for illegal activity detracting from wilderness recommendation. We are aware that someone in the Forest Service has attempted unauthorized road maintenance in the area, but again, we cannot understand how illegal activity should reduce the Bunk Robinson WSA's capability for wilderness recommendation. To follow the Forest Service's logic would mean that all Wilderness areas, WSAs, and Potential Wilderness Areas can be "poached" by those who don't support Wilderness designation. This is highly inappropriate. Additionally, because the Forest Service is required to manage WSAs as if they were managing Wilderness, it is incumbent upon the Forest Service to explain how their own management has degraded this area.

The rationale for why the Whitmore Canyon WSA was not recommended, found at pages 37-42, is similarly lacking in actual rationale and nothing in the Potential Wilderness Evaluation Report or Wilderness Need Report address the concerns we raised in our earlier comments.

In fact, it appears language found in the LRMP contradicts the Forest Service's own recommendations (or lack of recommendations) for both the Bunk Robinson and Whitmire WSAs: "[t]he Peloncillo Ecosystem Management Area is one of the most remote portions of the Coronado National Forest. Access is limited to primitive roads, primarily Geronimo Trail (National Forest Road 63), and there are no developed recreation sites. Large unroaded areas are valued for their solitude and unconfined recreation opportunities."³⁴

After reviewing our critique of the wilderness evaluations the Forest Service failed to respond to our concerns and instead pointed us back to the documents we found scientific and logical fault with. This failure to respond to comments and failure to provide information necessary to understand the Forest Service's decision are violations of NEPA and the APA.

VII. The Forest Service improperly identifies human migration as causing "unprecedented" impacts.

We are deeply concerned about the following statement in the LRMP and request that it be deleted:

³³ CPP et al 2012, page 55-56.

³⁴ LRMP 2018, page 134.

Other unanticipated forces have come to bear in the region, notably illegal activity associated with the international border with Mexico. Undocumented immigrants crossing into the United States through the Coronado National Forest from Mexico, as well as drug smuggling activity, cause unprecedented resource damage as well as public and employee safety issues.³⁵

First, the level of damage created by human beings migrating across the landscape is miniscule in comparison to the level of damage caused by permitted uses, such as mining and livestock grazing, and compared to the creation of illegal, unauthorized motorized trails caused by recreational users. If the Forest Service takes into account unauthorized livestock grazing as well as the impacts associated with prophylactic activities of Customs and Border Protection or Department of Homeland Security agents, the impacts of human migration is relatively minute. This statement improperly demonizes human beings fleeing desperate circumstances and who are often seeking asylum or refugee status in the United States. The federal policy of weaponizing federal public lands, since at least 2005,³⁶ is the issue that the Forest Service and all federal land management should be addressing. It is improper, immoral, and unethical for this statement to be included in the LRMP or the EIS and ROD, and all such references should be stricken. It is especially important that these statements be removed because there is no evidence in the EIS, the ROD, or in the LRMP to support the statement that migrants and drug traffickers are having unprecedented impacts on the Forest.

Similarly, the Management Approaches described for the Miller Peak Wilderness management area inappropriately target human migrants as sources of resource concern without support in the record. While we support the approach that the Forest Service should be “coordinating with the U.S. Border Patrol and private landowners to develop strategies that ensure illegal immigrants and traffickers are not funneled into the Miller Peak Wilderness as enforcement activities ensue[,]” the Forest Service inappropriately identifies human migrants as a sole source of trash in Wilderness areas and this is neither true, nor supported in the record.³⁷

We strongly support the following management approach: “Coordinating with the U.S. Border Patrol to ensure that agents are aware of wilderness policies and mindful of the wilderness characteristics unique to this area.”³⁸

Similar statements are found for the Pajarita Wilderness management area and we offer the same recommendations for that MA.³⁹

³⁵ LRMP 2018, page 7-8.

³⁶ Since 1994 the Federal Government has been implementing a migration policy of “Prevention by Deterrence” wherein human migration through ports of entry has been heavily restricted and migrants are forced to migrate through more dangerous lands, which are often federal public lands. Under the current administration’s policies, migration through ports of entry has been further restricted and parents, often asylum seekers or refugees, have been separated from their children, making it more likely that migrants will chose the much more dangerous routes through federal public lands.

³⁷ LRMP 2018, page 112.

³⁸ LRMP 2018, page 113.

³⁹ LRMP 2018, page 114.

- **Recommendations for specific changes to the LRMP due to inadequate Standards, Guidelines, or inaccurate Desired Conditions or Monitoring.**

Motorized vehicles should not be allowed in areas designated as Wild Backcountry. We detailed our concerns in our previous comments⁴⁰ and the Forest Service has failed to address our concerns. Put simply, allowing motorized vehicles in Wild Backcountry will facilitate the creation of new, illegal motorized vehicle routes, will degrade roadless and wilderness character, will displace wildlife, fragment habitat, further degrade watersheds, and eliminate opportunities for quiet recreation. Allowing motorized vehicles in Wild Backcountry will move the forest away from visual quality objectives.

The Forest Service has failed to respond to our concerns regarding the dramatic reduction in the number of Management Indicator Species identified.⁴¹

The language found throughout the LRMP that certain uses are “generally not suitable” does not allow for the protection of natural resources and guts the language found in the 1986 LRMP that prohibited certain uses in certain areas to protect natural resources.⁴² The Forest Service failed to respond to our concerns about this language change and failed to provide a rationale for these changes.

The LRMP identifies a need to include desired condition statements that reflect the role of the Coronado National Forest is preserving open space and reducing fragmentation “by providing forage for livestock grazing, a land use that is compatible with preserving open space, and reducing fragmentation by consolidating National Forest System lands and private lands with high resource values within its boundaries.”⁴³ As we repeatedly stated in our prior comments, the Forest Service could preserve open space and reduce fragmentation by recommending more areas for Wilderness designation and identifying more lands as suitable for Wilderness designation.⁴⁴ The Forest Service could also reduce road density to provide unfragmented habitat within the lands the Forest Service currently manages.⁴⁵ Similarly, livestock grazing does nothing to preserve open space on or next to the national forest. If it did have this effect, the Forest Service could show a map demonstrating the same amount of open space that existed when the former Forest Plan was initiated in 1986. This statement is much too simplistic and does not recognize the complicated nature of land use patterns or the close relationship between agriculture and development.

Given the extensive information found in the LRMP regarding climate change and related impacts,⁴⁶ it is unclear why the Forest Service has chosen to ignore the need to manage what it can to help create a resilient landscape where wildlife and plants can thrive in light of the impacts of climate change. The Forest Service has chosen to ignore those uses of the forest that

⁴⁰ CPP et al 2014, page 7, 44.

⁴¹ CPP et al 2014, page 17-19.

⁴² CPP et al 2014, throughout.

⁴³ LRMP 2018, page 9.

⁴⁴ CPP et al 2014, page 57, 68.

⁴⁵ CPP et al 2014, page 85.

⁴⁶ LRMP 2018, page 17.

can be eliminated or reduced to provide for resilient landscapes. These manageable uses include reductions in livestock grazing⁴⁷ and motorized recreation, increasing Wilderness and open space, and reducing road densities. Simply put, the best way to move the forest towards the Desired Condition for a response to Climate Change⁴⁸ is to remove unnecessary stressors and reduce fragmentation.⁴⁹

The following Desired Condition should be removed to ensure actions that facilitate this Desired Condition do not impair actions that would meet the Desired Conditions to provide the full range of ecosystem diversity, ensure native plant populations, reduce invasive species, ensure ecological conditions provide habitat characteristics necessary for threatened and endangered species, and ensure endemic rare plant communities are intact and functioning:

Livestock grazing and wood fiber harvest activities contribute to aspects of the social, economic, and cultural structure and stability of rural communities.⁵⁰

The Standards found under the Vegetation Communities section are all related only to fire and firefighting and vegetation management which is clearly about mechanized treatment and the use of herbicides.⁵¹ There should be Standards that address management options for reducing the vectors for invasive species that contribute to unnatural fire regimes, such as reducing livestock grazing and road density. Management direction that favors natural conditions would reduce costs and facilitate native species on the landscape.

For Desert Communities, the General Description should say “[a]nnual precipitation CURRENTLY averages 10 to 13 inches.”⁵² This would more accurately reflect the climate change models and information and will provide a more accurate reference as the LRMP ages. This is especially important because, as we have experienced with the last LRMP, the life of these plans can reach decades. For this same section the Desired Conditions state “[t]here are no signs of compaction or accelerated erosion.”⁵³ To meet this desired condition the Forest Service must restrict livestock grazing in this management area. Also in this section for Management Approaches we recommend changing the word “considering” to “implement” for Management Approach 1, which states “[c]onsidering the Arizona Interagency Desert Tortoise Team’s Recommended Standard Mitigation Measures when designing projects.”⁵⁴

For all vegetation types we are concerned that the only Standards appear to be focused on vegetation management and not on reducing those uses that will impair natural vegetation on the landscape. We recommend that Standards include reducing livestock grazing and road densities.

⁴⁷ LRMP 2018, page 18: potential decrease in forage and water available for livestock; aquatic, wetland, and riparian systems are highly vulnerable to shifts in precipitation regimes and may be further threatened by increased human demand for water used in grazing.

⁴⁸ LMRP 2018, page 19.

⁴⁹ CPP et al 2014, page 13,14, 17, 19-29, 87, 96,

⁵⁰ LRMP 2018, page 21-22.

⁵¹ LRMP 2018, page 22.

⁵² LRMP 2018, page 24.

⁵³ LRMP 2018, page 24.

⁵⁴ LRMP 2018, page 25.

For Montane Meadows, Wetlands, and Riparian Areas the Standards and Guidelines should include prohibitions on the use of any motorized vehicles.⁵⁵

For Watersheds, if the forest-wide Standards included a road density standard of one mile of road per square mile of land, calculated as we described in our prior comments,⁵⁶ watershed condition would move towards proper functioning condition and the Forest Service would have a management tool that protected watersheds.⁵⁷ Notably, there is nothing in the single objective for Watersheds that would protect watershed condition and it simply states “[c]omplete essential project identified in a watershed restoration action plan for at least one identified priority watershed every 10 years.”

The Guideline #7 for Natural Waters Sources should state “[n]ew road construction near springs and seeps SHALL be avoided.”⁵⁸

For Constructed Waters, Objectives should include the following statement: “Where artificial waters are artificially increasing predator populations and having a negative impact on wildlife, the management objective should be to remove the artificial water, not the wildlife.”⁵⁹ I.e., remove the cause of the problem, not the animals. Additionally, the forest has provided no scientific rationale for increasing the number of artificial waters, no indication that these waters help to achieve the desired conditions, and no evidence that artificial waters help the full spectrum of native endemic wildlife over time.

The following statement in the General Description for Minerals should be removed: “The agency does not have the authority to outright deny locatable mineral activities providing they follow applicable laws and regulations.”⁶⁰ While the Forest Service recognizes the importance of National Forest System mineral resources to the well-being of the Nation, and encourages bona-fide mineral exploration and development, it also recognizes its responsibility to protect the surface resources of the lands under its care. Thus, the Forest Service is faced with a double task: ***to, where and when appropriate***, make minerals from National Forest lands available ***and, at the same time, to minimize the adverse impacts of mining activities on other resources***.⁶¹ District Rangers often make decisions as to whether, and under what conditions, mining operations are allowed.⁶² Furthermore, the Forest Service could reject placer mining if it would “substantially interfere with other uses” like recreation.⁶³ If the Forest Service believes that federal regulations require approval of mining activities (which we dispute), that requirement does not need to be reflected in the LRMP.

⁵⁵ LRMP 2018, page 50, 51, 52.

⁵⁶ CPP et al 2014, page 80, 83, 85.

⁵⁷ LRMP 2018, page 56-57.

⁵⁸ LRMP 2018, page 59.

⁵⁹ LRMP 2018, page 61.

⁶⁰ LRMP 2018, page 71.

⁶¹ https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5410824.pdf (emphasis added).

⁶² See *Karuk Tribe of Cal. v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 681 F.3d 1006, 2012.

⁶³ See Mining Claims Rights Restoration Act of 1955, 30 U.S.C. 16; *Forest Service wields an uncommon mining law*, Marshal Swearingen, High Country News, January 31, 2013.

The description of the Motorized Transportation System and the Desired Conditions should include some language reflecting the fiscal realities of the underfunded road maintenance system.⁶⁴ We recommend the following be included in the Desired Condition statement: “the designated road system is within the fiscal realities of the Forest Service to maintain.” In this same section at page 75, the word “unacceptable” should be removed from the statement “[u]sers do not cause unacceptable resource damage or create unauthorized routes.” Under the Objectives for this same section, the word “potential” should be changed to “designated” in the following sentence: “Decommission, close, and restore 3 to 10 miles of unneeded nonsystem roads annually throughout the plan period, except for roads identified for potential public access routes.” At page 76 of this same section, for Guideline #2, the phrase “[n]ew road construction in meadows and wetlands should be avoided where physically or financially feasible” should be changed to “[n]ew road construction in meadows and wetlands SHALL be avoided.” Similar changes are recommended for Guideline #3, “[n]ew road construction in riparian areas SHALL be avoided.” Management Approach #4 at page 76 should be removed and a road density standard of no more than 1 mile per square mile should be added.

For the Recreation Management Approach #8,⁶⁵ we recommend adding the following: Working closely with the Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol, reduce forest visitors’ invasion of privacy by Border Patrol agents and ensure that militarization of public lands is not facilitated, which will displace most visitors. For Recreation Management Approach #16,⁶⁶ add the following: where doing so does not increase the motorized road/route density. We also recommend adding language requiring the closure of existing motorized routes whenever a new motorized route is added to the designated system. For Recreation Management Area Approach #17⁶⁷, add the following: ensure that recreational target shooting does not endanger Arizona Trail users.

Under the Scenery section,⁶⁸ add a Standard that roads or motorized trails, especially new roads or motorized trails, will not degrade scenic integrity.

Management Approach #2 for Special Uses⁶⁹ is vague. It is not clear what the Forest Service means by “[c]ontinuing to establish user groups or organizations for each site.” Please provide clarification.

For Range Management, General Description,⁷⁰ modify the following sentence: “Livestock grazing is permitted on about 90 percent of the Coronado National Forest” to reflect that the amount of livestock grazing is not a static metric. We recommend changing the sentence to add the word currently: “Livestock grazing is CURRENTLY permitted on about 90 percent of the

⁶⁴ LRMP 2018, page 73.

⁶⁵ LRMP 2018, page 79.

⁶⁶ LRMP 2018, page 80.

⁶⁷ LRMP 2018, page 80.

⁶⁸ LRMP 2018, page 82.

⁶⁹ LRMP 2018, page 86.

⁷⁰ LRMP 2018, page 90.

Coronado National Forest.” For the Desired Conditions for Range Management,⁷¹ after the sentence “[c]ommunities surrounding the Coronado National Forest benefit from the interactions of livestock production activities with other economic sectors, and from the social, cultural, and ecological values tied to conservation ranching[,]” add the following: “where livestock grazing does not negatively impact other income producing uses of the forest such as eco-tourism.” For the second paragraph, second sentence of the Desired Conditions for Range Management, we note that the statement “[a]reas that are grazed have stable soils, functional hydrology, and biotic integrity, while supporting healthy, diverse populations of native wildlife[,]”⁷² is an impossible aspiration. The Forest Service must explain and provide scientific support for how this desired condition can be attained while allowing livestock grazing. We recommend adding the following to the Range Management Guideline #5:⁷³ “Livestock grazing shall not be permitted in riparian areas. If a permittee is unable to prevent his livestock from accessing riparian areas, the permit will be revoked.”

For Roaded Backcountry, Desired Conditions, remove the following phrase in the first sentence: “except where needed for homeland security.”⁷⁴ The Forest Service should not facilitate the militarization of federal public lands.

For Roaded Backcountry Guideline #3,⁷⁵ the guideline should be tied to a road density of one mile of road per square mile or less.

For Developed Recreation Desired Conditions, add a phrase to the sentence “[a]strophysical facilities occupy a minimal area within this land use zone[]”⁷⁶ to reflect the need for a permit. We suggest “[a]strophysical facilities occupy a minimal area within this land use zone and operate only where permitted.”

For Motorized Recreation,⁷⁷ we recommend a Guideline or Management Approach that identifies adaptive management protocols for areas where off-road vehicle/motorized users are not following rules. Where repeated violations of rules are found, off-road/motorized recreational use should be limited or excluded and under no circumstances should the Forest Service sanction user-created routes.⁷⁸

For Wildlife in Wilderness,⁷⁹ include the following Standard: Reintroductions will not utilize motorized or mechanized equipment.

⁷¹ LRMP 2018, page 90.

⁷² LRMP 2018, page 90.

⁷³ LRMP 2018, page 91.

⁷⁴ LRMP 2018, page 100.

⁷⁵ LRMP 2018, page 100.

⁷⁶ LRMP 2018, page 101.

⁷⁷ LRMP 2018, page 102.

⁷⁸ CPP et al 2014, page 79,

⁷⁹ LRMP 2018, page 107.

For Research in Wilderness,⁸⁰ add the following to the Desired Conditions: Motorized and mechanized equipment are not permitted as part of any research.

For the Arizona National Scenic Trail, include the following Standard:⁸¹ Recreational target shooting shall not endanger users of the Arizona National Scenic Trail.

For “Table 18. Suitability of select special uses on the Coronado National Forest”⁸² delete the column “DHS/CPB Activities.” DHS/CPB activities are very often not compatible with recreational, Wilderness, wildlife, or other natural resource values and the Forest Service should not identify every area of the Coronado National Forest as suitable for their activities. There is no explanation or rationale or analysis of this proposed suitability determination.

We are concerned about the following statement in the Management Approach for the Recreation section: “Applying for and supporting special designations such as National Recreation Area and National Recreation Trail.” While we would support applications for special designations for a National Recreational Trail, we strongly oppose any plans for applying for a special designation as a National Recreation Area. We note that the LRMP has a recreation focus generally, and the Forest Service has maintained since the beginning of this lengthy planning process that this is a Recreation Forest, despite our extensive comments noting the ecological importance of the area.

During the life of the first forest plan, the Coronado went through a formal process to create a National Conservation Area. While this proposal was not supported by the public, it is important to note this history because it is the proper way to attempt to obtain such a designation. The Forest Service cannot imply through this document that they are a recreation focused forest without going through another public process to specifically identify the plan to obtain such a national designation.

VIII. New information about Mexican gray wolves requires immediate action by the Forest Service

As the Forest Service is no doubt aware, in November 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released the Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan First Revision.⁸³ The plan is controversial in that its scientific foundations and prospects for successful Mexican wolf recovery are problematic,⁸⁴ and the plan is vigorously contested through litigation by conservationists.⁸⁵ But,

⁸⁰ LRMP 2018, page 109.

⁸¹ LRMP 2018, page 126.

⁸² LRMP 2018, page 174.

⁸³ USFWS 2017.

⁸⁴ ASM & SCB 2017; Hendricks et al. 2016, 2017; Carroll 2017; Fredrickson 2017; Phillips 2017.

⁸⁵ The lawsuit is brought by conservationists represented by attorneys at the Western Environmental Law Center (WildEarth Guardians, Western Watershed Project, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and the Wildlands Network) filed suit (Case 4:18-cv-00048-JGZ Document 22 Filed 05/24/18) against the Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke and Greg Sheehan, Acting Director USFWS. Major points of contention are the reduced population number and restricted habitat. Advocates claim the plan fails to account for the wolves' current genetic crisis tied to inbreeding, defies science with its population cap, incorporates incomplete and uncertain data and includes inaccurate assumptions about recovery range size and mortality rates.

the recovery plan has been revised and the Forest Service should address this issue as soon as possible.

The Coronado National Forest can facilitate Mexican wolf recovery by integrating relevant connectivity and species diversity requirements into the forest plan. While this was not an issue we raised in our comments during the DEIS comment period, we do believe this is an issue the Forest Service should address immediately. If the Forest Service recognizes the deficiencies in the LRMP we have outline above and determines to revise the LRMP to ensure compliance with federal regulations and to protect natural resources found in the forest, we would expect that the Mexican gray wolf will be included as a species of concern and that the LRMP will reflect the actions necessary to support recovery of this species. If the Forest Service moves ahead with implementation of the LRMP as it has been revised, we strongly recommend that the Forest Service immediately begin the process to develop an amendment to the LRMP that addresses the need to support Mexican gray wolf recovery.

In support of our recommendation for an immediate amendment or a revision of the current LRMP, we provide the following information:

The U.S. portion of the interim Mexican wolf recovery area, the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA), currently includes eleven National Forests south of Interstate Highway 40— the Coronado, Carson, Cibola, Gila, Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Tonto, Prescott and Kaibab (Williams RD).⁸⁶ The recovery goal is to conserve and protect the Mexican wolf and its habitat so that its long- term survival is secured, populations are capable of enduring threats, and it can be removed from the list of threatened and endangered species.⁸⁷ All federal land managing agencies share that responsibility.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) establishes an affirmative obligation for the federal government to use “all methods and procedures which are necessary to bring any [listed] species to the point at which the measures provided in this [act] are no longer necessary,”⁸⁸ and states that “all federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered ... and threatened species.”⁸⁹ “Conserve” and “conservation” are defined by the statute as using “all methods and procedures which are necessary to bring any endangered ...or threatened species to the point at which the measures provided” by the statute are no longer necessary.⁹⁰ When forest plans are amended or revised, they are also subject to the substantive requirements of the ESA for listed species.⁹¹ This means that they cannot jeopardize the continued existence of listed species,⁹² or

⁸⁶ USFWS 2017:6

⁸⁷ USFWS 2017:ES-1

⁸⁸ 16 U.S.C. §1532(3). The goal of the statute is not to "list" species but to recover their populations so that they can be "delisted."

⁸⁹ 16 U.S.C. § 1531(c).

⁹⁰ 16 U.S.C. § 1532(3).

⁹¹ Nie et al. 2017:62.

⁹² See e.g. *Resources Limited, Inc. v. Robertson*, 35 F. 3d 1300, 9th Circuit 1993 (FWS conditioned its "no jeopardy" conclusion on the Forest Service's continued adherence to grizzly bear guidelines

destroy or adversely modify any critical habitat that has been designated,⁹³ or result in prohibited incidental take.⁹⁴ Forest plans may also be viewed as the primary means by which the agency is “carrying out programs for the conservation of” listed species, in accordance with Section 7(a)(1) of ESA.⁹⁵

A primary goal of the ESA in seeking to protect threatened and endangered species—as well as the ecosystems on which these species depend—is to recover species to the point at which they are self-sustaining in their natural habitat.⁹⁶ Section 7(a)(1) of the ESA requires all Federal agencies to “utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of this Act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered species...in consultation with and with the assistance of, the Secretary [of the Interior].”⁹⁷

One of the NFMA’s most powerful provisions is its wildlife diversity mandate.⁹⁸ It requires that forest plans “provide for a diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives.”⁹⁹ According to Wilkinson and Anderson’s authoritative history of NFMAs development, the diversity provision was meant to require “Forest Service planners to treat the wildlife resource as a controlling, co-equal factor in forest management...”¹⁰⁰

The land use planning process provides the Federal agencies the opportunity to clearly articulate and implement their affirmative, non-discretionary obligation under the ESA to use “all methods and procedures which are necessary to bring any [listed] species to the point at which the measures provided in this [act] are no longer necessary.”¹⁰¹

IX. Conclusion

We again extend our appreciation to the Forest Service for the opportunity to express our concerns in this appeal of the LMRP, FEIS, and ROD for the Coronado National Forest. Our intent in filing this appeal is to work cooperatively with the Forest Service and the larger interested public to ensure that the Coronado National Forest – as a public trust resource – is properly managed for the long-term public interest for the benefit of this and future generations. We look forward to working with the Forest Service as the Forest Plan Revision and eventual

⁹³ See *Cottonwood Envtl. Law Center v. US Forest Serv.*, 789 F. 3d 1075 - 9th Circuit 2015 (reinitiation of consultation on forest plans required after designation of critical habitat for Canada lynx).

⁹⁴ Pending litigation involving the Superior National Forest Plan claims that the Forest Service is responsible for take of Canada lynx resulting from hunting and trapping on the national forest. *Center for Biological Diversity v. Tidwell*, D. D.C., Case 1:16-cv-01049-TSC, June 6, 2016, Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief, at 15.

⁹⁵ See e.g. *Resources Limited, Inc. v. Robertson*, 35 F. 3d 1300, 9th Circuit 1993 (FWS conditioned its “no jeopardy” conclusion on the Forest Service’s continued adherence to grizzly bear guidelines).

⁹⁶ U.S.C. § 1531[2(b)]; Carroll et al. 2014.

⁹⁷ SCB 2010

⁹⁸ See generally Courtney A. Schultz et al., *Wildlife Conservation Planning Under the United States Forest Service’s 2012 Planning Rule*, 77 J. Wildlife Mgmt. 428-44 (2013). Also, see Haber and Nelson 2015b).

⁹⁹ 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B).

¹⁰⁰ Charles F. Wilkinson and H. Michael Anderson, *Land and Resource Planning In the National Forest* 296 (1987).

¹⁰¹ 16 U.S.C. § 1531(c) and 16 U.S.C. §1532(3). The goal of the statute is not to “list” species but to recover their populations so that they can be “delisted.”

implementation process moves forward.

Much of the picture painted by this document's Desired Conditions is a vision one could embrace *if it were achievable*. What we need from a Forest Plan, however, is a well-developed strategy to move us towards such a vision, a strong set of tools to solve today's and tomorrow's resource concerns, benchmarks by which we can judge our progress towards goals, and contingency plans for what to do if our actions aren't achieving the results we need. Unfortunately, this plan sets unrealistic expectations at the same time that it undermines many of the tools we've used to make progress towards such goals in the past.

With this plan, the Coronado attempts to give itself a high degree of management flexibility, without any parallel accountability. This will not benefit the land, the agency, or the community. We have raised these issues repeatedly in the hopes they would be addressed prior to the release of the FEIS, LRMP, and ROD, and unfortunately they were not.

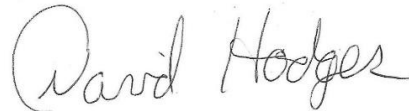
Therefore, we are respectfully submitting this appeal. The U.S. Forest Service must withdraw the ROD, FEIS, and LRMP and reinstate the planning process for the Coronado National Forest under the 2012 Planning Rule.

We look forward to having the opportunity to discuss resolutions to points raised in this objection with the reviewing officer.

Sincerely,



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