

Coconino Forest Plan

Administrative Change per Appeal Resolutions

Administrative Change #2

November 1, 2019

Introduction

This Administrative Change to the 2018 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Coconino National Forest (NF) carries forward modifications and clarifications to the Forest Plan and an erratum to the Record of Decision (ROD) as a result of the decision made on appeals of the plan, as well as the resolutions offered in appeal resolution meetings with the appellants.

There were two appeals of the revised plan, from the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter (Grand Canyon Wildlands Council and Arizona Wilderness Coalition). The Forest Service worked with the appellants to resolve their appeal issues and the Arizona Game and Fish Department withdrew their appeal in its entirety. The Sierra Club informed the Forest Service that one of their appeal points related to trail management guidance had been resolved. The remaining appeal issues from the Sierra Club were reviewed by the Reviewing Officer for the Chief, and the decision was made to affirm the revised Coconino Forest Plan, with instructions given to add clarity on two appeal topics. The forest has followed these instructions and is publishing this administrative change that addresses them as well as the appeal resolution agreements made with the appellants.

The decision on the appeals of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the revised Coconino Forest Plan has been made by the Chief of the Forest Service, and all parties to the appeals have been notified. This appeal decision is the final administrative determination of the Department of Agriculture unless the Secretary elects to review the decision. The appeal decision and enclosure are available on the Coconino National Forest's planning webpage <https://www.fs.usda.gov/land/coconino/landmanagement>.

Administrative Change and Errata per Appeals Decision and Resolutions

To address the instructions given in the appeal decision and provide the resolutions the Coconino National Forest agreed to in discussions with the appellants, the following modifications and clarifications are being made to the revised Coconino Forest Plan. Also listed are the errata made to the ROD to address Sierra Club Issue 1. The alterations made as part of this administrative change, as well as the errata to the ROD, are listed below. Additions are indicated by ***bold, italicized text***; deletions are indicated by strike-through text. The pages of the Forest Plan and the ROD that have been changed are published on the forest planning website. They are being mailed to interested parties to replace the original pages in the printed documents. Updated versions of the ROD and Forest Plan will also be posted to the forest planning website <https://www.fs.usda.gov/land/coconino/landmanagement>. Pages which have been changed will be identified in the page footers, along with the date of this administrative change.

Instructions from the Appeal Decision

- Although I found no violation of law, regulations, or policy, please add clarity to the revised LRMP by specifically mentioning that pinyon pine nuts are a forest product culturally important to American Indians (pp. 6-7 of Appeal Decision).

In Chapter 2, Forestwide Management, Desired Condition #16 for Pinyon Juniper ERUs on page 55 states that “A robust crop of pinyon nuts is regularly produced, consistent with the capability of the site.” To address this instruction and clarify that pinyon pine nuts are important to American Indians, a modification has been made to the General Description for Forest Products section. The 2nd paragraph on page 88 now reads:

...cactus, Christmas trees, cones, ferns, firewood, forbs, fungi (including mushrooms), grasses, nuts (including pinyon nuts ***which are important to American Indian tribes***), pine straw, roots, sedges, seeds,...

- In addition, the term "excessive" herbivory could be clarified with a specific metric that would indicate "excessive" herbivory, or a better definition of the specific type of monitoring planned that would result in the need for action to protect young aspen regeneration (p. 7 of Appeal Decision).

To address this instruction, changes have been made to Chapter 2, Forestwide Management. In the Management Approaches for Livestock Grazing section on page 87, a management approach has been added to describe the allotment monitoring that occurs and management practices that can be used to assess the condition of and prevent excessive herbivory on young aspen regeneration:

Include the condition of young aspen regeneration in annual allotment management monitoring and allotment analysis and trend monitoring. Livestock use in areas with aspen should be authorized at levels that are consistent with the desired conditions for aspen regeneration and establishment and do not result in excessive herbivory or heavy grazing intensity, as defined in FSH 2209.13 Chapter 90 Section 92.14b. Prevent excessive herbivory on young aspen regeneration with exclosures (fencing), deferred grazing, herding, and alternative water sources, along with adjustments in Allotment Management Plans. Include maintenance of exclosures (fencing) in project implementation, to continue until aspen regeneration is large enough to withstand browsing pressure. These practices have been shown to limit the amount of grazing on aspen and riparian vegetation. Additional adjustments in management may be necessary to reduce herbivory on aspen, as aspen restoration increases with new management direction.

Appeal Issues Resolution Agreements

Sierra Club Issue 2, Trail Management Guidance: Unclear guidance on trail management may lead to misinterpretation of plan direction.

- The 2nd Management Approach for Trails and Trailheads on page 116 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan has been modified based on language agreed to by the appellant to include consideration of safety and potential resource effects as follows:

In general, multi-use trails are preferred, though single-use trails may be considered where trail design cannot mitigate user conflict or provide for sustainable recreation settings between multi-use types. *The consideration of single-use trails will take into account user safety and potential effects on forest resources.*

AZGFD Issue 1, Wild and Scenic River Designation: Eight of 11 eligible segments have fish habitat as a remarkable feature. Fish barriers may become the only tool to conserve and recover native fish.

- The following language from the 1st Management Approach for Wildlife, Fish, and Plants on page 81 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan has been added as a 2nd Management Approach for Designated and Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers on page 182 of the Forest Plan:

Coordinate with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the statewide Native Fish Conservation Team regarding maintenance of habitat for listed and native species, including the identification of refugia and the establishment or removal of fish barriers for management of native fish.

AZGFD Issue 2, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Inventory: Concern with the decrease in motorized access compared to the 1987 LRMP.

- To clarify that the ROS is an inventory or setting for planning purposes, not a designation, the 1st column heading in Table 14 on page 199 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan has been modified to read:

ROS Settings and Special Area Designations

- The word “designation” in the 2nd paragraph on page 245 (Appendix A) has been deleted, as the word “designation” conflicts with the use of ROS as an inventory:

These types of situations may require field expertise and judgment to identify an area’s ROS or SIO ~~designation~~ and may need to be adjusted to meet site-specific conditions.

- A Management Approach for Roads and Facilities, Roads, has been added on page 100 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan to memorialize the intention to work with AZGFD and

others to ensure that anomalies in conformance with what is on the ground are addressed in future management actions (travel management):

Coordinate with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and other interested parties, during updates to the Motor Vehicle Travel Map (MVUM) and during other affected NEPA projects, on identifying potential adjustments to ROS in areas of ROS inventory concern covered by those projects.

- Another Management Approach for All Recreation has been added on page 111 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan to address the concerns raised:

Coordinate with the Arizona Game and Fish Department as well as other individuals and organizations to identify and record locations on the Forest that do not align with the surrounding ROS settings based on existing on-the-ground conditions and use. This will improve information available to the Forest for project-specific planning, considering more current site-specific data regarding recreation use and opportunities.

AZGFD Issue 3, Recommended Wilderness Area Designation: Opposition to the Recommended Wilderness Designations, that they would obstruct AZGFD management activities in these areas.

- A footnote has been added to Guideline 3 (SA-RWild-G3) for Recommended Wilderness on page 177 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan, to clarify that existing uses and management activities can continue as long as they don't interfere with the wilderness characteristics of the area. The guideline reads: "Motor vehicle use should only occur for limited administrative and permitted activities, and as defined on motor vehicle use and over-snow vehicle maps, to be consistent with the area's wilderness characteristics," and the added footnote is:

Existing uses within recommended wilderness will be allowed to continue so long as the effects of those uses will not preclude the maintenance of the presently existing wilderness characteristics of the area that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation.

- To address an additional concern about applying a Designated Wilderness tool or method to Recommended Wilderness areas, the 1st Management Approach for Recommended Wilderness on page 177 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan has been replaced due to a concern of applying a Designated Wilderness tool/method to Recommended Wilderness areas, as follows:

~~Use the minimum requirement analysis as a framework to evaluate the potential effects of projects on wilderness character and to develop alternatives for projects within recommended wilderness.~~

For new proposals, uses, or authorizations within recommended wilderness, review how proposed activities would affect wilderness character and consider

potential alternatives to the proposal that would minimize effects to wilderness character.

Additional Resolutions Offered and Included

Sierra Club Issue 1, ROS designations for the Mt. Elden Management Area (MA): ROS did not retain SPNM designations nor were ROS alternatives adequately considered for this area.

- **Record of Decision (ROD) Errata:** Map 12 in appendix A on page 258 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan shows that some of the Mt. Elden MA is classified as SPNM inventory class. Wording in the ROD (page 36, Response to Public Concerns, Mount Elden Management Area as Wilderness or Primitive/Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized) has been modified, as an errata, to make it clearer that Mt. Elden has not been exclusively categorized as Primitive (P) or Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized (SPNM). The changes made are as follows:

One stakeholder requested that the *entire* Mount Elden Management Area be considered for wilderness designation or given a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classification of primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized. The Mount Elden area was considered for wilderness designation as part of the wilderness evaluation process the Forest conducted for the forest plan revision effort. The Mount Elden area was screened out during the inventory step of the evaluation. After boundary adjustments were made for private land, communication towers, a Forest Service lookout tower, utility corridors, other special use permits, and associated roads, the area no longer met the 5,000-acre criteria for potential wilderness areas. It was removed from further consideration at that time. The *suggestion to classify the entire* Mount Elden Management Area *as either* has not been assigned recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) settings of primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized *ROS was not adopted* as suggested. *Naturalness, access, remoteness, facilities, and site management were incorporated in GIS modeling to identify the spatial arrangement of recreational opportunities and ROS classes across the Coconino National Forest. This modeling indicates that less than 10 percent of the management area meets the criteria for the semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classification, and that none of it meets the criteria for the primitive ROS classification. The ROS modeling conducted for the forest plan revision reflects that less than 10 percent of the management area should have an ROS class of semi-primitive non-motorized and none of the management area should have an ROS class of primitive. Classifying this entire management area as suggested semi-primitive non-motorized or primitive ROS would create a situation where many existing uses in the area would be inconsistent with the assigned ROS classes. Rather, by retaining the settings identified in the Flagstaff-Lake Mary Environmental*

Assessment (FLEA) of 2004, this management area includes a combination of semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, and roaded natural ROS classes (see pages 294-295 of the FEIS, Volume 1).

Sierra Club Issue 3, Mt. Elden MA: Mt. Elden Management Area Desired Condition could be misinterpreted.

- To clarify that the ROS is an inventory or setting for planning purposes, not a designation, the 1st column heading in Table 14 on page 199 of the revised Coconino Forest Plan has been changed from “ROS & Special Area Designations” to:

ROS Settings and Special Area Designations

- The word “designation” in the 2nd paragraph on page 245 (Appendix A) has been deleted, as the ROS and SIO are inventories or settings, not designations, to read:

These types of situations may require field expertise and judgment to identify an area’s ROS or SIO ~~designation~~ and may need to be adjusted to meet site-specific conditions.