



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Flagstaff Ranger District

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Flagstaff, AZ 86004
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File Code: 1950
Date: August 13, 2020

Dear Forest Neighbors,

The Flagstaff Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest welcomes your comments on our proposed Mt. Elden-Dry Lake Hills Recreation Planning Project. The proposal is designed to provide world class, sustainable, non-motorized recreation opportunities just outside the community of Flagstaff, Arizona. We are currently preparing an environmental analysis, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and are seeking your feedback to better identify issues, concerns, and opportunities. You are being contacted about this proposal because of your past interest in recreation planning in this area or in other Coconino National Forest projects.

The Mt. Elden-Dry Lake Hills area is the most popular and heavily used recreation area on the Flagstaff Ranger District. Over the years an increase in recreational use has led to deteriorating conditions on system trails and a system of unauthorized trails, both of which increase potential for impacts to natural resources. The purpose of the project is to develop a premier trail system while responding to ongoing negative impacts from unsustainable recreational uses to natural resources such as wildlife, watershed and soil conditions, recreational experience and vegetation. We initially proposed the project in 2013 and received hundreds of comments. While the public desire to address recreational needs and opportunities in the area was clear, the project was put on hold due to changing conditions and other priorities. At this time we have updated our proposed action based on previous public comment and changed conditions.

Our current proposed action includes: trail construction, trail relocation, re-routes and improvements, trail closure and removal of unauthorized trails, trailhead construction and improvements, improvements in the Mt. Elden Environmental Study Area, and identifying sideboards for special use events and appropriate trail systems for use in these events. A detailed description of our proposed action, along with maps, can be found on our project website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=38239>).

HOW TO COMMENT

We invite you to provide substantive comments regarding the proposed action. We request that you submit your comments online at

<https://cara.ecosystemmanagement.org/Public/CommentInput?project=38239>. Comments may also be submitted by regular mail to 5075 N. Highway 89, Flagstaff, AZ 86004; by fax at 928.527.8288; or hand delivered to the Flagstaff District Office at the above address between 8:00 am and 12:00 pm, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, except holidays.

Your input is an important part of the decision-making process. It is important that we receive comments in a timely manner to ensure they are useful to the agency's preparation of the environmental assessment. To be most helpful in the planning process, please submit your comments within 45 days (by Monday, September 28th).



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Substantive comments are within the scope of the project and the decision to be made, are specific to the proposed activities in the project area, and have a direct relationship to the project. If you cite or include references with your comments, we ask that you state specifically how those references relate to the proposed action. Please include hard copies or functioning internet links to any references to which you refer. Comments received during scoping, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents nor will the commenter have objection status.

OBJECTION PROCESS

This proposed action is an activity implementing a land management plan and is subject to the pre-decisional review (objection) process pursuant to 36 CFR part 218 (subparts A and B). Those who comment during this scoping period will be kept on the mailing list and given another opportunity to comment on the environmental assessment (anticipated in early 2021). Only those who submit timely, project-specific, written comments during this or another public comment period are eligible to file an objection. Individuals or representatives of an entity submitting comments must sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

CONTACT

For additional information, please contact Christine Handler, Environmental Coordinator, at christine.handler@usda.gov or 559-920-2188.

Sincerely,



MATT MCGRATH
District Ranger

cc: Christine Handler; Patrick McGervey