



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern
Region

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File Code: 1570

Date: December 11, 1998

Mr. John M. Perkins IV
13 Wicklow Dr.
Vincentown, N.J. 08088

Reference: Coconino National Forest Plan
Amendment 12
Appeal# 98-03-00-0042-A217

Dear Mr. Perkins:

Pursuant to 36 CFR 217, this is my decision on your appeals regarding the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for an amendment to the Coconino Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The decision notice is for Amendment 12 and it was signed by Acting Forest Supervisor Fred S. Salinas on June 24, 1998. This amendment will provide new management direction for the Sedona/Oak Creek planning area.

My review of your appeal was conducted pursuant to and in accordance with 36 CFR 217. I thoroughly reviewed the appeal record regarding the disposition of your appeal. My review decision hereby incorporates by reference the entire appeal record.

APPEAL SUMMARY

I received your Notice of Appeal letters on August 13, 1998, and notified you on August 27, 1998, that your appeal was timely and would be processed under 36 CFR 217. The District Ranger transmitted all the relevant decision documentation and Appeal Record (AR) to this office on September 25, 1998.

APPEAL ISSUES AND FINDINGS

Issue: I am opposed to the dispersed camping restrictions and prohibitions around the entire red rock country, as laid out on page 10 of the document.

Contention 1: The freedom to camp and roam in the wilderness, is being undermined significantly in the decision to "officialize" the entire region. This would detract from the enjoyment of the feeling of this place. It would make something miraculous into a mundane tourist trap.

Contention 2: The policy of emphasizing day-use activities while limiting overnight activities shows more of a catering to the tourist industry here than concern for the land.



Response: The planning area now attracts as many visitors annually as Grand Canyon National Park. Sedona area Wildernesses receive 400,000 visitors and the West Fork of Oak Creek Canyon itself has 50,000 visitors (AR 97.1 and 5). The Forest Service manages Wilderness according to the Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577) for ..."outstanding opportunities for solitude..." The Forest Service policy is non-degradation of the Wilderness resource. This policy is implemented by identifying negative human influences and correcting them. Where a choice must be made between Wilderness values and intense visitor activity, preserving the Wilderness resource is the overriding value (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2320.6). The Forest Service manages non-Wilderness lands similarly, to mitigate adverse impacts of users on the natural and cultural resources, and on other users (FSM 2350.2).

The Deciding Officer documented through independent research, Forest Service monitoring, public input and professional opinion that there are problems with overcrowding, resource degradation, fire threat, user conflicts, and sanitation (AR 40, 41, 43, 49, 97.5, 97.9, 97.10, 97.11, 97.12, 97.14 and 97.19, 103.0 and 103.1, and 105.1). Amendment 12 addresses the need to balance environmental impacts with increasing public use of the area (AR 72.1 and 89.1). While some favorite long established camping uses will be eliminated in some areas and restricted in others; the plan strikes a balance between increasing public use, especially the kinds of use demanded by the majority of users, while protecting the land resource.

DECISION

After a detailed review of the record, I find the Forest Supervisor conducted a thorough process based on the National Environmental Policy Act regulations and Forest Service Policy to amend the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The Supervisor is affirmed with respect to the issue and contentions raised in your appeal.

This is the final administrative decision of the Department of Agriculture unless the Chief, on his own initiative, elects to review the decision within 15 days of receipt (36 CFR 217.7(d)(1) and 217.17 (d)). By copy of this letter I am notifying all parties to the appeal of my decision.

Sincerely,

/s/ John R. Kirkpatrick

JOHN R. KIRKPATRICK
Appeal Reviewing Officer