

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service
Coronado National Forest
300 West Congress
Tucson, AZ 85701
www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado



For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Larry Raley (520) 749-8700
Gail Aschenbrenner (520) 670-4529

SABINO CANYON RECREATION AREA TO REOPEN WEDNESDAY **New Hours, Travel Restrictions Will Be Tried First on Temporary Basis**

TUCSON, AZ (March 29, 2004)-- Coronado National Forest officials plan to reopen the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area on Wednesday, March 31, at 6:00 a.m. after three weeks of closure due to the presence of habituated mountain lions.

“The Arizona Game and Fish Department believes mountain lions are still present in the area, but that their activity seems to have moved or decreased. They further state that because of weather and more difficult and expensive means of removal being forced by lawmakers and animal protection organizations, the likelihood of capture is decreasing.” said Larry Raley, Santa Catalina District Ranger. “As such, we will reopen the recreation area with restrictions on a trial basis for now. This will allow us to continue to evaluate the current situation and ask the public to remain vigilant and report any lion sightings to the Arizona Game and Fish Department”

The new restrictions will be tried on a temporary basis to evaluate levels of visitor compliance and effects on wildlife behavior and use patterns. Until further notice, rules for Sabino Canyon Recreation Area are:

- Open 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. Closed after 6:00 p.m.
- All travel restricted to Sabino Canyon and Bear Canyon Roads
- No bicycles at any time during trial period
- All normal regulations will continue to be in effect
- No dogs allowed at any time (except certified “handy” dogs)
- No feeding of wildlife
- No weapons or alcohol.

All visitors entering the parking lot during hours of operation will receive handouts on appropriate behavior and wildlife safety tips. Additionally, visitors will be strongly encouraged to:

- Use the buddy system when hiking
- Carry a hiking staff to ward off animal attacks
- Keep children within arm’s reach
- Avoid brushy areas where mountain lions can hide
- Practice “self-policing” within their groups.

The temporary restrictions will remain in effect until additional public input is gathered regarding future management of the area. The District plans to host one or more public workshops, and has set up an electronic mailbox for additional comment. Write: comments-southwestern-coronado-santa-catalina@fs.fed.us, and specify “Sabino” in the subject line. “The national forests belong to all Americans,” said Raley. “Times have changed and so have people’s attitudes on what is important in terms of public land management. We are looking forward to working with citizens to craft the future of Sabino.