



Flagstaff Biking Organization
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February 21, 2018

Senator John McCain
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Submitted via electronic online form

Dear Senator McCain-

We are writing with strong concerns regarding the Arizona State Land Department's proposal to exchange Coconino National Forest lands surrounding Flagstaff as part of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute Settlement.

Flagstaff Biking Organization (FBO) is a group of cyclists who came together to "promote bicycling as a safe and attractive means of transportation and recreation in Northern Arizona." Our initial project was to put on a Bike to Work Week for our community in May 2002. Building on the success we started to expand our efforts to keep people informed of cycling related issues and galvanize support for better and safer facilities, trails, and trail access. Currently we have well over 300 paid members and represent the interests of Flagstaff's thousands of cyclists. Please see <http://flagstaffbiking.org/about-fbo/> for more information.

The National Forest lands in question are entirely unsuitable to be transferred for any purpose to the Arizona State Land Department. The value to the citizens of Flagstaff and surrounding communities, as well as to the people of the United States as a whole, as a recreational and open space resource is far too great.

This parcels contain the following trails:

- [Arizona National Scenic Trail](#)
- [Flagstaff Loop Trail](#)
- Campbell Mesa Trail System

- Sandy Seep Trail
- Christmas Tree Trail
- Rogers Lake Connector Trail
- Highlands Trail

The Arizona National Scenic Trail is a Congressionally designated [National Scenic Trail](#).

The Flagstaff Loop Trail was a volunteer driven, multi-year, multi-agency effort to begin to tie the Coconino National Forest trail system formally to the [Flagstaff Urban Trail System](#) and the [Coconino County Parks and Recreation](#) trail systems. This trail was built primarily with the sweat-equity of volunteers under the direction of the trail professionals with the US Forest Service and Coconino County.

The Campbell Mesa Trail System was also built largely by volunteers and is one of the most popular beginner trail systems in Northern Arizona.

The Sandy Seep Trail and trail head is one of the only trail head accesses on the north east side of Flagstaff, and provides access to the Arizona National Scenic Trail. Christmas Tree trail provides the only connectivity from the north east side of the Flagstaff Ranger District's trail system, including the Arizona National Scenic Trail, to the urban interface trails in the City of Flagstaff

The Rogers Lake Connector Trail was just completed in the summer of 2017 as part of a National Trails Day event attended by nearly 100 volunteers. This trail was also largely constructed through volunteer efforts. The Rogers Lake area trails and the Highlands trail, both affected by this proposal, tie in with the Fort Tuthill County Park and the Flagstaff Urban Trail System to provide the current entirety of the non-motorized trail system on the southern side of Flagstaff.

The Flagstaff community is strongly oriented towards an outdoor-recreation lifestyle. These trails are part of the backbone of our culture. Our town is home to tens of thousands of mountain bikers, hikers, equestrians, OHV enthusiasts and other trail users. Additionally, we serve as one of the most desirable summer trail and outdoor destinations for residents of the hotter metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson.

The loss of these parcels and trails to the Arizona State Land Department who, by their own assertion, are not public lands managers, or to eventual private development, would be devastating to our local recreation economy and culture.

To be clear, we in no way oppose the United States Government's effort to fulfill its obligation to the Hopi and Navajo people. This need is certainly paramount, but these lands proposed to be transferred from the Coconino National Forest to the Arizona State Land Department should not be part of that equation.

Thank you for your consideration, and please keep us apprised of any developments related to this proposal.

Sincerely,

s/Anthony Quintile

Anthony Quintile, for the Board of Flagstaff Biking Organization

Cc: Senator Jeff Flake, Representative Tom O'Halleran, Flagstaff City Council, Coconino County Board of Supervisors