

## — APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST —

*Covering more than two million acres of mountainous terrain in east-central Arizona, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest includes most of the 200-mile-long Mogollon Rim. With 34 lakes and reservoirs and 680 miles of rivers and streams, this forest has been called an angler's paradise. The same habitat that invites human recreation provides a ribbon of life for migratory bird species, native fish and amphibians. Unfortunately, these amazing resources are at risk due to an off-road vehicle plan proposed by the Forest Service.*

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest has been developing a travel-management plan since 2007. This plan is supposed to protect wildlife, rivers and streams from poorly managed motorized recreation. However, the end result of the past three years of work includes loopholes that would allow off-road vehicles and trucks to drive through habitat for native fish in areas like the San Francisco and Gila rivers and other important riparian areas.

Turning Arizona's precious rivers into roads will be disastrous for native fish, birds, amphibians and reptiles that depend on those places for their survival. The proposed plan puts seven of Arizona's native fish — including the loach minnow, spikedace and Gila chub — at risk by leaving thousands of miles



Photo: Val Halstead © Wolf Haven

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest provides a critical refuge for endangered Mexican gray wolves.

of roads on the ground, which will cause erosion, sedimentation and destruction of riparian areas these fish depend upon for survival.

In addition to leaving more than 2,800 miles of roads open for public use, the Forest will allow people to drive off-road along 600-foot-wide corridors — the length of two football fields — to camp with their cars and RVs. This leaves hundreds, possibly thousands, of miles of roads unprotected from the ravages of unmanaged off-road driving. This failure to protect natural resources includes about 700 miles of roads alongside streams, rivers and wetlands that are critical to wildlife survival in Arizona's dry desert forests.

## — FOREST ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK —

*“Habitat destruction and the spread of alien species have been ranked as the two greatest threats to biodiversity. Off-road vehicles contribute to both of these.”*

Wilcove D.S., D. Rothstein, J. Dubow, and A.L.E. Phillips, 1998.  
*Quantifying threats to imperiled species in the United States.* Bioscience 48:1-15.

The plan by the numbers:

- **55,000**: acres of land open to continued destruction;
- **2,673**: miles of proposed motorized roads and trails;
- **1/3**: portion of the current road system the Forest Service can afford to maintain;
- **4**: percent of forest visitors who use the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest primarily for off-road motorized recreation;
- **54**: percent of hunters who say off-road vehicle use ruins their hunting experience in Arizona;
- **1**: number of stream crossings for every 1.2 miles of stream in the forest.

Threatened and endangered species trying to live in this forest in the face of motorized mayhem:

- Mexican gray wolf
- Mexican spotted owl
- Southwestern willow flycatcher
- Bald eagle
- Northern goshawk
- Chiricahua leopard frog
- Apache trout
- Allen's lappet-browed bat

The Forest Service's inability to maintain these routes has led to erosion, habitat destruction and habitat loss for already threatened and endangered species. This plan puts the history, future and culture of eastern Arizona at risk from the impacts of unnecessary roads and off-road vehicle users with little respect for the land.

More must be done to protect wildlife habitat and water quality in this forest. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest needs to take a hard look at which roads it needs and which roads it can afford and develop a better plan that would responsibly manage the forest for future generations.

## National Off-road Vehicle Management

Scientists have recognized the impacts of off-road vehicles for decades. Effects on wildlife, habitat, vegetation, soil, air, water, and other forest users are often severe, far-reaching, interconnected, and obvious to even the most casual observers. Motorized access is increasing on public lands and our national forests are being subjected to unprecedented damage. Finally, nearly 30 years after the signing of a presidential order designed to protect our forests from off-road vehicle abuse, the Forest Service is putting regulations in place to protect our public lands from further off-road vehicle damage. The Travel Management Rule forces the Service to manage off-road vehicles and protect our natural heritage for future generations. The rule requires the formal designation of routes and areas open to off-roading — reserving other areas for the benefit of wildlife, plants, and quiet recreation.

## Off-road Vehicle Management in Southwestern National Forests

The Center for Biological Diversity has been working to protect wildlife habitat throughout Arizona from the ravages of off-road vehicle users for more than 15 years. The Center is committed to being a key part of the implementation of this rule in Arizona by working with conservation groups, government agencies, and off-road vehicle riders to minimize damage and preserve natural resources.



More information on protecting public lands from off-road vehicle damage can be found on the Center for Biological Diversity's Web site at

[www.biologicaldiversity.org/tmp](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/tmp)

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