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News Release



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Fossil Creek CRMP Notice of Intent released; Forest Service seeks public input and comments

Sedona, Ariz., Nov. 30, 2016, For Immediate Release — In an effort to best manage Fossil Creek Wild and Scenic River, the Coconino and Tonto national forests are releasing a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) today in the *Federal Register*.

The public is invited to comment over a 45-day period, **beginning today through Jan. 13, 2017**, on the project's preliminary alternative concepts, including a proposed action.

Development of the alternatives comes from prior public and partner involvement since 2010. The five alternative concepts present a range of management options to balance recreational use with protection of Fossil Creek's water quality, free-flowing condition, and outstandingly remarkable values. (Find information online at <http://tinyurl.com/FossilCreekCRMP>.)

The approximate 17-mile Fossil Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor, located in central Arizona within the administrative boundaries of the Coconino and Tonto national forests, is the only intact perennial system with continuous flow without any water diversions in Arizona and is the only uninterrupted river system between the Verde River and the Mogollon Rim. As such, it spans and connects a number of biotic communities from upper Sonoran desert scrub through ponderosa pine forests. This creates a diversity of habitat for wildlife, fish, and plants, and hosts unique travertine geology and a rich cultural history.

In recent years, Fossil Creek has experienced a dramatic increase in recreational use, which has impacted its natural and cultural resources. Since 2011, the Forest Service has implemented several interim management measures, including a seasonal reservation system in 2016, to manage use and protect resources.

The environmental analysis for the Fossil Creek CRMP is being elevated from an environmental assessment (EA) to a more detailed environmental impact statement (EIS) in order to more fully analyze potential effects. This change necessitates publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register*. Previous comments submitted since 2010 during designated comment periods are already part of the project record and need not be re-submitted during this current comment period.

Public Engagement: Learn more about the five alternative concepts at several public engagement opportunities, including an informative Dec. 6 "phone conference" you can do right from your home.

- **Dec. 6, 2016 ▪ 5:30-6:30 p.m. ▪ Dial: 1-888-844-9904, then enter Access Code: 6560414#**
During this phone call, we will discuss the National Environmental Policy Act EIS process and the Fossil Creek CRMP proposed action. Please email questions in advance to comments-southwestern-coconino-redrock@fs.fed.us. This will be a broadcast-style call with one-way audio, and it will be recorded for those who cannot listen to the live broadcast.
- **Jan. 5, 2017 ▪ 5:30-7 p.m. Open House ▪ Payson Unified School District Board Room, south entrance, 902 W. Main Street, Payson, AZ.**
- **Jan. 9, 2017 ▪ 5:30-7 p.m. Open House ▪ Camp Verde Library, east entrance, 130 Black Bridge Road, Camp Verde, AZ.**

Comment Submission: Please submit comments in writing, through one of several methods.

- E-mail to comments-southwestern-coconino-redrock@fs.fed.us (include "Fossil Creek CRMP" in the subject line).
- Mail to Coconino National Forest, Attention: Fossil Creek CRMP, P.O. Box 20429, Sedona, AZ 86341.
- Fax to (928) 203-7539.
- Provide in person at the Red Rock Ranger District Office, 8375 State Route 179, Sedona, AZ 86351.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action.

Timeline: The draft CRMP and EIS are anticipated to be completed in mid-2017, when the alternatives and environmental effects analysis will be available for public review and comment. A final EIS and draft Record of Decision are anticipated to be released in early 2018.

Contacts: Visit the Fossil Creek CRMP webpage at <http://tinyurl.com/FossilCreekCRMP> for more information, or contact Marcos Roybal, Fossil Creek project coordinator, at maroybal@fs.fed.us or (928) 203-2915.

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