Mountain Biking in Wilderness Areas

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Outline

• History of Mountain Bicycling

• Saguaro National Park
  • Background Information
  • General Management Plan
  • Comprehensive Trail Management Plan/Environmental Assessment

• Bicycling Groups
History

- 1964, no technology for mountain bikes
- 1964, Wilderness Act
- 60’s and 70’s inventive riders modified bikes
- Small numbers of mountain biker’s
- 1981, mass-production of mountain bikes
- Larger numbers of mountain biker’s
• Mountain bikes show up on public lands
• Concerns and complaints
• National Off-Road Bicyclists Association in 1983
• 1984, Forest Service published regulation to ban bikes
• No public process to reverse decision
Background

- 700,000 people visit the park annually
- 91,450 acres
  - 71,400 acres, Designated as Wilderness
- Two districts represented
  - Tucson Mountain-west
  - Rincon Mountain-east
- One of the first Parks to allow mountain biking
Where to ride?

- All paved roads
- Cactus Forest Loop
  - 8-mile paved loop
- Cactus Forest Trail
  - 2.5-mile
- Hope Camp Trail (New)
  - 2.8-mile
Hope Camp Trail and Cactus Forest Trail
Hope Camp Trail

• Originally only open to hikers and equestrian
• Formerly owned by private rancher
• Former owner allowed for recreational use
  • Hiking, equestrian, motor vehicles, and bicycles
• NPS closed route to motor vehicles and bicycles
• Arizona Trail connection
Hope Camp Trail
Cactus Forest Trail

- One-year trial period
- Monitored the trail
- 2002 the Park closed the trail
- International Mountain Bicycling Association took action
- Park Service designed a special regulation to allow bikes, reopened September 2003
Cactus Forest Trail
General Management Plan

- 2008 the Park developed the Plan
- Six different management zones
  - Sensitive, primitive, semi-primitive, natural, sightseeing corridor, and developed
- Hope Camp Trail under the Natural Zone
- Day use only
- Visitors are to stay on the trail
Congressionally Designated
Alternative 1
Alternative 2

Legend
- PARK BOUNDARY
- TRAIL
- STATE LAND
- PRIVATE LAND

Management Zones
- SENSITIVE ZONE
- PRIMITIVE ZONE
- SEMI-PRIMITIVE ZONE
- NATURAL ZONE
- SIGHTSEEING CORRIDOR ZONE
- DEVELOPED ZONE

Alternative 2 – Preferred Alternative Rincon Mountain District
General Management Plan
Saguaro National Park
United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service
DSC / May 2006 / 151 / 20680
Alternative 3
Comprehensive Trails Management Plan/EA

- 2005 the Park initiated development
- Very, very extensive
- Internal scoping and External scoping
- Completed 2009
- Converted Hope Camp Trail to multi-use
Issues

• Increased visitors, increases type of visitor activities
  • Increased conflict on park trails
  • Increased demand for particular types of activities

• Unlawful use of trails

• Bicycling at Saguaro has limited opportunities and very controversial

• Not permitted on any trail within TMD
Problems

- Conflict with horseback riders and bicycles
- Increasing trail use, affecting flora and fauna
- Loosen and erode soil
Mountain Biking Groups

- International Mountain Biking Association
- National Off-Road Bicyclists Association
- Mountain Biking Association of Arizona
- Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists
Summary

- Very controversial
- Some progress towards Mountain Biking
- Biking group assist in trail quality
- Mountain Biking provides for another way to experience nature