



# FLAGSTAFF TRAILS INITIATIVE

**Public Open House Comments**

June 19, 2019

## **Introduction**

This report contains the results of a public open house held on Wednesday, June 19, 2019 in support of the Flagstaff Trails Initiative (FTI).

The open house was held in the Flagstaff High School Commons from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. Participants were directed to explore and interact with several information stations that included an FTI overview, Financial Sustainability, Education and Outreach and Trail System Planning. It was attended by 108 people, not including the organizers.

A feedback form was provided for participants to weigh in. It contained two prompts and a generic field:

1. The top priorities for this topic in the regional trails strategy should be.... *(collected 132 responses)*
2. Something I wouldn't want to see happen is.... *(collected 60 responses)*
3. Comments, continued... *(collected 24 responses)*

The responses to the feedback form are included below. The names of commenters have been removed.

The **Flagstaff Trails Initiative** is a multi-party effort to develop and implement a collaborative strategy for recreational trails in and around Flagstaff. It seeks to improve the quality, connectivity and community support for a sustainable trail system that balances the demand for recreation with the community's vision for conservation, development and health.

## 1. The top priorities in the regional trails strategy should be...

Development of a trail system that accommodates and satisfies the increasing users in Flagstaff: mountain bikers, bikers, climbers, etc

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Well executed plans for trails all around Flagstaff to ensure needs are met for all sports - variety of difficulty levels, adequate access, etc to mitigate the creation of social trails

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Better programs to involve community members in trail maintenance - trail days for the users to invest and provide input and creativity in trails

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Incorporation of some popular, sanctioned trails that are loved by multiple user groups

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Possibility of funding through BBB taxes. I meet a lot of Phx people mt biking/hiking in summer. Or a small part of city/property taxes.

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Addressing ADOT about decent shoulder along 89N that connects FUTS from city limits south on 89N

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Adding more motorized trails. Too many people on too few trails means more trail decay and conflicts with users

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I would like to see interconnected trails from area to area.

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Many national forests have trail maps that lay out the motorized trails like ski resorts green, blue, black to double black. I would like to see the trails like that. Break out routes for more advanced riders and less advanced can stick to main routes.

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Prosecute people who abandon fires and trash in the forest

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Need motorized singletrack the entirety around the peaks.

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Fort Valley planning - connect motorized single track to round peaks circuit

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Moto single track around peaks

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Adopt social trails into system, please

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Connectivity between Flag & FUTS, Belmont, Doney Park, etc

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Financing no vendor permitting please. Do charge for parking.

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Motorizes vs nonmotorized activities separate trails wherever possible

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Eliminate social trails! Need more signage to discourage use of unauthorized trails. Active restoration of areas that have been overrun by social trails would help.

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Something like a Red Rock Pass to help raise funds

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Connect Veit Springs to GT Trail. An old road already exits there. Would be a good connector

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Trail sustainability - layout, construction, maintenance

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Trail user group conflicts - sightline issues, overcrowding, trail abuse and wear

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**The top priorities in the regional trails strategy should be (contd)...**

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Purpose of a trail - viewshed, recreation, connection, destination - intended user group? Should this trail even exist?

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Those planning and building the trails should be well versed in modern sustainable trail practices the intended use for the trail (hiking, cycling, etc) or supervised by such.

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Fort Valley: singletrack on south side of 164B. I agree with all the motorized trails proposed in the datasheet.

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Woody Mtn: Agree with proposed trails from datasheet

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Wing Mtn: Agree with proposed moto trails from datasheet. Also recommend including the Pines to Prairies proposed trail system

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Kachina - Look into mountain bike and moto opportunities

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Hochderffer Hills: agree with recommendations for moto trails from datasheet

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Improvement of access/trailheads/connectors in Fort valley. More regulation of camping (legal and illegal) in area, support all usage including moto.

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Fort Tuthill et al: incorporate Kelly Pocket and improve trails to multi-use sustainable in Old "Airport Loop" area off Munds.

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Adoption of Pines to Prairie

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Top priority is start with the protection of the natural (as much as still is) environment as how to have the least impact

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Consider all users not the most vocal necessarily, acknowledge that there will always be pressure to use the new machine but it may not be compatible with the environment

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Management once design/plan is developed

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Adding motorized trail mileage to support increased use and provide similar seat times as is available to other groups.

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Implementing sustainable and enjoyable trail alignments for existing and new motorized, multi use trails

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Increasing education and enforcement of UTV trail users and campers that abuse public land privileges (trash, fines, reckless driving). These behaviors and the curtailed rights that result from them, effect all user groups

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Planning for increased use of the forest by all user groups. Everyone should have recreational opportunity NOT just hikers. Motorcycles, mountain bikers, horses all have public rights!

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The forest in this area is so close to a big growing city that use is inevitable and we need to plan for it. People move here to recreation in the forest.

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Maintain/adopt as many of the existing trails as possible

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More all levels (smoother/flowing) trails

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**The top priorities in the regional trails strategy should be (contd)...**

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E-bike accessible trails (Class 1)

Trails that link into FUTS, transportation routes

Create connectivity between existing trail systems and to surrounding neighborhoods

Signage in areas with multiple use trails

Parking at trailheads

Eliminate many social trails

Bikes versus hiking not compatible! Too many bikers the trails. They erode and ruin the trails.

Develop Observatory mesa for recreational trail use

West side/Old 66 FUTS extension to service community needs for new residential development

Coordination with NPS to link with Monuments, encouraging new historic trails

Sustainable trails. Leave areas undisturbed for wildlife

In general, I like the direction you are going - nice work!

Err on the side of adoption and improvement rather than closure - more trails will lead to more money coming in to support them

Dry Lake Hills seems potentially contentious but really it could be a world class mountain bike area comparable to Whistler, Moab, Bend, etc - don't just make it better, make it great

I suggest exploring a modest fee trail pass for our regional trail system

Doney Park Planning Area

Campbell Mesa

Begin with an assessment of natural resources in each area. Then design recreational improvements that are consistent with conserving natural resources. Long term conservation is more important than trying to serve ever increasing numbers of recreationists.

A cohesive recreational plan that involves sustainably build trails for a variety of user groups

Aggressive fund sourcing/raising for the NEPA process and actual building of trails.

Flagstaff moving forward with purpose as a community. More integration with the local economy and explore ways to get more community involvement with managing public lands..

In planning, put the environment first - people second. Protoect the environment at all costs.

There are areas where there should be no trails or no bikes

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Do a better job of blocking unauthorized roads - gates don't work

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**The top priorities in the regional trails strategy should be (contd)...**

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Trail courtesy/ethics

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Bikers are fine with sharing the trail as long they always have the first turn.

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Trail design and rebuild. Traffic calming so that bikers will have the opportunity to yield. Bikers replace excuses such as "I ride fast (therefore I do not yield ever)" "Thanks and have a great hike (this excuses me from behaving in an ethical manner, etc)

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Rotating use of trails because mountain bikers will not share the trail (alternating use days)

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Cupping and erosion paths created by bikers, some in wet conditions some by overuse

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Water source/trail safety/wildlife safety, bikers and hikers keep dogs on leash while on public trails, keeping dogs under physical control or leave dogs at home. Safe trails - now unsafe because of biker department

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No vendor permitting

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Possible charge for parking as in Red Rock Pass system

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Connectivity of trails

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Keep motorized separate from non-motorized

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Switzer Canyon trail completion into downtown connection

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Maintenance, especially FUTS and Route 66

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Parking at trailheads where needed and trash cans at Campbell Mesa

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Provide enough trail opportunities to support demand by various user groups

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Scheduled maintenance of existing trails needs to many - many are being loved to death

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There is a lack of motorized trails in the Flagstaff area, which creates problems on legal trails and creates many user-built illegal trails

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Would like to see long loop trails

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Create a destination trail for each map region to spread out use

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Create development fee in the city and county to financially support trails

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Lobby Congress to create bike access at either Abineau or Beat Jaw (make around peaks ride more pleasurable)

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Compact and sustainable trail system

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Protection of habitat and wildlife corridors and some areas that are free of trails

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Improved trail etiquette and reduced illegal trail building

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Observatory Mesa is closest to downtown and would be the obvious area to focus on. Tourists and locals can access these trails, as well as more races could benefit from the area.

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**The top priorities in the regional trails strategy should be (contd)...**

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Better signage would help on single track west/noth of Lowell

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Signage (large) at library would be a great resource for locals and visitors

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Charge for parking at Snowbowl or other (Elden) trailheads. Could generate funds from tourists.

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Please don't waste resources closing social trails

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Coordinate the trail plan with the FS road maintenance planning. More FS roads should close or be allowed to lapse into 4wd routes, and other improved to allow access to the forest

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Connectivity between FUTS and Forest Service

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Connect Doney Park to FUTS trails - need hiking/biking trails along 89

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Actual guidelines for trail routing

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Keeping natural areas natural

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Preserving singletrack trails

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Improving signage (not all links are obvious)

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Continue to plan for both mountain biking and hiking

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Increase amount of designated trails in South Elden

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Increase opportunities to access trails by bike/walk from town

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Building more trails

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Sanctioning and including social trails

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It would be ideal to have the amount of trails and signage and trailheads to match Sedona.

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Organized trail building for mountain bikers

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Communicating with public. Newspaper blurbs are not enough

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Education students and organization outings. Think of it as physical education.

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Categorize trails by users (some trails are not appropriate for bicycles and horses)

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Identify trails (authorized or not) for closure

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Increased signage to point people to authorized trails

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Fundraising - engage hotels, gas stations and the chamber to sell FUTS t shirts/mugs/stickers with profits going to maintain existing trails

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Hiker safety. Ban bicycles from all trails. They are a safety hazard. Things with wheels belong on roads not on footpaths.

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**The top priorities in the regional trails strategy should be (contd)...**

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Connectivity

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Access thru downtown to other areas

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Signage that integrates various travel options, not just FUTS signage

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Observatory Mesa Area. I like the idea of a trail to Parks and Bellemont

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Advanced and expert level mountain bike trails need to be maintained and developed.

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More motorized trail options

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Advanced and expert trails for runners

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Mountain bike specific downhill trails

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Continuous single track around the peaks for all users

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Volunteer trail crew needs to be expanded and utilized

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Resolving any hiking/bicycling conflicts. Sometimes hiking/walking feels dangerous due to high speed cycling

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Financing parking with fees (day or annual)

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Enhancing existing trails and addressing unauthorized social trails

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Educating the wider public about conservation, protecting the environment, maintaining trail system

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Trail pickup at Tunnel Hill

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Incorporating/adopting trails in heavily used areas (e.g. areas with lots of social trails)

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Include technical and/or downhill trails for mountain bikers in the official trail system. These will be built and have been already, so they need to be incorporated or officially built to make them sustainable.

## 2. Something I wouldn't want to see happen is....

Rep tape with little community involvement

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Loved trails that are not system trails to be destroyed and not considered for incorporation

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Complacency that doesn't take charge of development and change to Flag's trails as it grows. Make a system that is world class and well maintained - Sedona, AZ and Bellingham, WA = great examples; revenue for these cities due to their trail systems is incredible

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Expansion of wilderness areas - there are too many wilderness areas already. When I am out there - trails are overgrown from lack of use

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Land swap with Flagstaff for urban development

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Nothing. Doing nothing has created a situation with overcrowded trails that are poorly maintained at best if they can even be maintained at all. In addition, a lack of system trail development has contributed to the miles of user created trails, a great deal of which are not sustainable or cross areas of archeological, environmental or other significance. Recreational use of trails has evolved and the trail system has not kept up.

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I would also not want to see trails shoehorned in to areas that do not lend themselves to useable trails. If a trail is to be forced into a tight easement, or an extremely limited corridor, forcing it to be built in a way that makes it unsustainable and unusable, then perhaps there shouldn't be a trail there to begin with and other options should be explored.

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UTV Trails to accommodate new wider and faster vehicles

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Throttle only ebikes allowed on anything but moto trail and not even sure they belong on moto trails

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Consider our public lands as an amusement park and plan on that basis

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Loss of motorized trail mileage. Loss of specific, often iconic, trail segments and locations that have been utilized for decades

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Any more urban development

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Nothing. Not planning for increased recreational use would lead to frustrated users and increased impact on forest by more unauthorized trails that are poorly built.

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Elimination of great trails that we've come to love

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Guided biking tours in Elden area

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Exclusive mountain bike only trails

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No funding for trail maintenance and new trail construction

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e-bikes on our forest trails or in open space

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No bikes in wilderness areas.

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Continued silo-ing that leaves trail system with gaps

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**Something I wouldn't want to see happen is (contd)...**

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E-bikes on the trails

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All unauthorized trails be closed/shunted. Though they can be concerning, I feel that they also show desire and need for additional trails and incorporation of some unauthorized as official trails would be beneficial across many user groups.

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Continued drainage degradation and erosion from unauthorized trails

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Trails are eroding more and more, exposing rocks and making it difficult for runners and beginning mountain bikers.

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Bikes in wilderness areas

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The continuation of nothing being done.

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The continuation of various user groups focusing on differences and not common goals.

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Flagstaff is decades behind. The environmental impact of doing nothing is far greater than the impact of building a well thought out recreation plan including trails, signage, pit toilets, etc.

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Motorized anything except wheel chairs

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No motorized bikes or scooters

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Bikers continuing to provide unsafe and discourteous situations for hikers - this must change

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e bikes on trails or FUTS

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Trails closing

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Trails in disrepair

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Continued creation of user build trails - in the end these cause a lot of damage/impact and do not solve access problems

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Restrict trail use

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Allow maintenance to stagnate

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Restrict promotion of Flag trails (anti-growth)

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Advertising to make Flagstaff a destination like Moab or Sedona (our ecology can't handle it and neither can theirs)

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A motorized loop around the Peaks (important wildlife corridors)

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Single directional trails that would eliminate uphill hiker/runner use

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More new trails without money to maintain them.

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As town grows, parking getting packed like other mountain towns (Boulder, SLC, Tahoe, Silverton) Long term planning like paid parking could provide funds

**Something I wouldn't want to see happen is (contd)...**

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Don't close social trails unless necessary

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Stop lengthening trails under the name of "realignment" or "sustainability"

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Bikes widening trails curves - the new section of Sunset is now 12 ft wide from bikes swooping around curve. Even the newest section of Little Elden has bike tracks much wider than trail - this is not sustainable

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Closure of hiking trails to justify creating new bike trails

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Electric bikes on trails

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Marketing trails to tourists in ways that alter our natural landscapes (in order to make things more accessible to the masses)

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Decrease in overall trails

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Misuse of trails

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Motorized anything on the trails or sidewalks

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A lot of motorized trails spread across the region

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For yet another good hiking trail to be turned into a mountain bike racetrack

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Social trails destroyed

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General number of trails reduced

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No vendors/no vendor permits

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Single track widen

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Reduction of trails. This would lead to more social and diffuse use of the landscape going forward.

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I do not want to see bikes in designated wilderness areas

### 3, General Comments

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Single track that circumnavigates the Kachina Wilderness Boundary with a small number that descend/ascend to the 418 for access

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Designated directional trails - improves safety and flow of users and reduces impact

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South of town on 89A, areas for more trails between 89A, the overlook and Woody Mountain Rd

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The AZ Trail is so overgrown in places, it should be open to dirt bikes 3 weeks/year to reestablish paths

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Need a way to remove owl habitat from the maps that are no longer occupied by owls

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Pines to Prairies Trail System

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Increase moto trails in Fort valley including trails for kids and novice riders

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Around the Peaks moto/mtn bike trail

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Would like to see seasonal closures of sensitive/wet/steep and rocky trails to equestrian traffic

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Creation of a "Friends of Coconino National Forest" all user umbrella, membership group like the AZT Group to provide funding, info, education, etc

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Adoption of sustainable social trails when they connect areas/trails/features that existing trails do not service. No need to adopt duplicate trails reduce neighborhood connections to one or two as needed.

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Unauthorized trails will continue to proliferate so long as the desired condition cannot be found on legal trails. Build what people want to ride or they will build it themselves. If they can't find it ON the trail, they will find it OFF the trail

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There needs to be a mechanism to review and remove obsolete wildlife concerns ie MSO owl nesting sites

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I am on the board for the Northern Arizona Climbers Coalition (NAZCC) and see/recognize unauthorized trails in the San Francisco Peak (off of Freidlein Prairie Road) and Mountain Elden sections of the map. I strongly advocate for sanctioning of selected unauthorized trails. As a specific example, forest access at the end of Paradise Rd would great benefit from becoming an authorized trail as it would allow for official maintenance of trails, installation of trash cans etc.

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Commuter trail for mountain bikers. Koch Field Rd and Picture Canyon Trail Connection.

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First, the trails and trail systems around Flagstaff are awesome.

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Non-motorized trails are extremely important to many of us (runners, hikers) as they enhance our connection to nature (including changes to spot wildlife). Similarly, preserving quiet is important (this also applies to trail users who blast loud music, talk for long durations on cell phones, etc). So maybe signage letting folks know what's considerate would be good.

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Lastly, preserving two-directional trail travel would be a priority for most runners.

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Involving mountain biking community to support trail expansion (local bike shops, advocates, users)

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## General Comments (contd)

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As the population grows in the valley so does the density of usage on current trails. More trails to spread out usage would be great. More trails for aggressive riding. Building more trails proactively can reduce the desire for people to build illegal trails.

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I really appreciate the effort you all are putting into this. It is awesome.

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New to area, retired from US Navy in January and want to get involved in preserving the trails I came here to enjoy. Very interested in volunteer opportunities as well as part-time employment as I am currently not working.

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We have a wonderful trail system and a beautiful natural environment (flora and fauna). I would like to see both preserved, protected and maintained into the future.

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The biggest issue is controlling use in a location like Flagstaff where outdoor recreation is growing. The best way to do this is to expand the trail system and incorporate social trails. By doing this land managers gain control over use since there will be ample trails for users to use, and less desire to use or build social/unauthorized trails. The demand is present and will only grow, so adopting and expanding the trail system is the only path forward which sustainably controls land usage.

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