HOT TOPICS CAFÉ

HAPPY TRAILS?

Wednesday, December 16, 2015
5:30 - 7 p.m.
Flagstaff Public Library (Downtown)
Facilitated by Mike Popejoy, Philosophy, Coconino Community College

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
College of Arts & Letters
Philosophy in the Public Interest
PROGRAM

5:30 p.m.  
Welcome and Introduction  
Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

5:45 p.m.  
Community Dialogue  
Mike Popejoy, Philosophy, Coconino Community College
  1) Approach 1: Prioritize Certain Types of Recreational Land Use
  2) Approach 2: Limit or Expand Certain Types of Recreational Land Use
  3) Approach 3: Use Human-Centered Values to Steer Recreational Land Use Decisions
  4) Approach 4: Use Biocentric Values to Steer Recreational Land Use Decisions

Philosophical Questions
Supplemental Information

6:50 p.m.  
Closing Questions and Recap of Discussion

This informational handout was prepared by
Mike Popejoy, Philosophy, Coconino Community College

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS, SUPPORTERS AND VENUE HOSTS!
Northern Arizona, and the Colorado Plateau more generally, has a wealth of public lands that can potentially be used in a variety of ways. One of the primary ways these lands are used, particularly in and around the Flagstaff area, is for recreation. And with increased numbers of people choosing to spend their time on these public lands two primary issues arise. The first deals with the interactions between the various users of the public lands: hikers, dog-walkers, runners, cyclists, equestrians, hunters, and motorized vehicle operators. The second deals with the relation of these human activities to the ecosystems in which they take place. Conflicts have arisen on both fronts, for instance between foot travel and motorized and mechanized vehicles, as well as between proponents of ecologically sensitive areas/species and recreation enthusiasts.

Recreation is a privilege, both economically (because we have the leisure time and disposable money to engage in the activities) and because of public land is available for our use.

**BACKGROUND REPORTING**

Reprinted with permission from the *Arizona Daily Sun*, Sunday, December 6, 2015

**Forest Trail Troubles?**

Emery Cowen

“Martin Ince, a Flagstaff mapmaker with Emmitt Barks Cartography, estimated the number of social trails on the Forest Service’s Flagstaff Ranger District rivals the nearly 400 miles of formal trails here.

While Flagstaff’s trails regularly gets rave reviews, longtime users, and especially mountain bikers, say the off-system routes are a symptom of much-needed expansions and improvements of the local trail network.

“Overall our trail system is incredibly outdated and being that Flagstaff is such an outdoor community I think we should have a really good trail system,” said Josh Langdon, a member of Flagstaff Biking Organization and the downhill-focused Flagstaff Gravity Riders.

Brian Poturalski, the recreation staff officer for the Flagstaff Ranger District, is well aware of the miles of unauthorized trails.

It’s an issue where the Forest Service is always playing catch up, he said, emphasizing that all user groups — hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers, off
road motorcyclists, runners — are responsible for creating the trails.

Unauthorized trails present several problems. They haven’t been through environmental review, so they might cut through sensitive wildlife habitat or archaeological areas, for example. They also haven’t been constructed to Forest Service standards, so many tend to run along fall lines and are prone to erosion, Poturalski said. Mountain bikers themselves said some of the local user-created downhill trails have fallen into disrepair…”

READ MORE...

Canyon hiking, running plan winning converts
Emery Cowan

“Last month, Grand Canyon National Park released its own attempt to deal with trail overcrowding and conflicts, among other issues.

Its draft backcountry management plan proposes a range of strategies to address not only interactions between visitors on the canyon’s most crowded trails but a range of other backcountry uses and impacts including canyoneering, river assisted backcountry travel, remote camping and rim-to-rim hiking.

The proposal that will likely affect the most people would require hikers who venture farther than five miles into the canyon to obtain a day-use permit, which would cost $5 or more.

Brian Tinder has completed several rim-to-rim runs, which would fall under the permit requirement.

“For that rate and that process, it sounds simple and easy enough,” he said. Requiring people to get a permit will hopefully promote awareness among people about what they’re getting into, he added.”

READ MORE...

### APPROACH 1

### PRIORITIZE CERTAIN TYPES OF RECREATIONAL LAND USE

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<tr>
<th>EXAMPLES OF WHAT COULD BE DONE</th>
<th>SOME TRADE-OFFS TO CONSIDER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Base prioritization on popularity. That is, if more people participate in a certain type of recreation in comparison to another, prioritize the more popular type.</td>
<td>This doesn’t take into account the impact of various types of recreation on the experiences of others and on the land. What if it turns out that the most popular type of recreation is also the most destructive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Base prioritization on what has the least environmental impact.</td>
<td>This may significantly limit the freedom of activity on public lands, particularly for those using motorized and mechanized vehicles/transport. This would also be a significant shift from the ways these lands have traditionally been managed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Base prioritization on what has the least impact on the ability of others to fruitfully engage in their forms of recreation.</td>
<td>This would likely have some of the same drawbacks as B regarding motorized and mechanized vehicles, but would also apply to much commercialized land use (e.g. Grand Canyon helicopters). It might also deprioritize things like downhill cycling and hunting.</td>
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### APPROACH 2

**LIMIT OR EXPAND CERTAIN TYPES OF RECREATIONAL LAND USE**

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<td>Limit motorized and mechanized recreational land use.</td>
<td>This limits freedom of activity on public lands, and one that has been in place for quite some time. In addition it limits access to the land, since access is much more difficult and much less land is covered without motorized and mechanized transport. It would also limit much commercialized land use (e.g. Snowbowl chair lift, Sedona jeeps, Grand Canyon helicopters).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce the number of non-motorized trails. Flagstaff already has plenty, and reducing the number of trails would give wildlife and ecosystems some more breathing room.</td>
<td>This might deny access to the favorite or treasured spots of some trail users. In addition, you reduce the variety of trail options, which may lead to more people driving to use trails instead of using those close to their residence.</td>
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<td>Expand the number of non-motorized trails. This would increase access to public lands, further encourage a healthy life-style, and could potentially be beneficial economically due to the draw of tourists.</td>
<td>This would only further increase the encroachment of humans into ecosystems that already see high human traffic. In addition, the construction of such trails would come at a significant cost.</td>
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<td>Limit tourist use of public lands during peak seasons. Tourist access could be restricted to places that might become overrun during a certain time of year, such as Lockett Meadow/Inner Basin in the fall.</td>
<td>This might reduce the draw of Flagstaff for tourists, and consequently also reduce revenue from tourism. Should we instead limit local use of trails at high-traffic tourist times/places to reduce overcrowding?</td>
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## Examples of What Could Be Done

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<td>Focus on the maximization of user happiness/satisfaction.</td>
<td>There’s no guarantee that following this course wouldn’t lead to negative environmental consequences.</td>
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<td>Focus on the maximization of human health and well-being.</td>
<td>This would prioritize non-motorized over motorized forms of recreation.</td>
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<td>Focus on the maximization of the economic benefits of recreation.</td>
<td>This could easily lead to exploitation of the land for a short-term monetary gain, with consequences that are potentially far-reaching and in some cases permanent (e.g. species extinction).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on the maximization of human aesthetic values, such as beauty, awe, and wonder.</td>
<td>This would limit forms of recreation that are aesthetically displeasing (noisy, ugly) and thus limit the ability of those users to participate in their activities. For instance it might limit motorized vehicle use, hunting, horseback riding (due to defecation on trails), and expansion at Snowbowl.</td>
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## Approach 4

## Using Biocentric Values to Steer Recreational Land Use Decisions
### EXAMPLES OF WHAT COULD BE DONE

<table>
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<th>Focus on the minimization of environmental impact.</th>
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<td>Focus on the protection of endangered species and sensitive habitats/ecosystems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on the conservation of the land in its natural state prior to large scale civilization; keep as much of the land wild as possible.</td>
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### SOME TRADE-OFFS TO CONSIDER

| This prioritizes activities such as hiking and running over motorized activities and even over cycling and horseback riding. Shouldn’t all user interests be given equal weight? Why should a subset of activities be given preference to the detriment of those who favor other activities? |
| In some case this could significantly limit recreation in certain areas, or even exclude it altogether, even though they are public. |
| This would very likely mean limiting the freedom to engage in higher-impact forms of recreation that are a more recent development in human history. |

### PHILOSOPHY

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Should the discussion about how to use our public lands be grounded solely in anthropocentric values or should it also include biocentric values?
- Are there values independent of human beings? That is, are some things in the natural world valuable regardless of whether or not we humans decide or think they are?
- Does land have to be profitable to justify its being set aside for recreation rather than being used in some other way?
- Is it happiness/satisfaction we get out of recreation more important than the ecological integrity of the land we use?
- How do we balance claims to freedom when those claims conflict?
**COCONINO N.F. WEBSITE**

**Pine Grove and Rattlesnake Quiet Areas**

- Aug 15 – Dec 31: open only to foot, horse, and bicycle traffic.
- Quiet areas requested by hunters primarily for a non-motorized hunting experience.
- "Wildlife, for example, benefit from the absence of noisy vehicles through stress reduction, much the same as you and I would."
- "During the fall and winter, though, the area is treated somewhat like a wilderness area."
- For the previous two bullet points, we still have the sounds of gunshots...

There are wet weather travel restrictions for Forest Service roads.

**OHV Use in Arizona’s Forests**

Motorized off-road elk retrieval is permitted in a large portion of the Coconino National Forest, up to 1 mile off-road.

**Kelly Motorized Trail Project:**
“The goal of the Kelly Motorized Trails project is to create a sustainable motorized trail system for both single-track (motorcycles) and larger off highway vehicles”

- "Moving to sustainable motorized recreation...addresses the growing demand for motorized recreation while protecting the environment and assuring that our national forests and grasslands provide clean air, clean water, and abundant wildlife for future generations."
- Nationwide OHV use: The number of OHV users in the United States has climbed tenfold in the past 32 years, from approximately 5 million in 1972 to 51 million in 2004. The Forest Service now manages more than 300,000 miles of road and 35,000 miles of trail for motor vehicle use. More than 11 million people using OHVs visited national forest and grasslands in 2004.

**Further Resources**

Biological Opinion on Arizona Trail - Peaks Segment
See pages 10-11 for explanation of impacts of both sanctioned and social trails on the Orion PAC pair of Mexican spotted owls. Later in the document is a scientific review of the effects of recreation on Mexican spotted owls.

Sustainable Wildlife Corridors in the Flagstaff Region - document prepared for City of Flagstaff by Arizona Game and Fish
Greatest threats to wildlife (mountain lions, mule deer, and bats) in Area 7 - Mount Elden Foothills is "Current Threats/Barriers: urban and suburban development, recreation, illegal mountain bike trail use." (see page 5)

Mount Elden exhibited the highest medicinal [plant] species composition," in a survey of the San Francisco Peaks.
Mount Elden has historically supported a diverse population of rare ferns:


Mount Elden supports large carnivores such as mountain lions:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1546855?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Off-Road Elk Retrieval Areas

http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s1077-012-9158-6#/page-1
NOTES:

NAU’s Philosophy in the Public Interest is non-partisan and does not endorse any position with respect to the issues we discuss. Philosophy in the Public Interest is a neutral convener for civil discourse.

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SOURCES

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