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7TH DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
Subcommittee on Water and Power  
Subcommittee on Parks, Forests and  
Public Lands – *Ranking Member*

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE  
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,  
Elementary and Secondary Education  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and  
Workforce Training

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS,  
Co-Chair

Tom Tidwell, Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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October 28, 2011

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Dear Chief Tidwell,

I write to express my concern with the failure to seek public input on the decision to allow the Arizona Department of Game and Fish the use of Forest Service roads to access Foster Ranch, a newly purchased state property being converted into a shooting range. I understand the increased use of the road may require significant road upgrades, representing significant costs to your agency. Noise from the shooting range will have serious impacts on recreation and wildlife at the nearby Walnut Canyon National Monument, a unit managed by the National Park Service.

I would appreciate an explanation of the inquiry the Forest Service performed before allowing the increased use and access of federal roads, and information you have about whether it considered the environmental impacts to the Monument of the resulting shooting range. Please let me know if the Forest Service conducted a public process or otherwise complied with, or intends to comply with, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Walnut Canyon National Monument, one of the oldest Monuments in our country, has long served as a valuable recreational and educational opportunity for Flagstaff residents and the greater American public. Accommodating more than 125,000 visitors each year, its unique characteristics include ancient cliff dwellings, centuries-old masonry, and tremendous wildlife diversity, including especially spectacular bird populations. Preliminary shooting events at Foster Ranch are clearly audible within the Monument. I am concerned that the noise could impact the values President Woodrow Wilson sought to protect when he established the Monument in 1915 and undermine its use for education, recreation, and wildlife appreciation. I am unaware of any formal consultation the Forest Service has undertaken with the Park Service or the Fish and Wildlife Service to assess these impacts.

The Forest Service roads in question are used primarily for light backcountry dispersed recreation. Increased use, such as would result from the regular use of Foster Ranch as a shooting range, could lead to more grading, more runoff, and more siltation and pollution of nearby and adjacent streams. To my knowledge, none of these impacts have been assessed, nor mitigation proposed.

I support the Arizona Department of Game and Fish desire to develop a shooting range for northern Arizona, but if its chosen site uses federal Forest Service roads and impacts Park



Service lands, the impacts of that choice on those roads and lands should be thoroughly assessed by the relevant federal agencies and subject to a public notice and comment process pursuant to NEPA. I hope you agree and look forward to your response.

Very sincerely,



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Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva

Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Land