



THE STATE OF ARIZONA  
**GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT**

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September 12, 2013

Earl Stewart  
Forest Supervisor  
Coconino National Forest  
1824 S. Thompson St.  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

RE: Hunters Camping on National Forest Lands

Dear Earl:

I have been forwarded a copy of the Coconino National Forest Service press release entitled, "Parking trailers in forests prohibited during hunting season" dated August 16, 2013. The press release delivers the message to our customers that hunters who leave their trailers on the Forest, unattended for 72 hours are subject to enforcement action, potentially including a citation or impoundment of their trailer. The press release is specific to the Coconino, Kaibab, and Prescott National Forests, but does not mention the other three national forests in Arizona.

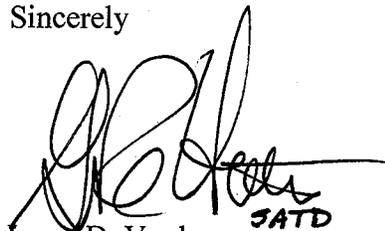
As you are aware, the majority of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's funding for on-the-ground wildlife conservation comes from hunters and anglers. There has been a decades-long decline in participation in hunting and angling in Arizona and across the country. This decline represents threats to the very model of wildlife conservation. My Department has engaged a tremendous amount of resources to reverse this trend. One such effort has involved simplifying the Arizona hunting and fishing license structure, reducing license permutations from more than 40 to less than 10, effective January 1, 2014. Other priority efforts have been directed toward removing or mitigating barriers to legal hunting and fishing and also assisting citizens to better understand how and where to participate in wildlife related recreation, legally.

Many of the hunts offered in Arizona last for a week or more. Having worked as a game warden for more than 30 years, I am aware that many hunters are forced to hunt in chunks of days. Keep in mind that some hunters wait for years, if not decades to be drawn for a particular big game tag. There are many times where a hunter may be in camp for a few days, have to leave for work, then return a few days later to finish his or her hunt. A situation where a person may be cited, or have their equipment impounded, creates a scenario where a hunter may simply choose not to spend the money and time to participate, rather than risk enforcement action because they had to leave for a few days to take care of work or personal matters.

The purpose of this letter is twofold. First, I would request the Forest Supervisors in Arizona establish a consistent approach to address length of visitation to the National Forests in Arizona. Creating an enforcement philosophy that applies to half the forests in Arizona creates a level of confusion among our customers such that, I believe, when combined with other challenges to participation, may drive some of them away from participation. Second, I request that you return your enforcement philosophy to one that allows a forest user, or their equipment, to be present on the forest for two weeks (14-day stay limit). This is a longstanding approach the Department supports, one that our customers understand and one that facilitates the normal participation patterns for hunts offered in Arizona.

I'm proud of the longstanding partnership the Department has enjoyed with Arizona's National Forests in managing Arizona's natural resources. I look forward to facilitating this partnership in the future. Thank you for your consideration to these two requests.

Sincerely

  
for Larry D. Voyles SATD  
Director

CC: Commissioners

Mike Williams, Forest Supervisor, Kaibab National Forest  
Tom Torres, Acting Forest Supervisor, Prescott National Forest  
Neil Bosworth, Forest Supervisor, Tonto National Forest  
Jim Upchurch, Forest Supervisor, Coronado National Forest  
Jim Zornes, Forest Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests  
Scott Smith, Chief of Staff, Governor Brewer's Office  
Kevin Kinsall, Resource Advisor, Governor Brewer's Office  
Liz Archuleta, Chairwoman, Coconino Board of Supervisors  
Sheriff Bill Pribil, Coconino County Sheriff's Office