



October 1, 2010

All Members of the Regional Plan Update Citizen Advisory Committee
City of Flagstaff
211 West Aspen
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

RE: CONSERVATION STATUS OF PICTURE CANYON

Dear Committee Members:

The Grand Canyon Trust has long been a part of local and regional processes aimed at conserving important open space lands in and around Flagstaff. Conservation land targets have included state lands near Walnut Canyon, Observatory Mesa, Rogers Lake, Dry Lake, and Picture Canyon, among others. This comment letter focuses on the conservation values found at Picture Canyon.

State land 21N, R8E, Section 4 contains Picture Canyon and should be identified in the updated Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan as conservation protected. It is identified as conservation protected in the city of Flagstaff's Open Spaces and Greenways Plan and is included in the city's Arizona Preserve Initiative petition for conservation protection.

Section 4 contains significant archaeological and historical resources which bear preservation. It is also a significant "neighborhood," a term used in the Open Spaces and Greenways plan to signify an area with recreation opportunities that also acts as a buffer zone between neighborhoods. A portion of the Arizona Trail also goes through Section 4.

Although Section 4 has been heavily disturbed by human activities, the presence of the Rio de Flag with its steep canyons and permanent water is biologically significant, containing a mixture of microhabitats, substrates, and elevational differences. Approximately 120 bird species, 52 mammal species, 11 reptile species, and 3 amphibian species can be found here. Treated wastewater from the Wildcat Wastewater Treatment Plant has been routed through this section, creating an important habitat for riparian obligate species.

Cultural resources are many in Section 4. There are petroglyph panels on the rock walls of the Rio de Flag canyon, giving Picture Canyon its name. The Arizona State Museum's archaeological assessment counts 16 separate archaeological sites in Section 4.

With respect to tourism, conserving Section 4 and Picture Canyon will protect important scenic beauty, including viewsheds for tourists on I-40 and historic Route 66, as well as visitors on the Arizona Trail. Section 4 encompasses a planned community linkage corridor that aids the communities' connectivity and provides additional tourist opportunities. The Rio de Flag is a feature that can be used as an educational site and trail and bike area.

For the reasons stated above, the Grand Canyon Trust recommends that the updated Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan provide for the permanent protection of Section 4 and Picture Canyon for the enjoyment of present and future Flagstaff residents and visitors.

Sincerely,

Nikolai Lash
Program Director
Grand Canyon Trust

Cc: Paul Babbitt, Chair of Citizens Advisory Committee
Jim Cronk
Kevin Burke
Bill Towler
Mandy Metzger
Robert Mark
Celia Barotz