

## United States Senate

COMMITTEES:  
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AFFAIRS  
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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

June 18, 2019

Vicki Christiansen  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chief Christiansen:

I am requesting an update on how the Forest Service is engaging with local stakeholders on the ongoing safety issue in the Fossil Creek Area.

Following your April 9th testimony in front of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, you stated that the Tonto National Forest was working with local stakeholders including Gila County on whether a closure would be needed on the Fossil Springs Trail to manage safety concerns during peak season. Simultaneously, local stakeholders began working to set up a time to meet with Tonto National Forest to discuss future safety management of Forest Road (FR) 708, Flume Road/Trail, and Fossil Springs Trail. Though the meeting had been confirmed on April 16th for June 11th, stakeholders were notified with less than one day's notice that the Tonto Forest Supervisor would no longer be able to attend. The meeting was then unexpectedly canceled the morning of due to increased fire activity.

In addition to the cancelation of this meeting, Tonto National Forest announced the closure of Fossil Springs Trail in May of this year to the surprise of both the stakeholders and my office. While I understand the increased strain placed on Forest Service staff during fire season, I am deeply concerned with the perceived lack of attention this issue has been given within your organization as well as the disregard for regular stakeholder input before these decisions are made.

As you know, Fossil Creek is a treasured outdoor recreation area for Arizonans. While the safety of my constituents is of the utmost concern, it is vital that the local community, fire districts, county, and tribes are involved in the development of the best possible safety plan that maximizes access to this area. Thus, it is imperative that the local stakeholder meeting is rescheduled immediately, and the feedback is incorporated.

I raised this issue during a separate Senate Energy and Natural Resources hearing June 18th, with

Ms. J. Lenise Lago, Associate Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. I appreciated Ms. Lago's commitment to get this stakeholder meeting rescheduled without delay, and I look forward to an update from the Forest Service when this takes place. My office is willing and eager to assist on this issue in whatever manner appropriate. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martha McSally". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martha McSally  
United States Senator