

Letter From The Managing Agency of the Cosmic Campground

USDA United States Forest
Department of Service
Agriculture

Gila National Forest
Supervisor's Office

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File Code: 2300
Date: September 3, 2015

IDA Board of Directors
3223 North First Avenue
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Dear Board of Directors:

The Gila National Forest has partnered with the Grauer's to develop an opportunity for forest users to enjoy the "Dark Skies" that naturally occur on the forest. I am writing this letter in support of the proposal to certify the Cosmic Campground as an International Dark Sky Association International Dark Sky Sanctuary (DSS). As part of my support, I would like to outline actions the forest will take to support the certification; actions that can occur through an MOU to support the certification; and actions that may not occur which may affect the certification.

The Cosmic Campground is located entirely on National Forest System lands administered by the United States Forest Service. The agency's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The lands administered by the Forest Service provide great opportunity for public enjoyment through regular visitation by the public.

Based on our mission, governing laws, and mandates, the following activities will be completed by the Forest Service to support the certification:

- No lighting will be installed at the Cosmic Campground. This will ensure that a Lightscape Management Plan is not needed. This will also allow the DSS to meet both the 5 and 10 year lighting requirements, thereby demonstrating a commitment to the DSS.
- The forest will work with all parties involved to install signage indicating the Dark Sky Sanctuary designation.
- The forest will work with all parties involved to permit the automatic weather station and sky brightness measurement station.

Based on our mission, governing laws, and mandates, the following activities can be completed but will require an MOU with an interest group to support the certification:



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- A brightness measurement program. As indicated above, the forest will work with an interest group to permit any equipment that needs to reside within the DSS. The interest group will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the information collected at the site.
- Public outreach and education including any interpretive programs. The forest will work with an interest group to authorize all outreach, education, and interpretive programs; however, it will be the responsibility of the interest group to complete all aspects of the programs.
- Establishing night sky quality. All light pollution determinations will be the responsibility of an interest group.

Based on our mission, governing laws, and mandates, the following activities will not occur on Forest Service lands:

- Inclusion of the protected area in our long term plan. All activities on the forest are guided by our Gila National Forest Plan. Currently, the forest is in the process of revising the current forest plan. While the forest may choose to briefly describe the night sky as a resource within the plan, the forest will not include specific management for the DSS. In addition, the forest will not include in its plan any action items for addressing current and future threats to the DSS.

I believe this project provides unique opportunities to visitors of the Gila National Forest. As such, I welcome this opportunity to speak in support of this proposal. I hope this proposal will aid the Forest Service in meeting our mission to sustain the health of an ecosystem and one of its unique features for future generations.

Sincerely,



ADAM MENDONCA
Forest Supervisor

Section 1: Location of the Cosmic Campground

The Cosmic Campground located on an all weather road is connected to US Hwy 180. [Image Credit: Google Earth].

Currently, the Cosmic Campground is open 24/7/365. One is not required to stay there to use it. Eventually, the Cosmic Campground will be operated as a group campground using the USFS scheduling system. It will be open to the public on this basis.



The boundaries of the Gila National Forest enclose the Cosmic Campground planning area. The Cosmic Campground planning area consists of the Cosmic Campground and the Dark Sky Campground. The Cosmic Campground consisting of 3.5 acres will comprise the land base for the Sanctuary. The long term intent will be for the Dark Sky Campground to become a public campground that is managed as a first come first serve “pull off” campground.

The lightscape management plan is simple. The nearest commercial power is is more than one mile away from the Sanctuary. The USFS does not provide power and lighting in a campground of this type and has no intention of doing so in the future. In his letter of 2015 September 3 to the IDA , Gila National Forest Supervisor Adam Mendonca states “No Lighting will be installed at the Cosmic Campground”. [page 40 this proposal]

In the future, if any night lighting is installed by the USFS in the Sanctuary for safety or any other reason it will be installed and operated strictly in accordance with IDA guidelines and forest service regulations.

