

Letter to the Editor: What's happening to our forest roads?

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 20 December 2019 08:57



Dear Editor:

Forest Road 480 in the Zuni Mountains was closed in 2018 from a wash out, the USFS posted a notice on their web site. I happen[ed] to come across by accident while looking for some new road, and off road vehicle maps. The notice advised the road would be closed until further notice. I contacted Alvin Whitehair, Mount Taylor Forest Supervisor to ask if the road would be open in time for hunting season. I was told it would be a long term closure until the road was repaired per the recommendations of USFS employee or engineer. I asked where the washout was and [was] told it was just below the Ojo Redondo campground. I then asked why the entire road needed to be closed and off limits, when it could be open[ed] up to Forest Road 425, which would allow some hunting access to the area for the upcoming hunting seasons. A short time later the road was open again.

Fast forward October 22, 2019 I got lucky enough to draw out for deer in the Zuni's after several years of no draws from good old New Mexico Game & Fish. [We] all know that's another story in itself. Near Forest Road 480 & 425 I saw fresh road construction which turned out to be a private contractor putting in new culverts on 480 as it went up the hill to the camp ground. Great. I thought maybe it would not get washed out again and I was looking for a second hunt in December in the same area. I then started to take notice of several older culverts along side other roads which appeared to be clogged with tree limbs, pine needles, brush and other sorts of debris which would lead to more wash outs.

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It then dawned on me if these culverts were left clogged with debris, the problem of roads being washed out would happen again. I took a picture of one culvert facing up that would pool water until it ran over the top to drain out the other side [making it] almost completely clogged.

So, as a tax payer I guess my question is why the USFS fails to clear these culverts after going to all the trouble to spend public money to put new ones in. Is this some kind of job security for the USFS and private contractors, or is it just typical government laziness?

I emailed Mr. Whitehair who has always been nice enough to email me back thanking me for letting him know and wanting to know where this picture was taken. Maybe he should drive around himself or send some of his government employees out once in a while to see for themselves. It's not like this happens in one day. Maybe that engineer type person could get out of the office again and check them. They sure had time last year to get out and close Forest Road 480.

Signed;

Mr. Harry L. Hall

Retired Police Officer USAF Veteran

Cibola County