



Carson National Forest Forest Plan Revision



Frequently Asked Questions

July 2016

1. What is a Forest Plan?	3
2. Why does the Carson National Forest’s Forest Plan need to be revised?.....	3
3. The Carson NF has asked the public for suggestions on the needs to change statements to the existing 1986 Carson Forest Plan. What happens when you receive conflicting or opposing needs to change statements regarding management of a particular resource, good, or service?	3
4. What is wilderness?.....	3
5. Why is the Carson National Forest considering potentially suitable wilderness areas for designation now?	4
6. Why is the Carson National Forest designating wilderness?	4
7. How is wilderness designated?	4
8. If an area is included in the inventory or evaluation phase of the wilderness process, but isn’t recommended as an addition to wilderness, what happens to that area post-plan revision?	5
9. How is a recommended wilderness managed?	5
10. How do you determine if an area has wilderness character?.....	5
11. If an area has wilderness character does it mean it will become wilderness?.....	5
12. How do you determine the best use of the land?.....	5
13. What can I do in a designated wilderness area?.....	6
14. What can’t I do in a designated wilderness area?	6
15. Will historic traditional uses, such as livestock grazing, wood gathering, hunting, medicinal herb collecting, and harvesting piñon nuts, be eliminated in recommended wilderness areas?.....	6
16. Is livestock grazing allowed in a designated wilderness?.....	6
17. Can a mobility-impaired person use a wheelchair in a wilderness area?	6
18. How does the designation of a wilderness area affect fire management?.....	6
19. The public has already provided input on the Carson NF’s wilderness process, so why are you asking for it again? Why are my previous comments not reflected on the map? Why doesn’t the Carson NF tell the public where it wants wilderness and let the public comment then?.....	7
20. How is a recommended wilderness area managed?.....	7
21. What is an inventoried roadless area?.....	7
22. How is an inventoried roadless area managed?	8
23. How many inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) exist on the Carson National Forest and what activities are allowed in them?.....	8

24. How will the 2001 Roadless Rule be addressed in the forest plan revision process?.....9

25. Are there roads in inventoried roadless areas?.....9

26. What is “travel management”?9

27. Why were so many roads closed during the travel management process?.....10

28. Why am I prohibited from driving off a designated road to collect firewood?.....10

29. Will the revised forest plan affect the current motor vehicle use map (MVUM) on the Carson National Forest?.....10

30. What are special areas, are they being considered now, and who designates them?10

31. Will plan direction in the Carson NF’s revised forest plan override the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the 1872 Mining Law, or any other act passed by Congress pertinent to National Forest System lands?11

1. What is a Forest Plan?

A land and resource management plan (forest plan for short) provides a general, conceptual framework to guide a forest in managing its forest resources, goods, and services. Described as “the view from 30,000 feet.” Forest plans are intentionally strategic and broad in scope and provide guidance in the decision-making process involved with site-specific projects. New or revised forest plans have desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines, identification of suitability of areas for certain uses, and monitoring programs. Forest plans are consistent with and do not override law, regulation, or established policy.

2. Why does the Carson National Forest’s Forest Plan need to be revised?

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires forest plans to be periodically revised -- usually every 15 years. Signed in October 1986, the Carson NF’s forest plan is 30 years old and is currently being revised.

Revisions to the Carson NF’s 1986 forest plan are long overdue, and a lot has changed on the forest and surrounding areas. Scientific understanding and technology have evolved; social and cultural influences and demands have changed; and stressors and threats to sustainability have increased. Some species have become rare and their persistence and viability are threatened. In addition, the guidance in the Forest Service’s 2012 Planning Rule directs forest plans to be science-based and developed with extensive public involvement and collaboration throughout the revision process.

3. The Carson NF has asked the public for suggestions on the needs to change statements to the existing 1986 Carson Forest Plan. What happens when you receive conflicting or opposing needs to change statements regarding management of a particular resource, good, or service?

At this point in the plan revision process, opposing views are welcome. The planning team will review the statements received, determine if they are within established law, regulation, or policy and are within the scope of forest plan revision. If opposing viewpoints meet these criteria, then the needs for change statement simply would say that there is a need to change the revised plan to provide direction on management of that particular resource, good or service.

The Forest Supervisor would ultimately decide what plan direction would be supported by relevant best available science and local knowledge, would minimize risks to sustainability of the resources, goods, and services provided by the Carson NF, and would support opportunities for social and economic contribution by the forest to the affected communities.

4. What is wilderness?

From the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) ... “where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain ... an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work

substantially unnoticeable; has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; ...”

5. Why is the Carson National Forest considering potentially suitable wilderness areas for designation now?

The [2012 Planning Rule](#) (36 CFR §219.7(c)2(v)) requires that, during forest plan revision, the responsible official (Forest Supervisor) shall identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation. The Carson NF is currently undergoing plan revision; therefore, it must consider areas potentially suitable for wilderness.

6. Why is the Carson National Forest designating wilderness?

The Carson NF is not and cannot designate any new wilderness. Only Congress can make the decision to designate an area as wilderness. The Carson NF is going through a 4-step Wilderness Recommendation process required by the [2012 Planning Rule](#). The four steps are:

1. Develop an **inventory** of lands to evaluate for wilderness character;
2. **Evaluate** the lands in the inventory to determine if any have wilderness character;
3. **Analyze** the effects of managing areas as wilderness;
4. Based on the analysis, the final forest plan may **recommend** areas, to Congress for designation.

The Wilderness Recommendation process helps determine if any lands within the Carson NF should be recommended or proposed as wilderness. This process is part of revising the Carson NF’s forest plan and involves the public throughout the process, so the Forest Supervisor can make the best informed recommendation that meets the needs of forest communities and users. The Carson NF will not make a wilderness recommendation until the spring of 2018, when the Forest Supervisor signs a record of decision (ROD) for the revised forest plan environmental impact statement (EIS).

A recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related recommendations for wilderness designation.

7. How is wilderness designated?

Only Congress can designate wilderness; however, just about anyone can recommend wilderness to their elected representatives in Congress. Recommendations can come from federal land management agencies, like the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management, or citizens. Once recommended to Congress, both the House and the Senate must agree on which areas should be designated and their exact boundaries. After the House and Senate agree, the proposal is forwarded to the President to sign into law or veto.

NOTE: Currently, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and The Wilderness Society are in the process of petitioning Congress to add areas of the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests to the boundaries of the existing Pecos Wilderness - [Conservation Opportunities around the Pecos Wilderness](#). This is a completely separate undertaking from the Carson National Forest's plan revision Wilderness Recommendation process.

8. If an area is included in the inventory or evaluation phase of the wilderness process, but isn't recommended as an addition to wilderness, what happens to that area post-plan revision?

If the area included in the inventory or evaluation phase is an [inventoried roadless area](#) (IRA), there are still regulations ([2001 Roadless Rule](#)) that limit some forest management options. That doesn't change. The area may also be considered for other special management in the forest plan revision process. If the area is not an IRA, there is no residual impact from being in the inventory or evaluation of potential additions to wilderness. However, the area may also be considered for other special management in the plan revision process. Inclusion in the inventory or evaluation of potential additions to wilderness is not a designation that conveys or requires a particular kind of management.

9. How is a recommended wilderness managed?

The revised plan must include plan components that provide for managing areas recommended for wilderness designation to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for each area's suitability for wilderness recommendation.

10. How do you determine if an area has wilderness character?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 identifies 5 characteristics that give an area wilderness character: (1) apparent naturalness; (2) solitude or opportunity for unconfined recreation; (3) the size of the area (Is the area 5,000 acres or greater or if smaller is it adjacent to other lands with wilderness character?); (4) unique features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value; and (5) manageability of the area to maintain its wilderness character. We identify, with public input, the conditions in, on, and around the inventoried lands to paint a picture of their character. To the degree that the land has all or some of these characteristics, it may have wilderness character.

11. If an area has wilderness character does it mean it will become wilderness?

No, the Carson NF needs to analyze how the area is used by the public and/or its significance to the ecological and social/economic health within the greater landscape. In other words – "What is the best use of the land?" Areas where wilderness is determined to be the best use of the land will be recommended.

12. How do you determine the best use of the land?

The best use of the land addresses the ecological, social, and economic needs of the communities the Carson NF serves. We ask questions like: Is the area a critical watershed that must be preserved and maintained? Is the land important to local communities for firewood gathering, a place to spend time with their families, or other traditional uses? Is there strong public and community support to protect the land as

wilderness? This information is provided through our analysis and from the public itself. Ultimately, the Forest Supervisor must decide how to best balance various needs.

13. What can I do in a designated wilderness area?

You can fish, hike, hunt, backpack, camp, ski, horseback ride, use pack animals, and rock climb in designated wilderness. Mining and grazing are allowed in wilderness when rights existed prior to wilderness designation. See [Forest Service Manual](#) 2300, Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management – Chapter 2320 – Wilderness Management for further detail.

14. What can't I do in a designated wilderness area?

You can't use motorized or mechanized vehicles or equipment in wilderness, such as cars, trucks, bikes, ATVs, snowmobiles, drones, and chain saws.

15. Will historic traditional uses, such as livestock grazing, wood gathering, hunting, medicinal herb collecting, and harvesting piñon nuts, be eliminated in recommended wilderness areas?

An area recommended for wilderness as a result of the forest plan revision process will have management prescriptions associated with it. These prescriptions may allow existing uses to continue, if such uses do not prevent the protection and maintenance of the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designation. Access for traditional uses would likely be limited to nonmotorized and nonmechanized means. During the analysis of proposed recommended wilderness, the effects on cultural values from these limitations on traditional uses will be evaluated.

16. Is livestock grazing allowed in a designated wilderness?

Yes, if grazing was established prior to designation of the area as wilderness. The number of livestock permitted in wilderness would remain at the approximate level existing at the time of designation. Maintenance of supporting facilities existing in the area prior to designation is permissible, and maintenance, as well as emergency situations, may be accomplished or remedied through the occasional or situational use of motorized equipment. Rule of reasonableness will govern use of motorized equipment. See [Forest Service Manual](#) 2300, Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management – Chapter 2320 – Wilderness Management for further detail. With a few exceptions, the Carson NF's existing wilderness areas permit livestock grazing on them.

17. Can a mobility-impaired person use a wheelchair in a wilderness area?

On National Forest System lands, persons using wheelchairs and other mobility devices may use them wherever foot travel is allowed, including wilderness areas. Wheelchairs and other mobility devices must be designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person and are of the type that are commonly used in indoor, sometimes congested, pedestrian areas (e.g., indoor mall or court room).

18. How does the designation of a wilderness area affect fire management?

Fire management objectives in wilderness are to:

1. Permit lightning caused fires to play, as nearly as possible, their natural ecological role within wilderness; and

2. Reduce, to an acceptable level, the risks and consequences of wildfire within wilderness or escaping from wilderness.

Two types of prescribed fires may be approved for use within wilderness:

- a) Those ignited by lightning and allowed to burn under prescribed conditions, and
- b) Those ignited by qualified Forest Service officers.

Fires may be managed in wilderness using non-motorized, non-mechanized tactics (no chainsaws, no helicopters, no vehicles, no pumps). Exceptions may be made during emergency situations, where life or property are threatened. The Forest Supervisor may approve the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport during emergency situations such as fire suppression. The Regional Forester shall approve the use of tractors in wilderness for fire suppression. No fire may be ignited or allowed to burn without documented, preplanned, specified conditions. Prescribed fire is allowed in wilderness, but implementation is much more costly and labor intensive without the use of mechanized/motorized equipment.

19. The public has already provided input on the Carson NF's wilderness process, so why are you asking for it again? Why are my previous comments not reflected on the map? Why doesn't the Carson NF tell the public where it wants wilderness and let the public comment then?

The [2012 Planning Rule](#) emphasizes extensive public involvement and collaboration throughout the revision process. The public will be involved and able to comment at each step of the Wilderness Recommendation process. Some comments received during inventory or evaluation may be more relevant at a later point in the process and will be carried forward and considered when the time is appropriate.

20. How is a recommended wilderness area managed?

An area recommended for wilderness during the forest plan revision process will have management prescriptions associated with it. Plan components applicable to a recommended area must protect and maintain the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation. In addition, the plan may include one or more plan components for a recommended wilderness area that:

1. Enhance the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designations;
2. Continue existing uses, only if such uses do not prevent the protection and maintenance of the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designation;
3. Alter existing uses, subject to valid existing rights; or
4. Eliminate existing uses, except those uses subject to valid existing rights.

21. What is an inventoried roadless area?

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) refer to those areas identified and mapped in accordance with the [Roadless Area Conservation Final Rule](#) (2001 Roadless Rule for short). According to the 2001 Roadless Rule, the definition of roadless areas includes undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that met the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act and that were inventoried during the

Forest Service's 1979 Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) process, subsequent assessments, or forest planning. The 2001 Roadless Rule defines IRAs as areas identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps contained in [Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2](#) (November 2000) or any subsequent update or revision of those maps.

NOTE: The [Carson NF roadless map](#) identifies all RARE II areas on the forest and how they were managed through the 1986 Carson Forest Plan, prior to issuance of the Roadless Rule. The management direction outlined in the 2001 Roadless Rule supersedes any 1986 forest plan management direction shown on this map.

22. How is an inventoried roadless area managed?

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) are managed according to the [2001 Roadless Rule](#), which establishes prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on 58.5 million acres of IRAs on National Forest System lands.

23. How many inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) exist on the Carson National Forest and what activities are allowed in them?

The Canjilon and El Rito Ranger Districts (RDs) share Canjilon Mountain IRA; Canjilon RD has 1 additional IRA; the El Rito RD has 1 additional IRA; the Camino Real RD has 3 IRAs; the Tres Piedras RD has 3 IRAs; and the Questa RD has 4 IRAs. None occur on the Jicarilla RD.

Except as noted below, the Chief of the Forest Service will review all projects involving road construction or reconstruction and the cutting, sale, or removal of timber in those areas identified in the set of inventoried roadless area maps contained in [Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2](#) (November 2000).

Regional Foresters will review the following activities:

1. Any necessary timber cutting or removal or any road construction or road reconstruction in emergency situations involving wildfire suppression, search and rescue operations, or other imminent threats to public health and safety in IRAs.
2. Timber cutting, sale, or removal in IRAs incidental to the implementation of an existing special use authorization. Road construction or road reconstruction is not authorized through this re-delegation without further project specific review.
3. The cutting, sale, or removal of generally small diameter timber when needed for one of the following purposes:
 - a) To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat;
 - b) To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects within the range of variability that would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period; or,
 - c) For the administrative and personal use, as provided for in 36 CFR 223, where personal use includes activities such as Christmas tree and firewood cutting and where administrative use includes providing materials for activities such as construction of trails, footbridges, and fences.

4. Motorized equipment (such as chainsaws) are allowed in IRAs. Motorcycles or motorized vehicles 65 inches or less in width are allowed on designated motorized trails and roads, and mechanical transport (such as mountain bikes) is allowed on designated trails and designated roads.

The IRAs on the Carson NF are also managed through prescriptions outlined in the [1986 Carson Forest Plan](#) that don't conflict with those in the 2001 Roadless Rule. The current Carson Forest Plan manages most of the IRAs on the forest according to Management Area 20 – Semi Primitive, which allows only those activities or uses that will preserve the present characteristics of the areas.

24. How will the 2001 Roadless Rule be addressed in the forest plan revision process?

The Carson NF's revised forest plan will include management of RARE II acres according to the [2001 Roadless Rule](#). If RARE II acres make up parts of a "recommended wilderness area", additional management prescriptions to maintain wilderness character may be included. In response to the public dialog that occurs during the revision process, another alternative may vary from the 2001 Roadless Rule. When a final decision is made on the revised forest plan, the decision will reflect the rules and direction that are in place at that time.

25. Are there roads in inventoried roadless areas?

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) on the Carson NF do not have any roads or areas designated open to motor vehicle use. Unauthorized, user created, and legacy routes (usually in the form of two-tracks) may be visible on the landscape in some of the Carson NF's roadless areas, but only the roads identified on the Carson NF's motor vehicle use maps (MVUMs) are open to motor vehicle use. NOTE: On the Carson NF's [interactive wilderness map](#), you can zoom in and turn on closed routes in orange that were inventoried with GPS in the early 2000s. A few of these routes may overlap with roadless areas, but were never authorized by the Forest Service for motor vehicle use.

26. What is "travel management"?

The [Travel Management Rule of 2005](#) requires all National Forests and Grasslands to designate those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Designations are made by class of vehicle and, if appropriate, by time of year. The Travel Management Rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas that is not consistent with the designations. In other words, the Rule eliminates motorized cross-country travel. The Travel Management Rule also limits motor vehicle use in designated corridors to only dispersed camping and big game retrieval. The purpose of the Travel Management Rule is to enhance management of National Forest System lands; sustain natural resource values through more effective management of motor vehicle use; enhance opportunities for motorized recreation experiences on National Forest System lands; address needs for access to National Forest System lands; and preserve areas of opportunity on each National Forest for nonmotorized travel and experiences.

NOTE: The Carson NF completed travel management analyses through 4 separate NEPA decisions: Jicarilla RD (8/2010); El Rito, Canjilon, and Tres Piedras RDs (12/2010); Questa RD (11/2011); and Camino Real Rd (9/2013). Motor vehicle use (MVUM) maps are issued to reflect those decisions.

27. Why were so many roads closed during the travel management process?

Numerous forest users perceive the Carson NF's travel management decisions closed many miles of "roads" on the forest. This perception is likely based on the [Travel Management Rule's](#) requirement that motor vehicle use is prohibited off designated roads. In order to comply with the Travel Management Rule, the Carson NF's travel management decisions amended the [1986 Carson Forest Plan](#) eliminating cross-country motor vehicle use in areas that had allowed cross-country travel on the forest in the past.

For example, the Camino Real RD's 2013 travel management decision maintains 318 miles of road open to motor vehicle use and closes 32 miles. The reason for closing 32 miles of road was because they (1) were causing unacceptable damage to water, soil, or vegetation resources; (2) were duplicative or paralleled an existing road; or (3) caused inadvertent trespass by the public through private lands. Although motorized cross-country travel was already prohibited on approximately two-thirds of the Camino Real RD, the travel management decision eliminated cross-country travel by motor vehicles for any use on the remaining 100,672 acres. These acres likely contained many miles of unauthorized, user created routes that forest users assumed were designated roads, open to motor vehicle use.

28. Why am I prohibited from driving off a designated road to collect firewood?

The [Travel Management Rule](#) also limits motor vehicle use in designated corridors for the purpose of dispersed camping and big game retrieval. Prior to the Carson NF's travel management decisions, motor vehicle use was allowed in designated corridors for camping, parking, and firewood gathering. With a valid fuelwood permit from the Carson NF, the permit holder can use a motor vehicle within an established (150' or 300') corridor to remove/retrieve fuelwood that is visible from the designated road (on the MVUM), as long as no resource damage occurs.

29. Will the revised forest plan affect the current motor vehicle use map (MVUM) on the Carson National Forest?

Generally no, the travel management analyses, decisions, and resulting motor vehicle use maps for ranger districts will be supported by the revised forest plan. The revised plan will not alter those previous travel management decisions and MVUMs, with the exception that motorized trails within a recommended wilderness area or a proposed research natural area could be closed and decommissioned.

30. What are special areas, are they being considered now, and who designates them?

Certain limited areas of National Forest System lands not designated as wilderness and containing outstanding examples of plant and animal communities, geological features, scenic grandeur, or other special attributes merit special management. These areas are either designated by law or may be designated administratively as special areas. Areas so designated are managed to emphasize recreational and other specific related values. Other uses are permitted in the areas to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated.

Forest plan revision is the appropriate time to conduct an analysis of the need and desirability for special areas. These analyses include collaboration and input from the

public, other government entities, and Tribes. Other than those designated by law, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Regional Forester, or the Forest Supervisor can designate special areas on the Forest, depending on the size.

31. Will plan direction in the Carson NF's revised forest plan override the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the 1872 Mining Law, or any other act passed by Congress pertinent to National Forest System lands?

No, forest plan direction cannot conflict with any Congressional laws, regulations, or with existing Forest Service Manual or Handbook that guide agency regulation or policy.