

Land, Water and People

Wolf Creek Access Project Begins Anew

By Becky Bryan

By now, almost everyone in San Luis Valley has heard something about the Wolf Creek Access Project. You may like it or hate it, but you probably have an opinion on it. Now is your chance to learn more about the new proposal and provide comments on it.

The first Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision for access to the proposed Village of Wolf Creek received a lot of attention. Citizens were both for and against the project, so much so that the project ended up in court. The Forest Service decided to settle the case rather than enter into a lengthy court battle. The new Forest Supervisor/Center Manager, Dan Dallas, summed up the settlement by saying he wanted a “fresh start” for the project.

That fresh start is beginning now. The Rio Grande National Forest has begun the scoping process for a new EIS and is seeking your input about the proposed access. The Forest will use these comments to determine what needs to be analyzed and develop alternatives to the proposed action.

Here is what you need to know about the Forest Service position on this proposal:

- The Forest Service is legally required to respond to an application from Leavell-McCombs Joint Venture (LMJV) seeking access across National Forest to their private property.
- LMJV’s private property is surrounded by National Forest. In this situation, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act requires that the Forest provide access across public land for the “reasonable use and enjoyment” by the private landowner.
- The Forest Service does not have authority over development on private land.

The Forest is holding three public open house meetings to provide opportunities for you to discuss the project with many of the team members who will be conducting the analysis. Each meeting will run from 5:00-7:30 p.m. at the following locations:

October 7 – Creede Community Center

October 8 – Rio Grande Community Annex, Del Norte

October 9 – Pagosa Springs Community Center

Several things are new with the Wolf Creek Access project this time around.

- LMJV has proposed a new location for the access road.
- Other government agencies that have jurisdiction over or interest in aspects of the private land development will be involved much earlier in the process.
- The Forest Service, rather than a contractor, will conduct the analysis.
- Many of the folks on the analysis team come from across the country. All are experts in their fields, and will work hard to do an accurate and complete analysis of potential impacts of the access proposal.

I hope to see you at one of the public meetings, so my team and I can get to know you and hear your thoughts on this project. If you cannot attend one of the meetings, you can

still learn more about the project by visiting our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/riogrande/projects/forcomment/village>.

You may send your comments to Wolf Creek Access EIS, C/O Content Analysis Group, 1584 South 500 West, Suite 202, Woods Cross, UT, 84010, or wolfcreek@contentanalysisgroup.com. Comments are due by October 31, 2008.

Becky Bryan is the project leader for the Wolf Creek Access EIS. She normally works as the NEPA coordinator on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri. When not at work, Becky likes to spend time with her family, cheer for her kids at their events, and plan their next family adventure.