



## DECISION NOTICE FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### POT CREEK INTERPRETIVE RESOURCE CENTER and CARSON FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #4

**Carson National Forest**  
Taos, Rio Arriba, Colfax, and Mora Counties, New Mexico

#### DECISION

Four alternatives were considered including a no action alternative. It is my decision to adopt Alternative 4 as proposed in the Environmental Assessment and appropriately amend the Forest Plan. This alternative...

- ...develops a Pot Creek Cultural Resource Center which consists of an auditorium, amphitheater, and various interpretive areas.
- ...includes a paved 80-car parking lot and several interpretive loop trails.
- ...restores and interprets prehistoric sites.
- ...involves partnerships with Southern Methodist University, the Taos Archeological Society, and the New Mexico State Highway Department.
- ...locates facilities on Southern Methodist University and Carson National Forest Lands.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The environmental analysis addressed issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICO's). It evaluated the feasibility of the proposal, developed alternative ways (with mitigation measures) to deal with the proposal, and determined the environmental consequences. The analysis was done by an interdisciplinary team with public participation throughout the process. The environmental assessment which documents that analysis is available for public review at the Carson Forest Supervisor's Office in Taos, New Mexico, and at the Camino Real Ranger District office in Penasco, New Mexico.

Three other alternatives were considered:

- **Alternative 1 -- No Action**
- **Alternative 2 -- Self-Guided Loop Trail for Cultural Resource Interpretation on Carson National Forest Land.** This includes a 40-car parking lot, a loop trail and a picnic area.
- **Alternative 3 -- Cultural Resource Center on Carson National Forest Land.** This is the same as Alternative 4, explained above, except all facilities are on Carson National Forest Land.

Alternative 4 was selected because...

- ...it provides an unusual opportunity for an estimated 50,000 annual visitors and local school children to interact with archeologists and college students working on archeological excavations.
- ...forest managers and university researchers will be able to directly interact and share information.
- ...it provides the best protection of Pot Creek cultural resources.
- ...costs can be shared between the Carson, an interpretive association, the New Mexico Highway Department, and Southern Methodist University.
- ...it provides an additional tourist attraction in Taos County.
- ...it meets the objectives of the Carson Forest Plan while not conflicting with other resource management activities.
- ...there are no significant negative effects on air, soil, water, vegetation, nor wildlife.

### FOREST PLAN

The actions of Alternative 4 are inconsistent with the Carson Forest Plan. The proposed site is not specifically mentioned in the Forest Plan nor the Cultural Resources Planning Assessment because the opportunity was only recently presented by Southern Methodist University. The Forest Plan gives direction to "...identify cultural resource interpretive audiences and objectives." The Cultural Resource Action Plan identifies Taos as one of these audiences. The Forest Plan also tells us that the "...list of interpretive opportunities would be reviewed and updated as appropriate."

The proposed Pot Creek Cultural Resource Center is currently in Management Area 8 -- Pinon Juniper. With this decision, 60 acres will be moved to Management Area 16 -- Existing Recreation Sites, and 72 acres moved to Management Area 15 -- Potential Recreation Sites, to provide for future expansion.

Replace the existing Forest Plan pages with the new pages attached to this decision notice and identified as "Amendment No. 4 -- March 1990".

### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined through an environmental analysis that this is not what the regulations constitute as "a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively." Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is made considering significance in both context and intensity.

● **CONTEXT:**

- This action effects 132 acres of the 336,561 acres of pinyon-juniper on the Carson.

● **INTENSITY:**

- *Beneficial & Adverse Impacts:* There are no significant effects on air, soil, water, vegetation, wildlife, nor people.
- *Public Health & Safety:* Construction and use associated with this action will be limited to the 60-acre site now with possible expansion by another 72 acres. It will not affect other visitors on the 1.5-million acre Carson National Forest. The adjacent state highway can handle the anticipated additional traffic. Facilities will be constructed and maintained to meet all State and Federal health and safety standards.
- *Unique Characteristics:* There are no unique characteristics, such as, historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. There are similar cultural resource sites scattered throughout the Pot Creek area on both Forest Service and private land.
- *Controversy of the Effects:* Through our involvement with the public, no controversy surfaced over any effects discussed in the analysis.

- *Uncertainty & Risks:* The effects of the action on the human environment contain no uncertain nor involve any unique or unknown risks. All site excavation will be conducted under the direction of archeologists and with the concurrence of the State Historic Preservation Office.
- *Precedent:* This action sets no precedent for future action with significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
- *Cumulative Affect:* It is not reasonable to anticipate that this action, in conjunction with other actions, would cumulatively have significant affects. The assessment reviewed other possible future projects, specifically concerned with possible cumulative affects. We also reviewed possible activities that might happen on non-Forest Service lands to see if their impacts, coupled with our projects, would create problems. It was found not to be a problem.
- *Significant Scientific, Cultural, or Historical Resources:* This action will not adversely affect any districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Cultural resource survey and inventory, State Historical Preservation Officer's (SHPO) concurrence, and Forest Supervisor's approval will be obtained prior to any ground disturbance or contract advertisement. New information may require a new decision to be made.
- *T&E Species:* This action will not affect any endangered or threatened (T&E) plant or animal species nor its habitat that has been determined critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. A T&E evaluation has been done, which states that no T&E species are in the area nor are any in any other areas going to be adversely affected by this action.
- *Laws:* This action does not violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

This decision does not affect interpretative work, which may continue within the area. Implementation shall not occur until seven calendar days following publication of the legal notice of this decision in the Taos News newspaper. Due to anticipated partnerships, this project may be implemented in stages.

#### APPEALS

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, Content of Notice of Appeal, including the reasons for appeal. The appeal must be filed simultaneously with Dave Jolly, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, 517 Gold Ave SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102-0084 and Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest, within 45 days of the date of legal notice of this decision in the Taos News newspaper. It is anticipated that the legal notice will appear in the Taos News on March 12th or 19th. For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact John C. Bedell, Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest, P.O. Box 558, Taos, NM 87571, (505) 758-6200.

  
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**JOHN C. BEDELL**  
**Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest**

3-15-90  
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 Date