



United States
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Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern
Region

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Carson National Forest Plan



A. Introduction

YOUR NOTES...

CARSON FOREST PLAN



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PURPOSE OF FOREST PLANS

Forest Plans define the direction for managing the National Forests. The Plan provides for integrated multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the Forest in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner. Preparation of the Forest Plan is required by the Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA), as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).

The Forest Plan replaces all previous resource management plans prepared for the Forest. Upon approval of the Forest Plan, all subsequent activities affecting these lands, including budget proposals, will be based on the Forest Plan (38 CFR 219.10 (e)). In addition, all permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of these National Forest System Lands must be consistent with the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.10 (e)).

The planning principles in the NFMA regulations (36 CFR 219.1 (b)) were integrated throughout the process.

Land management prescriptions and standards and guidelines are a statement of the Plan's management direction. Projected output, services, and rates of implementation are, however, dependent on the annual budget and amended accordingly after appropriate public notification.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FOREST PLAN

Chapter B of the Forest Plan describes the major issues and how the Forest Plan responds to the issues. It also summarizes the Analysis of the Management Situation, which depicts the current levels of goods and services produced, and projects supply and expected future use on the Forest. Chapters C & D (chapter 4 in those management areas not yet updated to the new format) detail the mission, goals, objectives, proposed vicinity, and timing of management practices; projects the desired condition of the Forest from implementation of the plan; and describes management direction and associated resource management standards and guidelines. A management area map is included with the EIS/Plan package. Chapter 5 is the monitoring plan. The Glossary, Chapter 6, defines terms used in the Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING

Development of a Forest Plan occurs within the framework of Forest Service Regional and National planning. The RPA Program sets the national direction and output levels for National Forest System lands based on suitability and capability information from each Forest Service Region. Each Region distributes its share of the national production levels among the Forests of the Region. This distribution is based on the detailed site-specific information gathered at the Forest level.

Each Forest Plan, in turn, either validates or provides a basis for changing production levels assigned by the Region. Activities and projects are planned and implemented by the Forest to carry out direction developed in the Forest Plan. Information from Forest Plans of all Forests in the Region will be used in developing and revising a Regional Guide.

Analysis that supports the Forest Plan is contained in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Therefore, the Forest Plan and the EIS are companion documents. The EIS describes alternatives considered in

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arriving at the Forest Plan and assesses environmental effects of implementing the Plan and its alternatives. Also contained in the EIS is a Glossary and List of Preparers to aid in reading and interpreting the Forest Plan. Supporting information is contained in planning records on file at the Carson National Forest Supervisor's Office. The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) is summarized in the EIS and Forest Plan and is referenced in several places in the Forest Plan. The AMS document is part of the planning records and may be inspected.

The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be used for tiering [40 CFR 1502.20 and 1508.28]. Tiering means that, if needed, future environmental documents for projects based on the Carson Forest Plan will only summarize or incorporate by reference issues discussed in the EIS. Environmental documents for those projects will focus on site specific issues, concerns, and opportunities unique to the project. Environmental assessments will not be prepared for projects that have been found to have limited context and intensity [40 CFR 1508.27(a) and (b)] and produce little or no environmental effects, individually or cumulatively, to either the biological or physical components of the human environment [40 CFR 1508.14][FSM 1951.2] or have been adequately addressed in other environmental documents, including the EIS associated with the Forest Plan.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is partially within the Forest boundary. The entire designated area is administered by the Secretary of the Interior, as directed by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542). A management plan for this area is available for review at the Bureau of Land Management office in Taos, NM. This River Management Plan is incorporated by reference in the Carson Forest Plan.

No other rivers within the Carson Forest boundary are listed on the Nationwide River Inventory. No other rivers are eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation.

The Columbine-Hondo area was classified a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in the New Mexico Wilderness Act of 1980. This Act directed the Secretary of Agriculture to review these lands as to their suitability or non-suitability for preservation as wilderness. This planning process is the vehicle through which the Regional Forester will make his recommendation to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Concerning other roadless areas on the Carson National Forest, the Act further states:

"...that review and evaluation (referring to the RARE II process) shall be deemed for the purposes of the initial land management plans required for such lands by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 to be an adequate consideration of the suitability of such lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and the Department of Agriculture shall not be required to review the wilderness option prior to the revision of the initial plans, and in no case prior to the date established by law for completion of the initial planning cycle..."

Therefore, no other areas will receive further study.

PLANNING PROCESS

The proposed Forest Plan was developed in compliance with the NFMA regulations (36 CFR 219) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines (40 CFR 1500) that were developed to implement NEPA of 1969.

The planning process specified in the NFMA regulations was followed in development of the Carson Forest Plan. The planning process utilized the interdisciplinary (ID) approach. An ID Team was created by

gathering professionals with diverse backgrounds in the physical, biological, economic, and social sciences. Implementation of this Plan will require continued ID teamwork [36 CFR 219.5 and .10].

The planning process is a logical, rational, and trackable approach to natural resource decision-making. The planning actions as described in the NFMA regulations [36 CFR 219.12(b)-(k)] and used in this Forest planning effort are as follows:

- Identification of issues, concerns, and opportunities,
- Development of planning criteria,
- Inventory data and information collection,
- Analysis of the management situation,
- Formulation of alternatives,
- Estimation of effects of alternatives,
- Evaluation of alternatives,
- Preferred alternative recommendation (Forest Plan),
- Plan approval,
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Planning was based on the following principles [36 CFR 219.1(b)] which were intergrated throughout the process:

"Plans guide all natural resource management activities and establish management standards and guidelines for the National Forest System. They determine resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management." Forest planning will be based on the following principles:

(1) Establishment of goals and objectives for multiple-use and sustained-yield management of renewable resources without impairment of the productivity of the land;" *(Goals, objectives, and the levels of sustained outputs are contained in Chapters C. & D.)*

(2) Consideration of the relative values of all renewable resources, including the relationship of nonrenewable resources, such as minerals, to renewable resources;" *(Both quantifiable and nonquantifiable values were evaluated for alternatives and benchmarks. These values are displayed and discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 4, and Appendices C and F of the EIS.)*

(3) Recognition that the National Forests are ecosystems and their management for goods and services requires an awareness and consideration of the interrelationships among plants, animals, soil, water, air, and other environmental factors within such ecosystems;" *(This principle was the foundation of the planning process. Planning models, prescriptions, benchmarks, and alternatives were formulated to consider all components of the Forest. Some components were emphasized in some of the analysis but minimum standards for all other components were always met.)*

(4) Protection and, where appropriate, improvement of the quality of renewable resources;

(5) Preservation of important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage;

(6) Protection and preservation of the inherent right of freedom of American Indians to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions;

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- (7) Provisions for the safe use and enjoyment of the forest resources by the public;
- (8) Protection, through ecologically compatible means, of all forest and rangeland resources from degradations by forest and rangeland pests;
- (9) Coordination with the land and resource planning efforts of other Federal agencies, State and local governments and Indian tribes;" *(Extensive coordination was done throughout the planning process. These efforts are described in Chapters 1 and Appendix A of the EIS.)*
- (10) Use of a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to ensure coordination and integration of planning activities for multiple-use management;" *(The ID Team members that developed the proposed Forest Plan are listed in Chapter 5 of the EIS.)*
- (11) Early and frequent public participation. (The public has been involved throughout the process. A description of *public involvement* is found in Chapter 6 of the EIS.)
- (12) Establishment of quantitative and qualitative standards and guidelines for land and resource planning and management;" *(These principles were integrated into the standards and guidelines for management found in Chapter 4. Impacts and effects of the proposed management are described in Chapter 4 of the EIS. The management situation for all resources and uses is described in the AMS on file at Forest offices and summarized in Chapter 3 of the EIS and Chapter B of this Plan.)*
- (13) Management of National Forest System lands in a manner that is sensitive to economic efficiency; and, *(Economic efficiency of the alternatives and proposed Forest Plan was evaluated throughout the process. Chapters 2 and 4, and Appendices C and E of the EIS describe the economic efficiency analysis.)*
- (14) Responsiveness to changing conditions of land and other resources and to changing social and economic demands of the American people." *(Demand considerations and social and economic effects of the alternatives and Forest Plan are found in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the EIS and in the AMS.)*

PLAN CONFORMITY

"As soon as practicable after approval of the plan, the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the plan. Subsequent administrative activities affecting such lands, including budget proposals, shall be based on the plan. The Forest Supervisor may change proposed implementation schedules to reflect differences between proposed annual budgets and appropriated funds. Such scheduled changes shall be considered an amendment to the forest plan, but shall not be considered a significant amendment, or require the preparation of an environmental impact statement, unless the changes significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services projected under planned budget proposals as compared to those projected under actual appropriations." [36 CFR 219.10(e)]

The following items were not considered in the Forest Plan because they developed too late to incorporate. They are compatible with the management direction, but funding is not included. They are:

- Management of the Valle Vidal Unit
- Forest Microwave System (Provides communication between Forest offices)
- FLIPS (National Forest Service Computer system)
- Other unforeseen capital investments which may be necessary over time.

VALIDITY

If at some time in the future it is found that a particular portion of the Forest Plan is invalid, that will not invalidate the entire plan. The other portions of the plan would continue to be implemented.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

"The Forest Supervisor may amend the forest plan. Based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and other contents of the forest plan, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether a proposed amendment would result in a significant change in the plan. If the change resulting from the proposed amendment is determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of a forest plan. If the change resulting from the amendment is determined not to be significant for the purposes of the planning process, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures." [36 CFR 219.10(f)]

PLAN REVISION

"A forest plan shall ordinarily be revised on a 10-year cycle or at least every 15 years. It also may be revised whenever the Forest Supervisor determines that conditions or demands in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly or when changes in RPA policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on forest level programs. In the monitoring and evaluation process, the interdisciplinary team may recommend a revision of the forest plan at any time. Revisions are not effective until considered and approved in accordance with the requirements for the development and approval of a forest plan. The Forest Supervisor shall review the conditions on the land covered by the plan at least every 5 years to determine whether conditions or demands of the public have changed significantly." [36 CFR 219.10(g)]

HOW PLAN WILL BE USED

The Forest Plan will be used to:

- Determine public issues, management concerns and resource use and development opportunities.
- Define management practices appropriate to the range of resource conditions found on the Forest.
- Assign combinations of management practices to lands for which they are most suited based on productivity and sensitivity of the land and the needs expressed in the issues and concerns.
- Specify the resource production outputs and schedules associated with implementing specific management practices.
- Establish standards and guidelines for resource use and protection.
- Establish monitoring standards to ensure that actual outputs and effects are consistent with those planned.
- Provide a framework for project level decisions and for development of budget proposals.
- Integrate individual resource planning activities.
- Coordinate Forest Service planning activities with the efforts of other Federal agencies, State and local governments and Indian tribes.

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- Provide input to subsequent RPA Programs and Regional Guides.

PLANNING AREA DESCRIPTION

The Carson National Forest encompasses 1,391,692 acres of National Forest System lands in northern New Mexico. It is an administrative unit of the Southwestern Region of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Portions of this Forest lies within Taos (35%), Rio Arriba (63%), Colfax (1%), and Mora (1%) counties. Figure 1 is a map of the Forest. The Forest is divided into six Ranger Districts: El Rito (19%), Canjilon (10%), Jicarilla (11%), Camino Real (21%), Questa (12%), and Tres Piedras (27%).

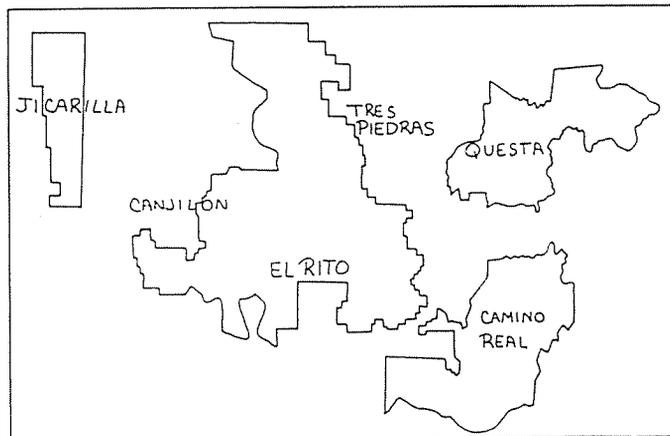
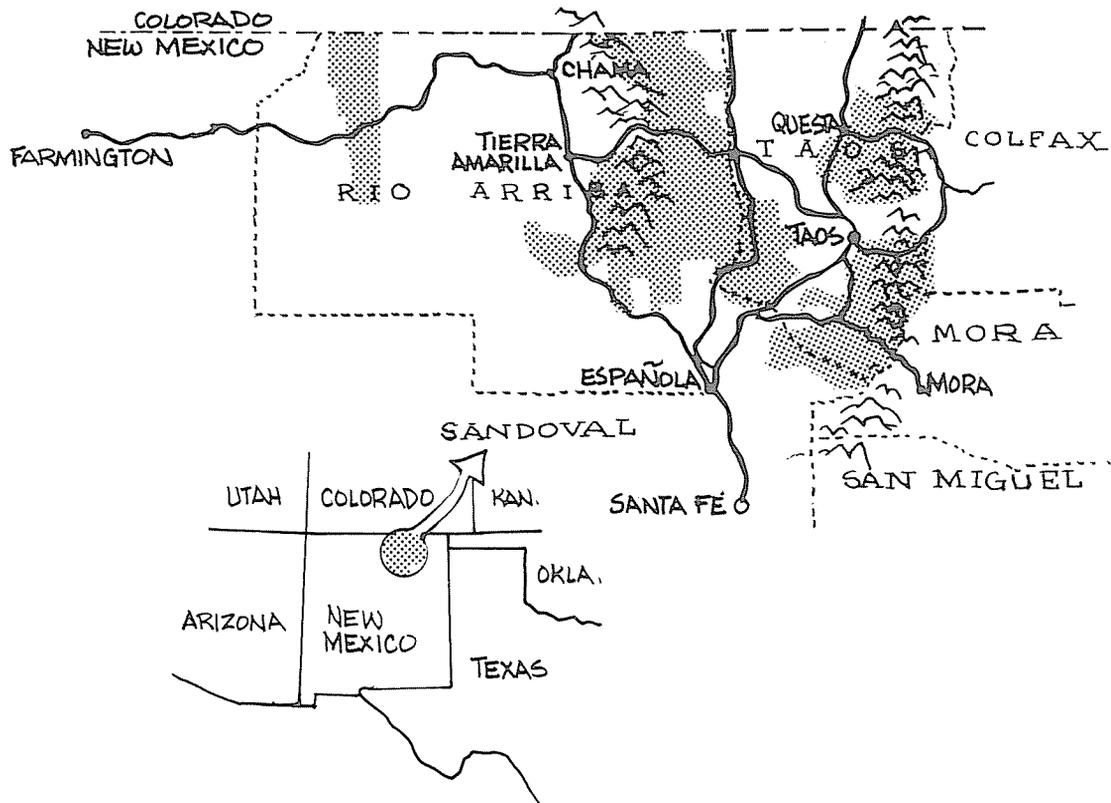
The landscape is generally mountainous with numerous streams, mostly draining into the Rio Grande. Elevations range from 6,000 feet in low elevation grassland to Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico, which attains an elevation of 13,161 feet.

The entire area of north-central New Mexico can be characterized by a mild climate with cool summers, moderate winter snows, and many days of sunshine. Precipitation varies from 10 to 35 inches a year with the greater amounts falling at the higher elevation areas. Precipitation is split between summer rain and winter snow. Summer precipitation comes mainly from warm, moist air masses from Mexico and is associated with strong southwest winds. Winter precipitation comes from the Pacific Ocean in the western United States. Yearly precipitation is highly variable.

Air temperatures vary from -25~ F to 50~ F in the winter. Summer air temperatures vary from 30~ F to 95~ F. Extended periods of extreme heat or cold are rare.

Southwesterly winds are common during the spring months and during the summer in association with thunderstorm activity.

Figure A-1. Vicinity of the Carson National Forest.



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MISSION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, PRESCRIPTIONS, STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

The following table defines missions, goals, objectives, prescriptions, and standards and guidelines. All these items are found in chapters C & D (chapter 4 in those management areas not yet updated to the new format).

Table A-1. Relationship of mission, goals, objectives, prescriptions, and standards/guidelines.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Missions	<p>Are very general Show general direction of the organization Are addressed to the organization and not to the individuals Are used to validate organizational objectives Contain the general purpose of the organization</p>
Goals	<p>A broad general statement usually not quantifiable and timeless The principal statements from which objectives are developed The central strategy for fulfilling the unit's mission Are grouped by resources</p>
Objectives	<p>Consistent with the missions and goals Clear, specific, and as measurable as possible Specify the end result to be achieved Specify a target date for its completion Attainable, and yet provide a challenge Brief, written, and communicated to all directly concerned Where possible, displayed in table format Objectives are the annual activity outputs provided to accomplish the goals and to help address the issues, concerns and opportunities. These are specified in the following tables. The cost for each time period is the amount required to implement the Carson Forest Plan. The annual budget, through the agencies budget process, may be different from that which is indicated as necessary for carrying out the intent of the Forest Plan. It is for this reason that short-range objectives must be rigid enough to guide the development of the annual budget request to insure implementation of Forest Plan direction.</p>
Prescriptions	<p>"Management practices and intensity selected and scheduled for application on a specific area to obtain multiple-use and other goals and objectives." [36 CFR 219.3] The prescriptions consist of standards and guidelines.</p>
Standards & Guidelines	<p>Timing and intensity of planned activities Specific policies that apply to activities in each prescription Mitigation measures and coordinating requirements needed to protect resources and the environment.</p>

HOW TO APPLY PRESCRIPTIONS

Find the area on the management area map. (Available at Ranger Districts and the Supervisor's Office.)

Validate the description of the area. [The map should be viewed as an index to what inventories say occurs on the ground. Always let what does occur on the ground override the map. If they disagree, look for the description in the Forest Plan that most accurately depicts the real situation. It is always best for the manager to validate by actually viewing the area.]

Read the appropriate prescription. [Be sure to read the standards and guidelines for *all* the activities. For example, many standards and guidelines that affect timber activities are under wildlife and recreation activities.]

Read Forest-wide prescriptions. [In a few rare instances, you may find that these do not totally mesh with those for the management areas. If this occurs, always follow the direction for the smaller area. The Forest-wide standards and guidelines have to be more general to cover all circumstances. The standards and guidelines for management areas can be more specific.]

Check for possible impact on objectives. [Make sure the project will not jeopardize the objectives. The intent is to meet these objectives. That means not to go over as well as not coming up short.]

If the planned action is consistent with prescriptions, the manager should perform an environmental analysis using the interdisciplinary process (FSH 1909.15). [The Environmental Assessment (EA) documents coordination of the action with the standards and guidelines and provides for additional management constraints, if necessary. The appropriate line officer will complete the decision notice.]

If the planned action is in conflict with standards and guidelines or unsuitable for the area, the manager needs to decide whether to proceed or consider a change in the Forest Plan. [In this case, the manager must consider redesigning or relocating the project. If it is decided to implement the action as originally planned, the District Ranger will prepare an EA documenting the need for and significance of a change to the Carson Forest Plan. If, based on the environmental analysis, the change is determined not to be significant, it may be implemented by the Forest Supervisor following appropriate public notification [36 CFR 219.11(e)].]

Activities, outputs, and standards will be monitored and evaluated according to the Monitoring Plan (see Chapter 5). The Monitoring Plan specifies the criteria for evaluating the need for amendments or revisions to the Plan.

If any errors are found through this process, they will be documented in writing and sent to the Forest Planner.