



**U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service  
Santa Fe National Forest  
Jemez Ranger District  
Jemez Cave Closure**

**PROHIBITIONS**

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 C.F.R. § 261.50(a), the following are prohibited within the area described in this Order (the "Described Area") and as depicted on the National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Jemez Ranger District, Santa Fe National Forest, described below and shown on the attached map, hereby incorporated into this Order as Exhibit A (the "Described Area"):

1. Going into or being upon the Described Area. 36 C.F.R. § 261.53(c).

**EXEMPTIONS**

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 261.50(e), the following persons are exempt from this Order:

1. Persons with a written Forest Service authorization specifically exempting them from the effect of this Order.
2. Any Federal, State, or Local Officer, or member of an organized rescue or firefighting resource in the performance of an official duty.

**DESCRIBED AREA**

The Described Area is within Township 18N, Range 2E, Section 14, specifically all lands within the boundary starting at 50 feet upslope from the roof of Jemez cave, then extending 50 feet on either side of the mouth of the cave, then including the interior and exterior of the cave, then extending down slope to the New Mexico Highway 4 right-of-way, as depicted in Exhibit A of this Order. The Described Area does not include the unimproved parking area immediately adjacent to the highway right-of-way.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Order is to provide natural and cultural resource protection for the

Jemez Cave and for public safety and welfare until current damage to natural and cultural resources can be assessed and a long-term management strategy developed.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

1. This Order shall be in effect from May 6, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. through April 30, 2025, unless rescinded.
2. A map identifying the Described Area is attached and made part of this Order as Exhibit A. For a digital version of this Order and Exhibit A, go to <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/santafe/alerts-notice>.
3. Unless otherwise expressly defined in this Order, the terms used in this Order are defined by the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture, 36 C.F.R. Chapter II, Parts 200-299. If there are terms in this Order that are not expressly defined in the Order or 36 C.F.R. Chapter II, Parts 200-299, their meaning shall be determined by their plain language definitions.
4. A violation of the above prohibitions is punishable as a Class B misdemeanor by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for organizations, or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both. 16 U.S.C. § 551; 18 U.S.C. § 3559, 3571, and 3581.
5. Contact the Jemez Ranger District in Jemez Springs, NM, (575) 829-3535, and at the Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor's Office in Santa Fe, NM (505) 438-5300, for more information about this Order.
6. This Order supersedes any previous Orders prohibiting the same or similar acts in the same Described Area.



Shaun Sanchez  
Forest Supervisor  
Santa Fe National Forest

**File Code:** 1950, 5350

**Date:**

**Route To:**

**Subject:** Jemez Cave Closure Order # 03-10-03-23-02

**To:** File

This letter to the file will confirm my decision to recommend the proposed Order for Jemez Cave on the Santa Fe National Forest.

The purpose and need for the temporary closure order is to provide for cultural and natural resource protection while a long term, active management strategy for the area is developed. I find that the proposed action for the Jemez Cave Closure Order is covered under the National Environmental Policy Act, FSH 1909.15 Ch.31.12 (1), "Categories Established by the Chief; Categories for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are Not Required; Orders issued pursuant to 36 CFR Part 261-prohibitions to provide resource protection or to protect public health and safety". This action does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and therefore is categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA. A project case file has been prepared and is located at the Jemez Ranger District Office, Jemez Springs, New Mexico for the Santa Fe National Forest.

The proposed closure would occur on the Jemez Ranger District within the congressional boundaries of Sandoval County, New Mexico as displayed on Attachment A of the Jemez Cave Closure Order Needs and Assessment.

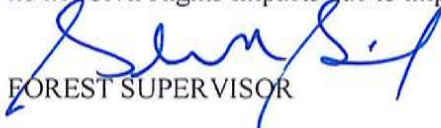
The proposed Order would prohibit the following acts on the area and trails shown on Exhibit A within the Santa Fe National Forest, consistent with Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 261.50 (a) and/or (b):

1. Entering, using or being in Jemez Cave, or the area extending 50 feet upslope from the roof of cave, extending 50 feet on either side of the mouth of the cave, extending down slope to New Mexico Highway 4 right-of-way, and including all access trails leading to the cave. The restricted area does not include the unimproved parking area immediately adjacent to the highway right-of-way.

This Order will be in effect from May 6th, 2023, until April 30th, 2025.

Copies of this Order will be available at the Supervisors and Jemez Ranger District offices, and the Forest website.

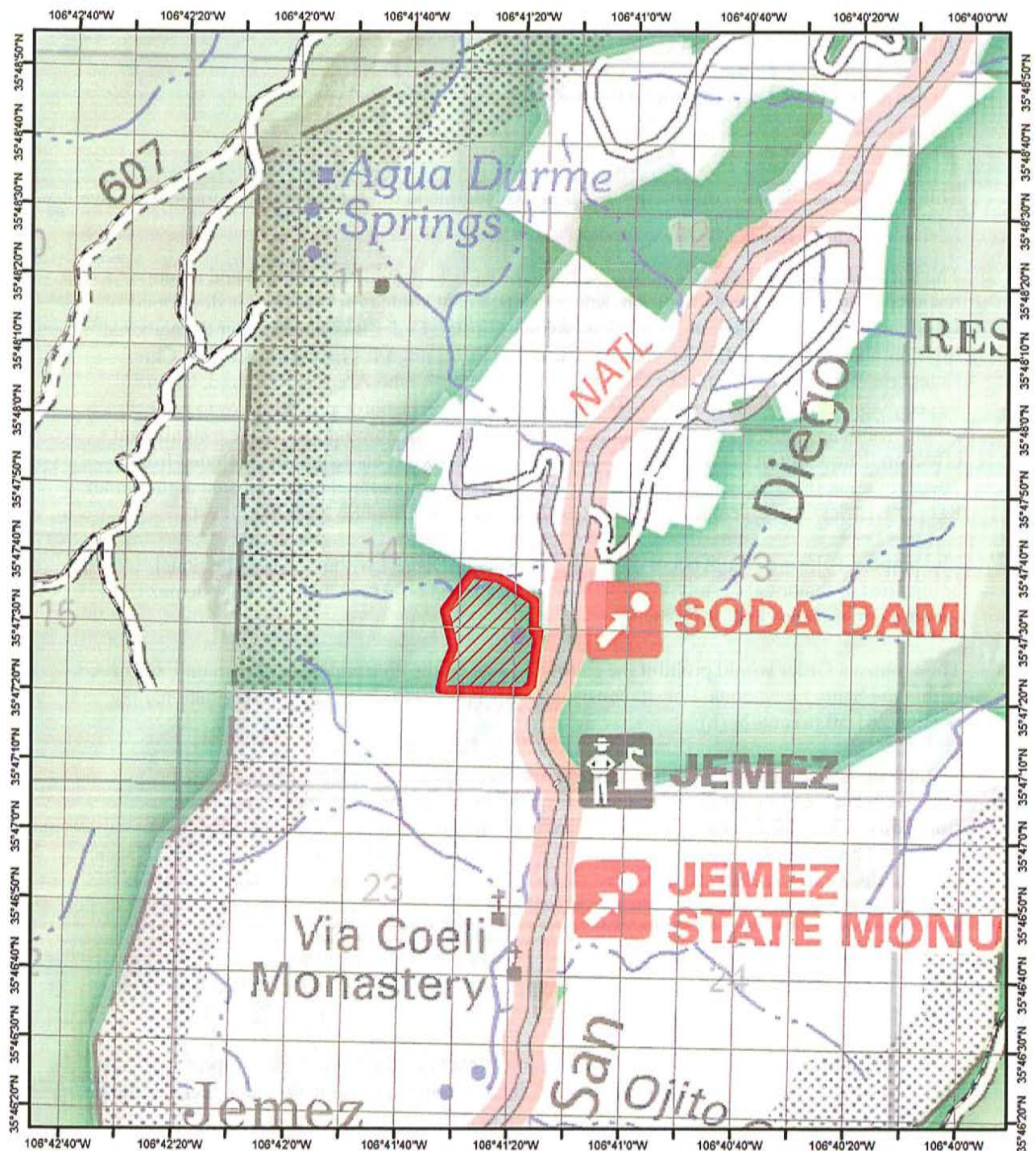
A Jemez Cave Closure Order Needs and Assessment contains the Civil Rights Impact Analysis (Attachment C of the assessment) was prepared for this project, documenting that there would be no net Civil Rights Impacts due to implementation of this order.

  
FOREST SUPERVISOR

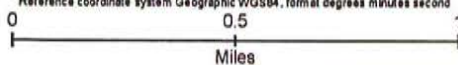




**Jemez Cave Closure**  
**Order Number 03-10-03-23-02, Exhibit A**  
**Santa Fe National Forest, Jemez Ranger District**



**Disclaimer:**  
The USDA Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were intended may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The USDA Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. This map is not a legal land line or ownership document. Public lands are subject to change and leasing, and may have access restrictions; check with local offices. Obtain permission before entering private land. Date: 4/27/2023. T:\SantaFe\Program\3300\ClosureOrder\CY23: SFNF SOGIS jwl  
Reference coordinate system Geographic WGS84, format degrees minutes second



**Legend**





Order Number: 03-10-03-23-02

**JEMEZ CAVE CLOSURE ORDER**  
**Assessment of Need (Justification), CRIA and Enforcement Plan**

**Background**

Increasing popularity and demand for sport overhead rock climbing in Jemez Cave is in direct conflict with the preservation and protection of Jemez Cave. The cave is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and meets the definition of a site in the R-3 Forest Service handbook. It is relevant as an archeological resource in the implementing regulations of the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). Jemez Cave is located in association to Soda Dam, adjacent to New Mexico State Highway 4, in Section 14, T18N, R2E, see Exhibit A.

For decades, rock climbers have used the cave for specialized technical, overhead climbing. Individual climbing routes have been added over time, each route a challenge to individual skill levels. The cumulative impact was that in March of 2010 there were 40 attached bolts and quick draws. Similarly, in February of 2012 approximately 50-60 bolts were permanently attached to the roof and walls. In June 2012 the climbing community removed all draws and chains from the cave. Since that time occasional bolts are still found and removed. There are also reports from time to time of persons hiking to the cave or squatting in the cave.

Based on inspections by Forest Service archaeologists on 1/20/2012 and 2/10/2012, rock climbers appear to be chipping into the sooted roof of the cave to create small hand and toe holds; also, their shoes smear some of the soot each time they climb in the cave and chalk marks are left on the sooted roof. A later report conducted in 2014 by Park Service archaeologists concluded that despite previous excavations, looting, vandalism, and willful damage by rock climbers, Jemez Cave is still an important cultural resource site and should remain closed to the public and to recreational activities. Recreationists also hike the short, steep, and badly eroding trail up to Jemez Cave to either participate in climbing or other recreational activities.

Jemez Cave has been closed to public access since July 2012. The Closure Order was last reissued in May 2019. Each previous Order expired after two years.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Order is to provide natural and cultural resource protection for the Jemez Cave and protect public safety and welfare until current damages to natural and cultural resources can be assessed, and a long-term management strategy developed.

Order Number: 03-10-03-23-02

**ATTACHMENT C**  
**CIVIL RIGHTS IMPACTS ANALYSIS**  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Forest Service  
Southwestern Region  
**JEMEZ CAVE CLOSURE ORDER**  
Santa Fe National Forest  
Sandoval County, New Mexico

**Purpose**

The purpose for developing a civil rights impact analysis is to provide the Forest Service decision maker information concerning potential civil rights impacts of the proposed action. Civil rights impacts are those which could affect the agency's ability to ensure equal opportunity in employment and in delivery of programs and services.

**Favorable Impacts**

The proposed action would:

- 1) Provide reasonable opportunities for persons to access National Forest System lands to engage in hiking and other recreational activities. The extent of the temporary closure order would apply only to the Jemez Cave and area immediately surrounding it, as shown in Attachment A. All other climbing areas within the Jemez Ranger District would be available to the public.
- 2) Provide protection of natural and cultural resources.

**Unfavorable Impacts**

The proposed action would prohibit general public entry and use of Jemez Cave, as shown in attachment A, for 2 years, or until rescinded.

**Mitigation Measures**

The Forest Service will continue to allow recreational use in the remainder of the district.

**Social Impacts**

The proposed action does not impose any unreasonable adverse impacts on the civil rights of any individuals. The overall benefits are reasonable, as compared to the unfavorable impacts. The action is not irreversible and will be subject to monitoring and evaluation in the future.

**Net Civil Rights Impact**

No net negative Civil Rights Impacts are foreseen, due to implementation of mitigation measures.

  
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Forest Supervisor

### Scope

Forest archeologists will reanalyze the cave to determine the extent of impact. Despite the previous extensive excavation work at Jemez Cave, it is likely intact subsurface deposits remain. The roof of the cave is heavily sooted, which is considered an archaeological feature created from past habitation/use of the cave. The soot has the potential to provide information that could be used to date the site further and could be used in ethnobotanical analysis.

Reanalysis of the cave may result in the documentation of additional modification of the cave walls and ceiling resulting from past habitation and use. Further work is needed to evaluate fully how rock climbing is affecting the qualities that make this site eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. A long-term management strategy for Jemez Cave will be prepared following evaluation and determination of the cave for additional archaeological/historic significance.

### NEPA Compliance

The proposed action for the Jemez Cave Closure is covered under FSH 1909.15 Ch.31.12 (1), "Categories Established by the Chief; Categories for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are Not Required; Orders issued pursuant to **36 CFR Part 261**-prohibitions to provide resource protection or to protect public health and safety". This action does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and therefore is categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA. This documentation will serve as sufficient basis for the action to be taken, and for the record.

### Notice and Implementation

The Jemez District Ranger will coordinate the implementation of the order with the appropriate resource staff personnel, climbing community and Jemez Pueblo tribal members in accordance with Attachment B, Enforcement Plan. When the order is in effect, the order and map, along with additional regulatory signs will be posted around the mouth of the cave and along the access trail and parking area. Interested or potentially affected persons may seek information about the order by reading signs posted at the Jemez Cave, or by visiting the Santa Fe National Forest Supervisors Office, Jemez Ranger District Office, or the Forests' web site. A news release will be prepared for dissemination to the media and public prior to implantation of the closure, explaining the rationale for the closure.



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**ATTACHMENT B  
JEMEZ CAVE CLOSURE ORDER  
Enforcement Plan**

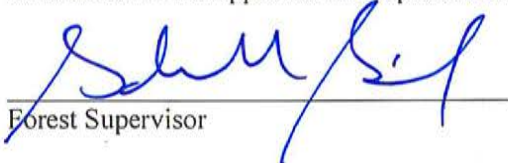
The parking area adjacent to New Mexico Highway 4 and user-created access trails leading to the Jemez Cave will be posted "Closed to Public Entry" to reasonably notify the public of the temporary closure. The Closure Order and Map will be posted at the parking area on NM Highway 4. The signs will be maintained on a regular basis. Copies of the Jemez Cave Closure Order and Map will be available at the Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor's Office, Jemez Ranger District Office, and the Forest web site.

Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs), as well as the Forest Protection Officers (FPOs), will enforce the temporary closure. District employees will monitor vehicles parked in the vicinity of the cave and report back to the responsible district staff. Instances where individuals are actively violating the closure will be reported to the appropriate LEO and district employees. District office staff will notify the appropriate personnel to respond to the incident. A news release will be prepared for dissemination to the media and public prior to implantation of the closure order.

The Forest Service will coordinate with the Jemez Pueblo and Sandoval County Sheriff's Office to facilitate support and cooperation with enforcement efforts.

Action	Responsible Official
Prepare proposed order	Jeremy Golston, Acting Staff Officer
Review proposed order	Ross Gamboa, Patrol Captain
Approve proposed order	Shaun Sanchez, Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest
Prepare news release for local media describing the order and management objectives/post to website/notify COIDC/copy to each receptionist/frontliners	Pamela Baltimore, Acting Public Affairs Officer, Santa Fe National Forest
Notices will be used at trailheads and access points advising of the closure for implementation.	Appropriate Staff Forest Protection Officers Law Enforcement Officers Santa Fe National Forest Employees and Volunteers

Enforcement Plan approved for implementation:

  
Forest Supervisor