

San Juan National Forest FY24 Land Adjustment Projects

This document describes land adjustment (land acquisition, exchange, and disposal) projects that the San Juan National Forest is considering working on in Fiscal Year (FY) 24. An overview map (Map 1 – Overview) shows the location of all of these properties, and there are individual maps of most, but not all, of these properties. If a photo is available, one photo of each property is included in this document. The projects are listed below geographically starting from the west side of the San Juan National Forest and moving east across the Forest.

Dunton Meadows Purchase: This is a FY24 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) proposal. The LWCF provides funding to federal, state, and local governments to purchase land for the benefit of all Americans. LWCF proposals are prioritized nationally and submitted to Congress for funding consideration annually. Letters of support were requested when this project was proposed. The appraisal of this property is in progress. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is a 165-acre private inholding surrounded by National Forest System (NFS) land in the headwaters of the Dolores River watershed (Map 2 – Dunton Meadows). Acquisition of this property would secure legal public access on National Forest System Roads (NFSR) 535 and 471 which are used to access a variety of recreational opportunities including scenic driving, motorized trails, biking, hiking, camping, snowmobiling, hunting and fishing. The property contains Canada Lynx habitat, wetlands, the perennial Meadow Creek, at least two springs, and drains into important Colorado River cutthroat trout habitat. The property is within 200 feet of the Lizard Head Wilderness Area. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

Western Rivers Conservancy has purchased 160 acres of the property with the intent of conveying the property to the US Forest Service. The remaining 5 acres of the property has improvements on it and will remain in private ownership. This property was proposed for FY24 Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) funding. We received letters of support for this LWCF proposal from Dolores County Board of County Commissioners, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Dolores River Anglers with Colorado Trout Unlimited, San Juan Sledders snowmobiling club, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, San Juan Citizens Alliance, and Senators Michael Bennett and John Hickenlooper.

The appraisal of this property is currently in progress.



Lizard Head Mesa Purchase: This is a new acquisition opportunity and a potential FY26 LWCF proposal. Letters of support will be requested when the proposal is prepared. The landowner also owns the Calico property (see below). The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is a 313-acre private inholding surrounded by NFS land in the headwaters of the Dolores River watershed. This property does not have any NFS roads going through it but otherwise has similar characteristics to the Dunton Meadows property. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Conservation Fund is in initial negotiations with the landowner with the goal of submitting this property for FY26 LWCF consideration.



Calico Purchase: This is a new acquisition opportunity, with the same landowner as Lizard Head Mesa. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is an 80-acre private inholding surrounded by NFS land in the headwaters of the Dolores River watershed. Acquisition of this property would secure legal public access to the highly used Calico Trail. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Conservation Fund is in initial negotiations with the landowner regarding conveying this property.

A field visit to this property has not occurred so photos are not currently available.

Parrott Creek Purchase: This is a FY25 LWCF proposal. Letters of support were requested when the project was proposed. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is 673-acres of private property adjacent to NFS land at the southern end of La Plata Canyon (Map 3 – Parrott Creek). Acquisition of this property would connect non-contiguous parcels of NFS land and provide a

new low elevation access point across less steep terrain to the large block of NFS land to the west. Parrott Creek and several ponds are on the property. The property contains large meadows and is a winter concentration area for elk. The property contains a portion of the historic Parrott City townsite which extends on to the adjacent NFS land. Acquisition of this property will preserve the integrity of the wildlife migration corridor through the area by helping to remove future threats to ecological connectivity in an area where land subdivision and home building is not uncommon. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Trust for Public Land is working on securing an option to purchase the property and convey it to the US Forest Service. This property was proposed for FY25 Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) funding. We received letters of support for this LWCF proposal from La Plata County Board of County Commissioners, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Five Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, La Plata County Historical Society, La Plata Open Space Conservancy, San Juan Citizens Alliance, and Senators Michael Bennett and John Hickenlooper.

We are currently waiting to see if LWCF funds will be allocated for this project.



[671 Acres of Land for Sale in Hesperus, Colorado - LandSearch](#)

Jumbo Land Exchange: This is a new land exchange opportunity. The level of NEPA documentation has not yet been determined.

This project involves the acquisition of two parcels of private patented mining claims totaling 17 acres surrounded by NFS land at the southern end of La Plata Canyon in exchange for a 2-acre sliver of NFS land between private property and La Plata Canyon Road (Map 4 – Jumbo Land Exchange). Acquisition of these properties would consolidate ownership and eliminate any future requests from the landowner to construct a road or install utilities to the properties. Access to the properties over NFS land is on very steep topography and any road construction would likely be very impacting. Due to the size and configuration of the NFS parcel, it is not very usable by the public. The conveyance of this parcel would be subject to an easement for La Plata Canyon Road. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently beginning the process to conduct the land exchange.



Laura A Millsite Donation: This is a new acquisition opportunity. The landowner recently offered to donate this property to the USDA Forest Service. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is a 5-acre patented mining claim in the northern end of La Plata Canyon (Map 5 – Laura A Millisite). Acquisition of this property would consolidate ownership and potentially secure legal public access on a portion of the La Plata Canyon Road that crosses the property. A small perennial stream also crosses the property. Very large spruce trees are present on the property. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently beginning the process to acquire this property.



Rhyolite Lode Small Tracts Act Conveyance: This is a new conveyance opportunity for an isolated, difficult to manage, small parcel of NFS land containing unauthorized improvements. The disposal is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

This is a 9-acre parcel of NFS land completely surrounded by private land with no easement held by the USDA Forest Service across the private lands (Map 6 – Rhyolite Lode STA). Several unauthorized improvements exist

on the parcel, including a road, cabin, zipline, and trailer. Conveyance of this property would eliminate an isolated piece of NFS land that is difficult to manage and would eliminate the need for the USDA Forest Service to remove or authorize the improvements on this parcel. There are cabins on several of the adjacent private properties. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently working with the surrounding landowners to determine if conveyance of this parcel is feasible.

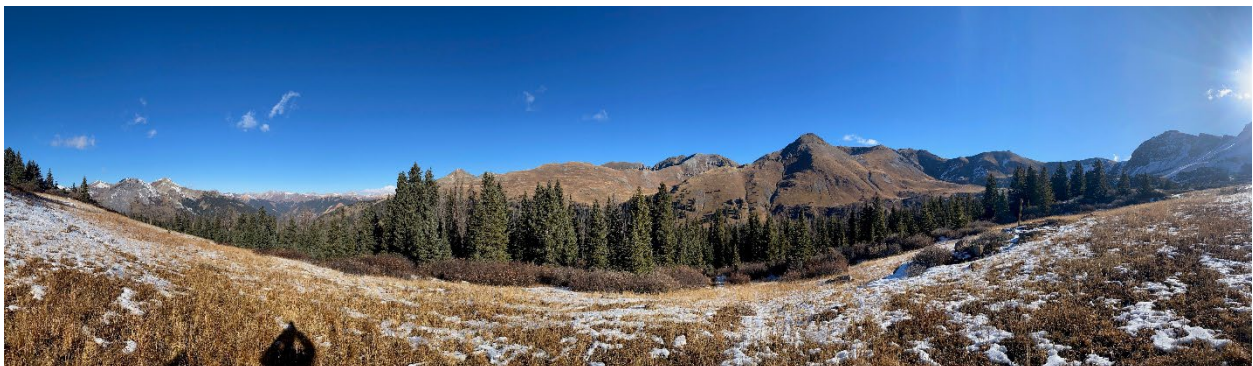


Great Western Lode Purchase: This is a new acquisition opportunity. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcels are three patented mining claims totaling 31 acres (Map 7 – Great Western Lode). Two of the properties are surrounded by NFS land within the Weminuche Wilderness. The third parcel is surrounded by both NFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. After acquisition, the Forest Service would administer the portions of these properties surrounded by NFS land and the portion of the one property surrounded by BLM land would be administered by the BLM. Acquisition of these properties would secure the integrity of the Weminuche Wilderness by preventing development on the private parcels. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Wilderness Land Trust has purchased these properties with the intent of conveying the properties to the USDA Forest Service.

We are currently beginning the process to acquire these properties.



Needle Creek Purchase: This is a new potential acquisition opportunity. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

These parcels are three patented mining claims totaling 31 acres (Map 8 – Needle Creek Parcels). These properties are surrounded by NFS land within the Weminuche Wilderness. The popular Needle Creek Trail going to Chicago Basin crosses one of these claims. Acquisition of these properties would secure legal access on the Needle Creek Trail and secure the integrity of the Weminuche Wilderness by preventing development on the private parcels. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Wilderness Land Trust is partnering with the Forest Service to obtain an appraisal of the property.

A field visit to these properties has not occurred so photos are not currently available.

First Fork Land Exchange: The level of NEPA has not been determined yet.

This project involves the acquisition of two parcels of private land totaling approximately 0.78 acre in exchange for one parcel of NFS land of approximately 0.89 acre (Map 9 – Proposed First Fork Land Exchange). The parcels that would be acquired include a portion of the First Fork Road (National Forest System Road 622) that the Forest Service does not have an easement on. This road accesses a large area of NFS land within the Piedra River watershed and numerous nonmotorized and motorized trails. The other parcel consists of river frontage and riparian area along the Piedra River. In exchange, the Forest Service would convey one parcel which is contiguous with the private property and contains the driveway and another access road to the adjacent private property. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently working on the feasibility analysis for this proposal.



V Rock Purchase: The Forest Service closed on this property in March 2024. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is a 160-acre private inholding surrounded by NFS land off of the Buckles Lake Road (Map 10 – V Rock Purchase). This property provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife species, including resident and migratory birds, predators, ungulates and sensitive species. An important hunting and recreation area, the lands provide summer, winter, and winter concentration habitat for elk, and a deer and elk migration corridor

encompasses the parcel. Wildlife and recreation would be negatively impacted if this parcel was developed. The land sits on the shoulder of the V Rock Mountain and provides outstanding views to the north and west. There is a road and power line to this property, making it ideal for development. Year-round use of this property has potential to adversely impact wildlife movement and winter use. This property is not within the Brunot Agreement Area.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has an option to purchase the property and convey it to the USDA Forest Service. This property was proposed for FY23 LWCF funding. We received letters of support for this LWCF proposal from Archuleta County Board of County Commissioners, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, National Wild Turkey Federation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2 Watersheds 3 Rivers 2 States Cohesive Strategy Partnership, San Juan Citizens Alliance, and Senators Michael Bennett and John Hickenlooper.

The Forest Service closed on this property in March 2024.



Valle Seco 2019 Land Exchange: This project involves the acquisition of one 880-acre parcel of private land surrounded by NFS land in exchange for approximately 379 acres of NFS lands in nine parcels. This project is not within the Brunot Agreement Area. A decision was signed on June 29, 2022 approving the land exchange.

This project has not been implemented and is currently in litigation.

Additional land acquisition, exchange, or conveyance opportunities will likely come up throughout FY24.