



# SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST

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## **San Juan National Forest Finalizes Recreation Site Analysis**

**DURANGO** – The San Juan National Forest has finalized its Recreation Site Analysis (RSA) and Plan of Work for management of the Forest’s 129 developed recreation sites, which range from trailhead parking areas, with very limited development, to full-service recreation facilities with intensive developments, such as drinking water, flush toilets, electrical, and sewage treatment facilities.

“Our analysis and plan of work represent the culmination of nearly two years of work incorporating public feedback to best balance our projected staffing and funding levels with the interests of our constituents,” said Brian White, San Juan National Forest Recreation Staff.

Across the 1.8-million acre National Forest, the RSA Plan of Work calls for the management of 51 sites to remain as is, 14 sites to receive improvements, and 19 sites to be closed/removed. If all proposed changes were to be made, the anticipated cost savings for operations and maintenance would be about \$35,000 per year Forest-wide, or a reduction of about 15% from current costs.

Highlights of the RSA Final Plan of Work:

- The toilets along the U.S. Highway 550 corridor on Molas and Coal Bank passes are expected to remain open under site-maintenance partnership(s) with local entities. However, if viable maintenance partnerships cannot be developed and implemented prior to January 1, 2018, the toilets would be removed.
- The free-use camping area at Little Molas Lake will remain free of charge, but its toilet will be removed. Campers will be able to use the nearby toilet at the Colorado Trailhead, which would remain open until mid-September as it has in the past. This toilet is about 600 feet in walking distance from the free-use camping area. (For reference, a typical design layout for a fully developed and hosted fee campground would include a toilet within 300’ walking distance from paid campsites, whereas these are free sites.)
- No significant changes will be made to the operating seasons for Little Molas Lake and Andrews Lake recreation sites. The spur road leading from U.S. Highway 550 to Little Molas Lake and the Colorado Trailhead will remain open to motor vehicles from May 1 -

Nov 30. The spur road leading to Andrews Lake is will remain open from June 1 – Nov 30. Toilets at these sites are typically opened in May after snowmelt, and are locked in mid-September as the summer season ends.

- A floodplain delineation and evaluation will be conducted in 2017 within the South Mineral drainage to determine if any of the five delineated free-camping areas are within the identified floodplain. Findings of that evaluation will help inform which specific actions should be taken at these popular summer camp areas.
- The toilet at the Junction Creek trailhead (Colorado Trail) will remain open in the near-term under continued care of long-term volunteers. If the volunteer effort ceases, the site would be added to the partnership effort described above. If the partnership model were to prove unviable, the toilet would be removed.
- The Lower Hermosa Campground will become a concession-operated fee campground with modestly improved services served by an on-site campground host.

The goal for the RSA is to identify a reasonable array of recreation sites that can be managed to high standards and within budget without compromising the quality of services, public safety, or creating undue impacts to natural resources.

The Final RSA and Plan of Work, and associated documents, data tables and maps are available online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/sanjuan/RSA>.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis will begin soon to analyze substantial actions to be implemented at identified recreation sites. The public will have the opportunity to comment on how significant changes planned for individual developed recreation sites will be undertaken.

For more information, please contact Brian White, San Juan National Forest Recreation Program Manager, at 970 385-1246 or [brianwhite@fs.fed.us](mailto:brianwhite@fs.fed.us).

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*The San Juan National Forest manages 1.8 million acres of federal land in southwestern Colorado within Archuleta, Conejos, Dolores, Hinsdale, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma, Rio Grande and San Juan counties.*