

Tres Piedras Ranger District

Petaca

Suggested Evaluation Determination: This area does not have wilderness character.

If a wilderness characteristic is not addressed in the following rationale, that characteristic is not determined to be found in the evaluated area, except for size. If size is not addressed, the area is determined to be 5,000 acres or more per the [wilderness criteria](#). The five wilderness characteristics are: (1) apparent naturalness; (2) opportunities for solitude or unconfined recreation; (3) size; (4) ecological, scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values; and (5) manageability of wilderness characteristics.

Apparent Naturalness

The Petaca evaluated area lacks apparent naturalness, because of visible impacts from past thinning projects (Tio Gordito) and evidence of historic mining activities for mica and gold. There are numerous range and wildlife improvements, such as exclosures, spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, and corrals scattered throughout this area. Debris from several abandoned range and wildlife improvements, such as culverts, trick tanks, and spring developments detract from the apparent naturalness of this area as well.

Solitude or Unconfined Recreation

This area offers limited opportunities for solitude or unconfined recreation because this area is already highly utilized by the communities of Antonio, Taos, and Petaca, which are some of the more populated communities in the area. Some of these uses consist of fuelwood gathering, driving for pleasure, dispersed camping (including car camping), hunting, and piñon picking. The area around Lucero Lakes does offer some opportunities for solitude, due to limited access and lower levels of use, compared to the rest of the area.

Outstanding Values

The rare plant small-head goldenweed exists in this area.

Manageability

It would be difficult to manage the Petaca evaluated area for wilderness character, because of current multi-year and multi-agency approved restoration projects that are being planned and funded with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Other governmental and non-governmental organizations are also participating in these projects. Additionally, motorized access and use of mechanized equipment are needed to maintain range and wildlife improvements throughout this area. Petaca is also within the wildland urban interface (WUI) for the communities of Tres Piedras and Petaca, where all fire suppression efforts would be the priority to protect life and property.

Other considerations that may affect the manageability of wilderness character in this area include long established traditional and cultural uses that consist of fuelwood gathering, hunting, and piñon picking from the local communities of Petaca, Antonio, Taos, and Tres Piedras.