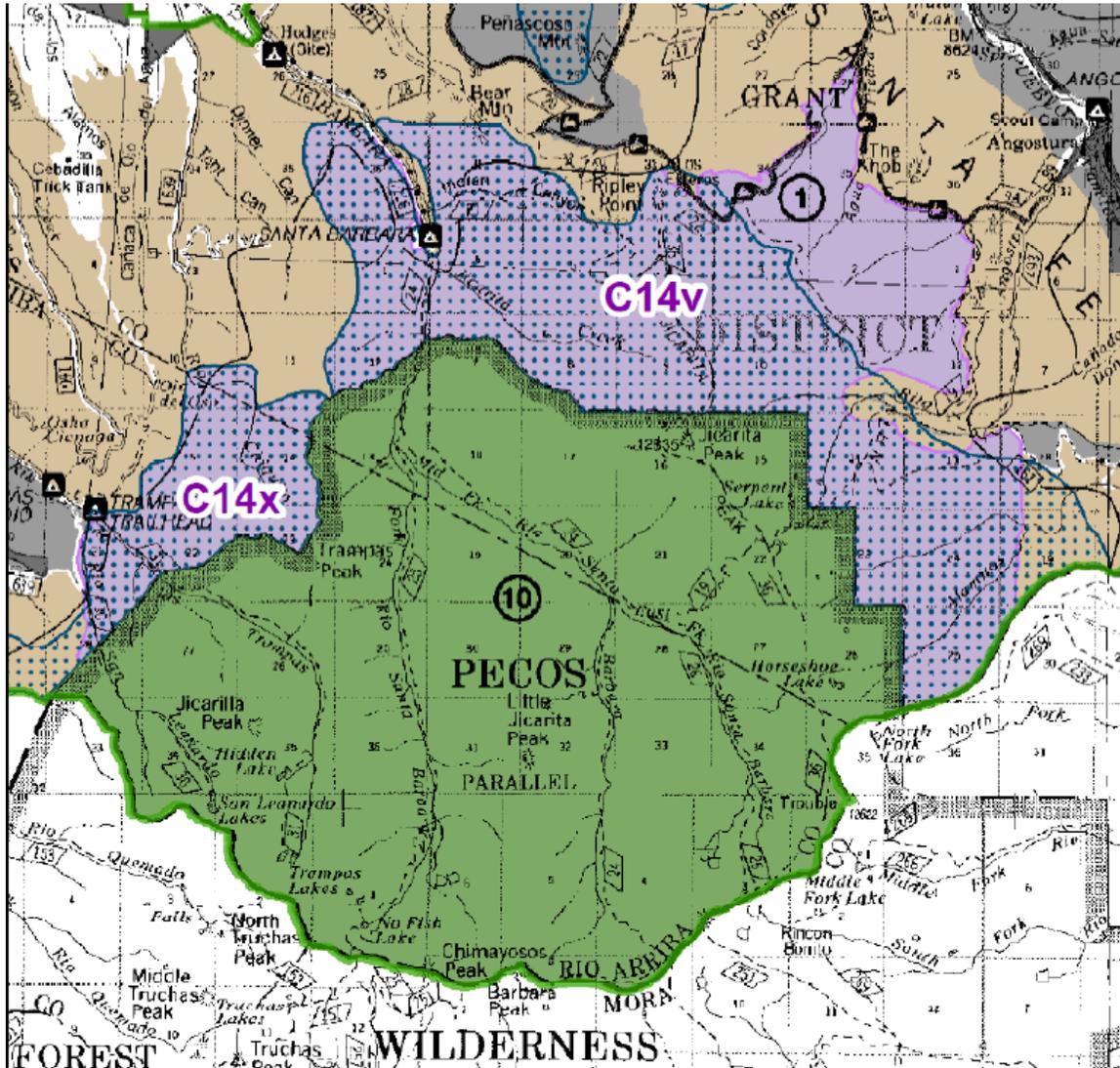


## Camino Real Ranger District

### Embudo Creek Watershed

**Suggested Evaluation Determination:** Most of this area does not have wilderness character; however one portion (labeled C14v and C14x see below) does 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

Most of the Embudo Watershed evaluated area lacks apparent naturalness, because of various uses, constructed features, and impacts from past management activities. Many of these include visible impacts from past thinning projects, visually apparent old logging roads, current and historic dumpsites, and current partnership blocks. Numerous range and wildlife improvements, such as exclosures, fish barriers, spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, instream structures, and corrals, are scattered throughout this area. Hodges Campground, Trampas Campground and Trailhead, Santa Barbara Campground and Trailhead, Agua Piedra Campground, Angostura Trailhead, Alamitos Trailhead, and La Junta Campgrounds are constructed recreation sites within the evaluated area consisting of hardened campsites, fishing piers, parking areas, and day use areas. Also, historic acequias (irrigation ditches), with valid existing water rights, originate on the Carson National Forest and feed private inholdings. A permitted irrigated hay field that is harvested annually is in the area as well.

C14v and C14x are determined to have apparent naturalness, since they are all or partially within an inventoried roadless area<sup>1</sup> that is adjacent to Pecos Wilderness. These areas include open meadows that are broken by high peaks and long vistas. Due to the steepness and remoteness of this area, there are few developments, improvements, or other evidence of human activity found in the area.

### Solitude or Unconfined Recreation

Most of the area offers limited opportunities for solitude or unconfined recreation, it is already highly used for recreation by the communities of Peñasco, Tres Ritos, Chamisal, Ojo Sarco, and El Valle. This area also serves as a gateway into the north end of the Pecos Wilderness for local residents and those visiting from outside the area. This is especially true for the developed recreation areas that include Hodges Campground, Trampas Campgrounds and Trailhead, Santa Barbara Campground and Trailhead, Agua Piedra Campground, Angostura Trailhead, and Alamitos Trailhead. Some other uses that occur in the area include fuelwood gathering, piñon picking, latilla cutting, various motorized and non-motorized recreational pursuits, hunting, fishing, and autumn aspen viewing. Given the high levels of use this area receives from access roads to campgrounds and trailheads, as well as ATVs and other motorized vehicles, most of the Embudo Creek evaluated area does not offer solitude or unconfined recreation.

C14v and C14x are determined to have solitude and unconfined recreation opportunities because they are either adjacent to the existing Pecos Wilderness or are within an existing inventoried roadless area. In turn, these areas have minimal improvements.

### Size

C14x is less than 5,000 acres, but is adjacent to a designated wilderness area. If this area were to be managed in conjunction with the existing Pecos Wilderness, it would be over 5,000 acres as a whole, which would then meet the size requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of an inventoried roadless area for the 2001 Roadless Rule included: undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that met the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act and that were inventoried during the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) process.

### Outstanding Values

Outstanding values within this evaluated area include Rio Grande cutthroat trout streams, Outstanding National Resource Waters, and high alpine peaks.

### Manageability

It would be difficult to manage most of the Embudo Creek Watershed evaluated area to preserve wilderness character, because of a current multi-year and multi-agency restoration project (Rio Trampas) that is being planned and funded with Forest Guild, Bureau of Land Management, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. This project involves thinning, prescribe burning, and fuelwood partnership blocks.

Motorized access and use of mechanized equipment are required for the maintenance of range and wildlife improvements, such as for spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, fish barriers, and corrals, in the area. This area is also popular for hunting, vehicle camping, and fishing using ATVs for access. There are also several motorized trails and mountain bike trails found throughout this evaluated area, including around C14v and C14x. These established uses would create manageability issues, since they have a long established history, which could pose conflicts with managing wilderness character and would promote vehicle encroachment throughout the area.

Other considerations that may affect the manageability of wilderness character include long established traditional and cultural uses that consist of hunting, fishing, latilla cutting, and fuelwood gathering from Peñasco, Ojo Sarco, El Valle, and Chamisal. Also, a permittee is allowed through his permit to manage his allotment with an ATV.

Manageability of wilderness character for C14v and C14x may be a concern, due to the potential for motor vehicle encroachment. To some extent, this use is presently occurring.