

Canjilon and El Rito Ranger Districts

El Rito-Lobato

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 El Rito-Lobato evaluated area lacks apparent naturalness, because of visible impacts left from past thinning projects, a powerline and utility corridor that is highly visible, and closed roads that are visually apparent throughout the area. This area also has several historic and presently active flagstone and sand quarries. These quarries have left visible scars on the landscape and show evidence of human activity, especially the active quarries. In addition, numerous range and wildlife improvements, such as guzzlers, spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, pit tank, and corrals are scattered throughout this area. El Rito Campground, a constructed recreation site consisting of campsites, parking areas, and day use areas, detract from apparent naturalness. El Rito-Lobato is also highly popular for rock climbing. Bolted routes and motor vehicle access are found at these areas, in addition to dispersed camping around popular rock climbing sites.

In addition, inventoried roadless areas¹ within the El-Rito-Lobato do not offer apparent naturalness. Their settings are more urban than pristine, due to the housing areas that are visible from both inventories roadless areas.

Given the developments, activities, and infrastructure found throughout the El Rito-Lobato evaluated area, it does not offer an apparent natural setting.

Solitude or Unconfined Recreation

This area provides little opportunity for solitude or unconfined recreation, because of the high levels of use and various activities that already occur in the area. For example, this area is heavily used by residents of El Rito, Aqua Caliente, Abiquiu, Española, and Santa Fe, in addition to the non-local visitation for the recreation opportunities in the area. This is especially true around the highly used and developed El Rito campground and the rock climbing areas.

Outstanding Values

El Rito-Lobato has outstanding geologic features comprising of sand towers and cryptograms. It also includes a nationally designated historic trail.

¹ 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.

Manageability

It would be difficult to manage most of the El Rito-Lobato evaluated area to preserve wilderness character, because of current multi-year and multi-agency approved restoration projects, needed and established motorized access and use of mechanized equipment for the maintenance of range and wildlife improvements, such as guzzlers, spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, and corrals scattered throughout this area.

Other considerations that may affect the manageability of wilderness character in this area include long established traditional and cultural uses, including fuelwood gathering and piñon harvesting.