

Canjilon and El Rito Ranger Districts

Comanche East Canyon

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 Comanche East Canyon evaluated area lacks apparent naturalness, because of visible impacts from past thinning projects, past sagebrush treatments, evidence of historic mining activities, and closed roads that are still visually apparent across the landscape. Infrastructure associated with range improvements, such as spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, and corrals are also scattered throughout this area. Additionally, riparian improvement projects, such as enclosures and bank stability structures, have been recently implemented in this area.

Impacting the natural setting is a large well and pipeline that runs for several miles across National Forest System lands and private lands. Also visual impacts from ungulate (including wildlife, domestic animals, and wild horses) grazing throughout this area have altered the natural appearance of the landscape.

Solitude or Unconfined Recreation

This area offers limited opportunities for solitude or unconfined recreation, since it is heavily used by the residents of Vallecitos, Petaca, and Servilleta Plaza. Some of this high use consists of traditional fuelwood gathering, driving for pleasure, dispersed camping (including car camping), and mica mining.

Manageability

It would be difficult to manage the Comanche East evaluated area to preserve wilderness character, because of current multi-year and multi-agency approved restoration projects that are being planned and implemented in conjunction with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Established and needed motorized access and use of mechanized equipment for the maintenance of range improvements, riparian improvements, the water well, and the pipeline occur throughout the area. This area also within the wildland urban interface (WUI) of the communities of Petaca, Servilleta Plaza, and Vallecitos, where fire suppression efforts would be the priority to protect life and property.

Other considerations that may affect the manageability of wilderness character in this evaluated area include long established traditional and cultural uses that consist of fuelwood gathering. Many Petaca, Servilleta Plaza, and Vallecitos residents rely on fuelwood from the forest to heat their homes and cook with.