

Canjilon and El Rito Ranger Districts

Alamosa

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 Alamosa evaluated area does not offer apparent naturalness setting, because of visual impacts from thinning projects, visibility of a powerline that traverses the area, and a water tower. Numerous range improvements, such as spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, and corrals are scattered throughout this area. A very large painted letter “E” is visible and is currently maintained by the students of El Rito, a tradition that has spanned many generations. Alamosa is a popular rock climbing destination. Bolted routes and motor vehicle access are found in this evaluated area, in addition to dispersed camping around popular rock climbing sites. Also visual impacts from ungulate (including wildlife, domestic animals, and wild horses) grazing throughout this area have altered its natural appearance.

Solitude or Unconfined Recreation

This area provides little opportunity for solitude or unconfined recreation, because of the high levels of use and various activities (especially from around El Rito) that already occur in the area. Some of this high use consists of fuelwood gathering, driving for pleasure, and dispersed camping (including car camping).

Manageability

It would be difficult to manage the Alamosa evaluated area to preserve wilderness character, because of current multi-year and multi-agency approved restoration projects, historically established motorized access and use of mechanized equipment for the maintenance of range improvements, such as spring developments, trick tanks, stock tanks, and corrals scattered throughout this area. In addition, private land inholdings require motorized access, as well as the community water tower. This evaluated area is also within the wildland urban interface (WUI) for the village of El Rito, 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. Some El Rito residents rely on fuelwood from the forest to heat their homes and cook with.