

# 1 Chapter 1. Introduction

## 2 Background

3 The land and resource management plan (Plan) is the principal document that guides forest  
4 managers' decisions about management of the land and resources. Forest plans are required by the  
5 National Forest Management Act of 1976. The current Cibola National Forest Plan was originally  
6 approved in 1985. Since then, the Plan has been amended 14 times to adjust for situations in specific  
7 projects or to reflect changes in social, economic, or ecological conditions. The 1985 Plan was  
8 written following the guidance in the 1982 forest planning regulations and the Cibola is now in the  
9 process of revising the 1985 plan using the provisions of the 2012 planning rule as outlined in 36  
10 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 219, April 2012. This preliminary draft Plan addresses the  
11 Cibola's four mountain districts; the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle, and McClellan Creek  
12 National Grasslands are addressed separately in the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle, and  
13 McClellan Creek National Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan, which was completed  
14 in 2012.

15 The 2012 planning rule differs from the previous planning rule by creating an adaptive framework  
16 that will allow the Forest Service to meet modern and future needs, taking into account new  
17 understanding of science, land management, and the all-lands context for managing resources. It  
18 focuses on outcomes, rather than outputs, and will help units identify their unique roles in the  
19 broader landscape and create land management plans to guide proactive contributions to ecological,  
20 social, and economic sustainability. The 2012 planning rule emphasizes collaboration, requires  
21 improved transparency, and strengthens the role of public involvement and dialogue throughout the  
22 planning process. It also requires the use of the best available scientific information to inform  
23 decisions.

24 The Cibola has embraced the requirement for collaboration and increased public involvement in the  
25 development of this preliminary draft Plan and has partnered with a variety of cooperating agencies  
26 (local, State, and Federal units of governments, including land grants and Tribes). These cooperating  
27 agencies have formed landscape teams, centered around the four mountain ranger districts of the  
28 Cibola. This approach has been instrumental in engaging with the broader public and the Cibola  
29 hopes this model will continue into the future as a final Plan is implemented.

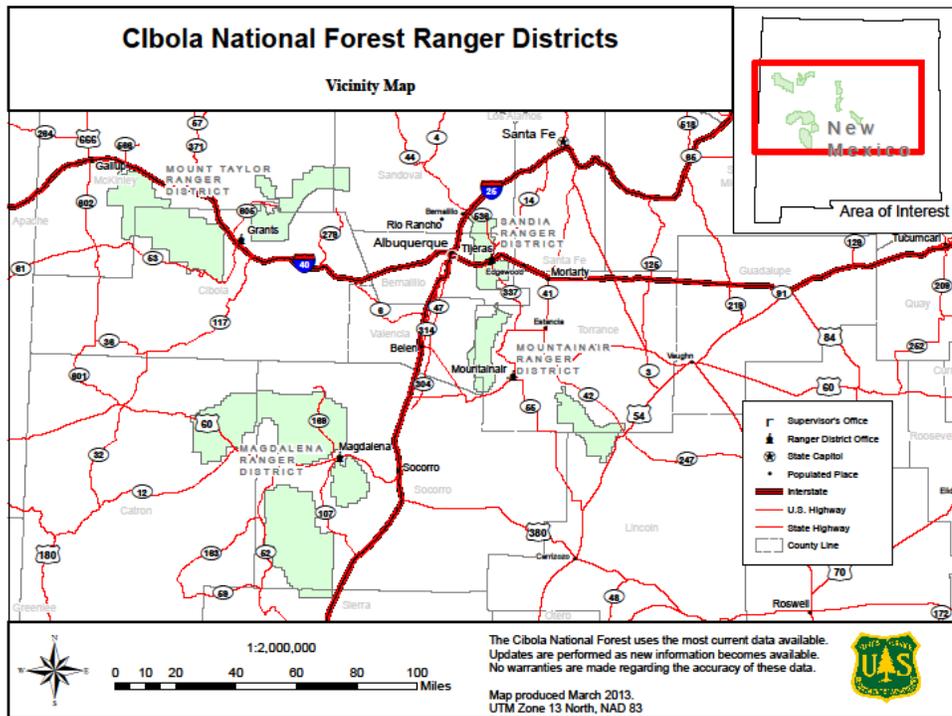
30 This document is a preliminary draft Plan and has been compiled by an interdisciplinary team (IDT)  
31 comprised of Cibola planning and resource specialists and cooperating agencies noted above. This  
32 preliminary draft Plan is shared with the public at this time as an extension of scoping efforts. As  
33 such, this document is not complete and the Cibola has made every effort to include placeholders to  
34 indicate where information or sections have yet to be completed. Feedback received on this  
35 preliminary draft Plan will be used as the Cibola revises the Plan as well analyzes alternatives in  
36 detail per the National Environmental Policy Act. No detailed analysis as occurred yet during the  
37 development of this preliminary draft Plan.

## 38 Plan Area

39 The Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands (Cibola) is one of five National Forests in New  
40 Mexico and includes four mountain districts as well as the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, McClellan Creek,  
41 and Black Kettle National Grasslands. This preliminary draft Plan addresses the National Forest  
42 System lands within the Cibola's mountain districts which are located within McKinley, Cibola,  
43 Sandoval, Bernalillo, Tarrant, Valencia, Lincoln, Socorro, Catron, and Sierra Counties. The

1 Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle, and McClellan Creek National Grasslands are addressed  
2 separately in the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle, and McClellan Creek National Grasslands  
3 Land and Resource Management Plan, which was completed in 2012.

4 This plan area of the Cibola covers more than 1.6 million acres, with elevations ranging from 5,300  
5 feet to over 11,300 feet (Figure 1). The four ranger districts addressed in the preliminary draft Plan  
6 are the Mt. Taylor, Magdalena, Mountainair and Sandia ranger districts (RDs). Within these four  
7 districts are ten separate mountain ranges (“sky islands”) scattered throughout central New Mexico.  
8 They are: Zuni, Mt Taylor, Magdalena, Bear, Datil, San Mateo, Manzano, Gallinas, Manzanita and  
9 Sandia mountains.



10  
11 **Figure 1 Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts**

## 12 Roles and Contributions of the Cibola National Forest 13 Mountain Ranger Districts

14 The Cibola provides unique resources and opportunities that attract a wide spectrum of forest  
15 users. These include but are not limited to ecosystems and wildlife habitat, recreation and scenery,  
16 livestock grazing, timber and forest products, energy development, heritage and paleontological  
17 resources, and scientific investigations. The distinctive history and characteristics of the Cibola and  
18 its surrounding communities frame the roles and contributions it provides to the local area, State,  
19 region, and nation, as expressed in the Vision and Niche statements below.

20 Vision statements represent the collective values and vision for future management of the Cibola,  
21 while Niche statements describe the unique characteristics and contributions of each ranger  
22 district. These vision and niche statements are used to guide the revised Forest Plan.

1 **Vision and Niche Statements**

2 **Cibola-wide Vision Statement**

3 We envision a Forest that is collaboratively managed to promote ecologic and  
4 socioeconomic health and sustainability and the continued historical and  
5 contemporary multiple uses including domestic water resources, grazing, hunting,  
6 recreation, and use of forest products.

7 **Mount Taylor Ranger District**

8 **Vision**

9 We envision a landscape that is sustained in health by and through a commitment to  
10 stewardship as our most basic and deeply held value.

11 We envision a landscape that is sustained collaboratively by a rich and growing  
12 partnership of individuals, groups, and institutions, recognizing the legal status of  
13 the USDA Forest Service as the government’s designated management agency  
14 representing the people of the United States, and appreciating its commitment to  
15 partnership as a guiding principle of informed functioning. We are mutually  
16 committed to finding common ground and using that commonality as a strong basis  
17 for continuing success.

18 We envision a landscape that is managed in a manner which respects and recognizes  
19 the historic, cultural, and spiritual significance of the area to multiple constituencies,  
20 both native and nonnative, and both protects and facilitates appropriate access to  
21 areas which are considered special places.

22 We envision a landscape that is managed for multiple sustainable uses; for  
23 vegetation, for wildlife, for valued water resources, for reduced risk of wildfire, for  
24 forest industries, for raw materials, for viable agriculture, for recreation and for  
25 tourism. We recognize that some specific portions of the landscape may merit  
26 special management area emphasis within a policy of multiple use, but we believe  
27 that the principle that potentiates and ensures multiple use of our forest is access.

28 We envision a landscape that is actively managed to develop and sustain healthy  
29 local economies. Fundamental to our local economies are ranching and other  
30 agriculture, forest products industries, extraction industries, and tourism. These  
31 activities entail stewardship and responsible planning, with proper attention to  
32 sustainable use and public health. Granted this approach, they are to be encouraged  
33 in forest management policy. Viable local economies are intimately linked to good  
34 forest management.

35 We envision a landscape that is enhanced by a proactive policy of educating and  
36 informing the public, one which involves outreach to local schools, clubs,  
37 community groups, and businesses. Education also plays an important role in  
38 tourism. Visitors to our forest should have access to user-friendly information, both  
39 centrally and on-site, that enriches their understanding and elevates their  
40 appreciation of our forest.

41 We envision a landscape that is managed with attention to dynamic action. Planning  
42 should be strategic, and action should be efficient and effective. Good customer

1 service is important and is fundamental to effective collaboration. We see  
2 collaboration as key to long-term success, and we plan to use our partnerships to  
3 create consensus and actively both pursue and acquire funding to further our vision  
4 of a healthily functioning forest.

5 **Niche: Four Seasons of Fun**

6 Mount Taylor Ranger District, located about an hour west of Albuquerque, consists of lands  
7 north of I-40 in the San Mateo Mountains (Mount Taylor Unit) and lands south of I-40 in the  
8 Zuni Mountains (Zuni Mountain Unit). The elevation ranges from 6,500 to 11,300 feet,  
9 providing diversity in vegetation and terrain. Both mountain ranges have been managed for  
10 multiple resources including recreation, grazing, mining, and logging. The District is rich in  
11 historic and paleontological history and is a gateway to other renowned sites like El Morro  
12 National Monument and Chaco Canyon National Historic Park.

13 The District is enriched by the boundaries shared with diverse and long-standing  
14 communities including, pueblos, ranches, and land grant communities. Home to a segment  
15 of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, several special-use endurance events, and  
16 world-class mountain biking, Mount Taylor attracts recreationists from throughout the  
17 country. Several winter recreation activities include snowshoeing, tubing, snowmobiling, and  
18 the annual tradition of cutting the family Christmas tree. The District offers a full spectrum  
19 of hunting opportunities including elk, mule deer, black bear, turkey, and cougar.

20 A mutual concern about high fire risks, the need to restore a culturally important landscape  
21 and watershed, and the desire to support local forest-based industries, led to the development  
22 of the Zuni Mountain Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. This program has  
23 received grants to restore the Zuni Mountain landscape to historic vegetation conditions using  
24 thinning and prescribed fire. Materials from the thinning will provide firewood for personal  
25 use and commercial contracts. When completed, the landscape will have fewer, but larger,  
26 trees; and more open areas to allow grass and herbs to recover. This will increase resilience to  
27 climate change and may increase water availability.

28 **Magdalena Ranger District**

29 **Vision**

30 We support the vision of continued historical multiple uses including grazing,  
31 hunting, recreation, mining, and forest products. We also foster continued  
32 sustainability of the forest through responsible resource management and support of  
33 the communities through responsible land and water development, utilization of the  
34 forest, and continued partnerships with research entities (specifically, the Magdalena  
35 Ridge Observatory, Langmuir Laboratory and the Very Large Array).

36 **Niche: A Last Bastion of the Great American Old West**

37 The nearly 800,000-acre Magdalena Ranger District is located in west-central New Mexico,  
38 and remnants of the old west still linger in the District's Magdalena, San Mateo, Bear,  
39 Gallinas, Datil, and Sawtooth Mountains. The Ranger District is over 100 miles from the  
40 population centers of Albuquerque and Las Cruces and El Paso, Texas, and offers  
41 outstanding natural settings and opportunities for true solitude. Local communities include  
42 Magdalena, Socorro, Alamo, Datil, and Truth or Consequences. The Ranger District's past

1 and current history includes large remote ranches, small- and large-scale mining, and  
2 interaction with the Apache, Navajo, and Pueblo Tribes.

3 Considered an “undiscovered jewel” because many parts of the District are remote and  
4 difficult to access, the District represents an important and valued contribution to the local  
5 communities and Tribes. The Magdalena and San Mateo Mountains rise to over 10,000 feet  
6 with spruce-fir, mixed conifer, and ponderosa pine forests, and elevations drop to less than  
7 6,000 feet along the southeast boundary adjacent to Elephant Butte Lake, with mesquite and  
8 creosote bush desert. Home to two designated wilderness areas, a segment of the Continental  
9 Divide National Scenic Trail, the Old Timers’ Festival, and Langmuir Research Laboratory,  
10 the District offers outstanding opportunities for backcountry pursuits, hunting, dispersed  
11 recreation, and solitude.

## 12 Mountainair Ranger District

### 13 **Vision**

14 The Forest Plan will emphasize watershed health through sustainability,  
15 regeneration, and protection of natural resources while ensuring that local adjacent  
16 communities benefit from the implementation of the Plan and the use of the forest  
17 through improved water quality and quantity, forest related economic development  
18 opportunities, access for traditional and multiple uses. Watershed health as the over-  
19 arching goal will ensure a legacy for future generations.

### 20 **Niche: The Country Next to the City**

21 Close to Albuquerque and situated around the rural village of Mountainair lie the Manzano  
22 and Gallinas Mountains, which together at 205,903 acres, form the Mountainair Ranger  
23 District. The District ranges in elevation from about 6,000 feet in the lowlands to over  
24 10,000 feet on Manzano Peak. The Manzanos are bordered by seven Spanish land grants:  
25 Chilili, Tajiue, Torreon, and Manzano on the east; and Tomé, Lo de Padilla, and Casa  
26 Colorada on the west. The communities of these Spanish land grants represent many  
27 generations of Hispanic heritage in the area. Adjacent to the northern end of the district  
28 boundary is the Isleta Pueblo Indian Reservation. The Gallinas Mountains are just west of  
29 the town of Corona and are entirely surrounded by private lands within Torrance, Valencia,  
30 Bernalillo and Lincoln Counties.

31 The District provides day-use recreation for hunting, hiking, horseback riding, picnicking,  
32 bird-watching, enjoying scenery and mountain biking. Several overnight campgrounds are  
33 available for longer outings. Land grant communities are connected to the land and have a  
34 vested interest in the District. The District is known for heritage sites including Pueblo  
35 Blanco, Pueblo Colorado, and the westernmost Civil War outpost of the Union soldiers, as  
36 well as the spectacular fall colors of bigtooth and Rocky Mountain maples in 4th of July  
37 Canyon, which attract thousands of visitors from throughout central New Mexico and  
38 beyond. The 36,970-acre Manzano Mountain Wilderness offers backcountry opportunities  
39 and solitude—characterized by rugged steep slopes, rocky outcrops, and deep canyons, this  
40 area can only be accessed by a well-developed trail system.

41 The Manzano and Gallinas Mountains provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife  
42 including elk, black bear, cougar, mule deer, turkey, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.  
43 The crest of the Manzanos is an important migration corridor in the spring and fall for  
44 hawks, falcons and eagles, as well as many other migratory birds in the daytime and hoary

1           bats in the evening. Three large, recent wildfires in the Manzanos have greatly changed the  
2           vegetation of the areas burned—what once was mostly ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper is  
3           now mostly scrub oak, adding to the overall diversity of wildlife habitat of the Manzanos.

4

1 Sandia Ranger District

2 **Vision**

3 *Currently under development.*

4 **Niche: Albuquerque’s Backyard Playground**

5 The Sandia Ranger District offers an easy getaway from the city and summer heat. It is a  
6 “sky island” surrounded on the north, northwest, and east by an urban interface that varies  
7 from Albuquerque subdivisions to a more rural interface of 1- to 2-acre parcels with houses  
8 on them. The lesser-known southern part of the District includes the Manzanita Mountains,  
9 which form a low ridge between the Manzano Mountains to the south and the Sandias to the  
10 north. A portion of this area is in the Military Withdrawal, where public use has been  
11 restricted since 1943. The Military Withdrawal and adjacent Forest Service land has been the  
12 subject of intensive ecosystem planning to reduce fuel loads and the risk of wildfire, to  
13 enhance wildlife habitat and ecosystem health, and to improve recreational opportunities.

14 The Sandias are part of the signature of Albuquerque’s unique sense of place. They serve as  
15 a premier open space refuge to a population of over 700,000 people in the extended  
16 metropolitan area. Over one-third of the State’s school-age population lives within an hour’s  
17 drive of the Sandias, and there is a great demand for fire prevention, fire ecology, and other  
18 environmental education programs. The District offers a variety of day-use recreational  
19 opportunities including biking, hiking, picnicking, and viewing scenery along the Sandia  
20 Crest Highway. Mountain biking is experiencing the biggest growth among all activities.

21 Sandia Mountain is a landmark in the spiritual universe of many active traditional Indian  
22 beliefs. It is regularly visited for ceremonial purposes by the Sandia Pueblo and at least  
23 annually by many other pueblos. It also has direct ties to Spanish land grant communities  
24 established by the King of Spain in the 1700s and Mexican land grants from the 1820s.  
25 Some Spanish land grants adjoining the Sandias are still active. Water sources are not only  
26 sacred to Indian beliefs, but also played a key role in sustaining the agricultural bases of the  
27 land grant communities. Several ditch systems still function today, including one actively  
28 maintained in Las Huertas Canyon as an "acequia madre" for a community's agricultural  
29 water. These traditional communities are encountering greater conflicts with the growing  
30 recreational uses of the Sandias.

31 The forested portions of the district are facing large-scale tree mortality from various  
32 pathogens and drought. This has led to an incredible fuel load on both the Sandia and  
33 Manzanita Mountains. There is the threat here of a large, uncharacteristic wildfire with the  
34 potential for loss of valuable infrastructure on both the federally managed lands and adjacent  
35 private lands. To address these concerns, an aggressive forest health program has been  
36 initiated in the wildland-urban interface. Objectives range from fuels treatments along  
37 subdivision boundaries to restoring aspen stands along the Sandia Crest National Scenic  
38 Byway.

39 **Summary of the Management Situation**

40 As required by the 2012 Forest Planning Rule, the Cibola evaluated existing information about  
41 relevant ecological, economic, and social conditions, trends, and sustainability and their relationship  
42 to the land management plan within the context of the broader landscape. This evaluation was begun  
43 in 2013 and consolidated into the 2015 Cibola Assessment report, which can be accessed online at:

1 <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprd3857289>.

2 The key findings presented were shared with Cibola’s interested public through a series of public  
3 meetings held at various locations on the mountain ranger districts. Needs-for-change statements  
4 were developed collaboratively with the public by comparing conclusions on conditions, trends, and  
5 risks from the respective topic areas of the assessment with the plan direction of the 1985 Cibola  
6 Forest Plan. Needs-for-change statements were published in a *Notice of Intent* in the Federal Register  
7 (February 9, 2015) to develop a draft revised forest plan and alternatives and analyze their respective  
8 effects in a draft environmental impact statement. As noted above, this document is a preliminary  
9 draft Plan and represents an intermediate step before release of a draft revised forest plan and  
10 alternatives analyzed in an environmental impact statement.

11 The Assessment, Needs for Change and Notice of Intent highlighted linkages between the conditions  
12 of the Cibola’s primary ecosystem services such as vegetation, soil, water, air and wildlife and the  
13 social, economic, and cultural uses and benefits enjoyed by the public. For example:

- 14 • *Throughout the Plan-* There is a need to address, either by plan direction or other plan  
15 content, how all resource management should be prioritized given varying levels of funding  
16 There is a need to redraw the management area configuration used in the 1985 Plan. There is  
17 a need to update plan component language for the resources, goods, and services provided  
18 by the Cibola, and to remove plan components that are redundant with existing law,  
19 regulation, or policy. There is a need to better recognize and potentially enhance the role of  
20 the Cibola National Forest in supporting local economies through both commodity  
21 production and services-such as recreation and tourism.
- 22 • *Across Multiple Resource Areas-* There is a need to include plan direction addressing  
23 potential climate change effects and invasive species on the Cibola and to include a plan  
24 monitoring program. There is a need to provide direction for an integrated resource approach  
25 to the use of planned fire and to address fuel accumulations in the Wildland Urban Interface  
26 (WUI).
- 27 • *Ecological Integrity-* There is a need to provide direction for achieving sustainability and  
28 resiliency for and minimizing risks to vegetation community composition and structure and  
29 for restoring natural disturbance cycles where appropriate. There is a need to provide  
30 direction to promote the achievement and maintenance of satisfactory soil condition. There  
31 is a need to provide updated management direction for the protection, maintenance, and  
32 restoration of riparian vegetation and channel morphology in the plan area and for  
33 restoration of priority watersheds. There is a need to provide direction on the sustainable  
34 management of groundwater, springs, wetlands, riparian areas, and perennial waters and  
35 their interconnections. There is a need to update plan direction on providing a sustainable  
36 water supply for multiple uses (wildlife, livestock, recreation, and mining) and public water  
37 supplies. There is a need to provide direction pertinent to riparian management zones around  
38 all lakes, perennial and intermittent streams, and open water wetlands. There is a need to  
39 update direction addressing air quality and forest management. There is a need to develop  
40 plan direction to contribute to the recovery and conservation of federally recognized species,  
41 maintain viable populations of species of conservation concern, and maintain common and  
42 abundant species within the plan area. There is a need to provide direction addressing  
43 habitat(s) for plant and animal species important to tribes and other traditional communities.  
44 There is a need to provide direction for managing aquatic passage and terrestrial habitat  
45 connectivity.

- 1       • *Cultural and Historic Resources*- There is a need to update direction on the stabilization and  
2       preservation of historic properties and address the role of management of historic properties  
3       in economic development. There is a need to update management direction for American  
4       Indian and non-Indian traditional cultural properties and sacred sites. There is a need to  
5       provide direction addressing management of historic and contemporary cultural uses by  
6       federally recognized Indian tribes and traditional communities not considered under tribal  
7       relations. There is a need to address, at either the management or geographic area scale, the  
8       inventory and management of historic properties and other cultural resources and uses. There  
9       is a need to provide direction that addresses the alignment of management of historic  
10       properties and landscapes, sacred sites, contemporary uses, and tribal cultural needs with  
11       other resource management objectives (particularly but not limited to ecosystem restoration).  
12       There is a need to provide direction on the identification and documentation of historic  
13       properties at risk of damage or destruction from catastrophic wildland fire. There is a need to  
14       update direction addressing immitigable adverse effects to historic properties.
  
- 15       • *Areas of Tribal Importance*- There is a need to update direction addressing consistency of  
16       activities with legally mandated trust responsibilities to tribes. There is a need to update  
17       direction regarding sacred sites, sacred places, natural and cultural resources important to  
18       tribes, and requests for reburial of human remains and cultural items. There is a need to  
19       update plan direction regarding administration of temporary closure orders to ensure privacy  
20       for tribes engaged in cultural and ceremonial activities. There is a need to update direction  
21       on design, location, installation, maintenance, and abandonment of towers, facilities, and  
22       alternative infrastructure within communication and energy generation sites, giving due  
23       consideration to the value and importance of high places (mountaintops and ridges) that may  
24       be sacred sites or important cultural landscapes to tribes.
  
- 25       • *Multiple Uses*- There is a need to provide plan direction for restoration treatments for those  
26       geographic areas and vegetation types that are most outside of the natural range of variability  
27       while considering capability of local infrastructure, contractors, and markets. There is a need  
28       to provide direction for management and removal of miscellaneous forest products for  
29       commercial, noncommercial, tribal and/or land grant use. There is a need to provide  
30       direction to the livestock grazing program that incorporates adaptive management toward  
31       ecosystem-based desired conditions.
  
- 32       • *Recreation*-There is a need to integrate sustainable recreation management with that of other  
33       Forest resources and to provide guidance for managing a sustainable trails program while  
34       addressing use conflicts. There is a need to provide management direction on the Continental  
35       Divide National Scenic Trail. There is a need to provide guidance for managing recreation  
36       activities that occur in areas sensitive to resource degradation or at risk due to high  
37       visitation. There is a need to update direction on managing recreational aviation activities,  
38       caves, and recreational activities associated with wildlife, fish, and cultural/historic sites.  
39       There is a need to update plan direction and guidance for implementing the Recreation  
40       Opportunity Spectrum classification system and incorporating scenic integrity objectives for  
41       managing scenic resources.
  
- 42       • *Designated Areas*: There is a need to update direction for managing designated Inventoried  
43       Roadless Areas, eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, designated Research Natural Areas, and for  
44       managing designated wilderness. There is a need to provide direction on management of  
45       areas that may be recommended for wilderness, during the interim period while Congress is  
46       considering designation. There is a need to provide direction for areas that may be  
47       recommended for various other designations.

- 1       • *Infrastructure*: There is a need to update direction on the management of infrastructure and  
2       for road maintenance in watersheds identified as being impaired or at-risk.
  
- 3       • *Land Status and Ownership, Use and Access*: There is a need to update direction for  
4       obtaining legal access that addresses public, private landowner, tribal, land grant, and  
5       management needs and for progressing toward a contiguity of the land base and a reduction  
6       of small unmanageable tracts.
  
- 7       • *Energy, Minerals and Special Uses* There is a need to provide updated direction regarding  
8       management of recreational mining, mineral exploration and extraction, and the use of  
9       common minerals. There is a need to update plan direction for managing existing or  
10      proposed transmission corridors and renewable energy generation. There is a need to provide  
11      direction addressing safety concerns pertinent to maintenance activities associated with  
12      existing energy and communication corridors.

13      These recurring linkages helped inform the development of four core themes for the revised plan.  
14      These themes guide and summarize work, provide additional strategic focus, and strengthen  
15      collaboration through shared stewardship. The four themes are:

16           1) Respecting Cultural and Traditional Landscapes and Uses: The Land is a life-sustaining  
17           resource that shapes who we are, helps form individual and community relationships,  
18           and strengthens ancestral connections. The Cibola has a rich history of people connected  
19           to this ancient landscape. We recognize that American Indians, land grant heirs, historic  
20           communities and residents of contemporary communities are here because of the land  
21           and the value they place on it.

22           Our forest management will serve the needs of present and future generations by  
23           acknowledging and honoring the different forest-based cultures, traditions, values, and  
24           economic benefits.

25           2) Valuing Unique Places and Features: Our sky islands contain a multitude of hidden  
26           gems waiting to be explored off the beaten path... spectacular geologic features, scenic  
27           vistas, landscape contrasts and stark transitions. These features give sense of place,  
28           promoting harmony between humans and nature. These features contribute to society  
29           through provision of nature-based education opportunities, spiritual renewal, artistic  
30           inspiration, employment and economic development, and outdoor play and exercise.  
31           These services are critical for the cultural and physical health of our society. It is where  
32           people come to “get away from it all” and experience solitude in four congressionally-  
33           designated wilderness areas, and is also a special gathering place for extended families  
34           and groups.

35           3) Managing Holistically for Watershed and Ecosystem Health: The Cibola National  
36           Forest plan revision has a responsibility to reduce the potential for uncharacteristic  
37           wildfire and the effects of climate change, as well as consider the regenerative capacity  
38           of the land and restoration economies. The “restoration economy” refers to the  
39           employment, capital, resources, and economic activity that emerge from investments in  
40           ecological restoration. Restoration projects can include restoring functional physical  
41           landscape processes, growing and planting native plants, supporting springs and  
42           pollinators, enhancing habitat, and improving water quality. While investments in  
43           restoration benefit the environment, restoration projects also require workers, materials,

1 and services to implement. The marketplace for these goods and services can create  
2 employment, spur business and workforce development, and increase activity in local  
3 economies. Through holistic management this plan will provide a framework for  
4 supporting restoration economies, multiple uses and benefits for this generation and for  
5 generations to come.

6 4) Managing For Sustainable Recreation: The Cibola National Plan has a responsibility to  
7 provide a recreation program that is resilient and relevant for current and future  
8 generations, fosters social and economic opportunities, and sustains the health, diversity,  
9 and productivity of the land. This is achieved by collaborating with local communities  
10 and partners, and recognizing their contributions and connections to the land, as well as  
11 the role they share with us as stewards of the land. The recreation program should be  
12 integrated into all resource management decisions and support the Forest’s management  
13 priorities.

## 14 **Plan Content**

15 This preliminary draft plan includes plan components and other plan content as described in the  
16 2012 planning rule. Plan components guide future project and activity decision-making once  
17 approved, any substantive changes to plan components would require a plan amendment with  
18 appropriate analysis as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A change  
19 to other plan content may be made using an administrative correction process. Administrative  
20 corrections are used to make changes such as updates to data and maps, management approaches,  
21 and relevant background information, and to fix typographical errors. The public is notified of all  
22 administrative corrections of the plan.

## 23 **Plan Components**

24 Plan components should provide a strategic and practical framework for managing the plan area,  
25 should be applicable to the resources and issues of the plan area, and should reflect the plan  
26 area’s distinctive roles and contributions. Plan components include: desired conditions, objectives,  
27 standards, guidelines, suitability of lands, and goals. With the exception of goals, these are all  
28 required by the 2012 planning rule. It must be clear to the public, governmental entities, and Forest  
29 Service employees where those plan components apply. To that end, the Cibola must also identify  
30 management areas and/or geographic areas. At the time of release of this preliminary draft Plan, only  
31 management areas have been identified. Plan components should not reiterate existing law,  
32 regulation, or policy. The plan components in this preliminary draft plan have been developed  
33 collaboratively with input from a variety of external and internal stakeholders with broad  
34 interdisciplinary representation. An interdisciplinary team refined the preliminary draft plan and  
35 organization to make it as understandable, useable, and integrated as possible.

36 Desired Conditions are descriptions of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of  
37 the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources  
38 should be directed. They must be described in terms that are specific enough to allow progress toward their  
39 achievement to be determined, but do not include completion dates. They describe the aspiration picture of  
40 the Cibola. They are not commitments or final decisions approving projects or activities; rather, they  
41 guide the development of projects and activities. The Cibola released a set of draft desired conditions  
42 to the public in July 2015 and the comments received on that document have guided the development  
43 of this preliminary draft plan.

44 Objectives are concise, measurable and time-specific statement of a desired rate or progress toward

1 a desired condition or conditions and should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. In some  
2 ways, objectives set the intent for management direction. This preliminary draft plan does not  
3 contain objectives at this time because it is too soon for the Cibola to set that intent. Feedback  
4 received on this preliminary draft plan will help guide the development of objectives.

5 **Standards** are mandatory constraints on project and activity decision-making, established to help  
6 achieve or maintain desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to  
7 meet applicable legal requirements. Standards differ from guidelines in that standards do not allow  
8 for any deviation without a plan amendment.

9 **Guidelines** are constraints on project and activity decision-making that allows for departure from its  
10 terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. Guidelines are established to help achieve or  
11 maintain desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet  
12 applicable legal requirements. A guideline allows for departure from its terms, so long as the intent  
13 of the guideline is met. Deviation from a guideline must be specified in the decision document with  
14 the supporting rationale. When deviation from a guideline does not meet the original intent, a plan  
15 amendment is required.

16 **Suitability of lands** addresses which specific lands within a plan area will be identified as  
17 suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those  
18 lands. The plan will also identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not  
19 compatible with desired conditions for those lands. The suitability of lands need not be identified  
20 for every use or activity. Suitability identifications may be made after consideration of historic  
21 uses and of issues that have arisen in the planning process. Every plan must identify those lands  
22 that are not suitable for timber production. However, other types of suitability are at the discretion  
23 of the responsible official.

24 **Goals** are optional plan components that are broad statements of intent, other than desired  
25 conditions, usually related to process or interaction with the public. Goals are expressed in broad,  
26 general terms, but do not include completion dates. This preliminary draft plan does not contain  
27 any goals at this time.

28 **Management Areas** describe how plan components apply to specific parcels of National Forest  
29 System land, with locations shown on maps. Management areas are delineated areas with a common  
30 set of plan components that differ from the Forest-wide plan components and are established to  
31 meet specific management needs. Management Areas are based on *purpose*.

32 **Geographic Areas** also describe how plan components apply to specific parcels of National Forest  
33 System land, also with locations shown on maps. Geographic Areas are delineated areas with a  
34 common set of plan components that differ from the Forest-wide plan components and are  
35 established to address the needs of a specific area. Geographic Areas are based on *place*.

## 36 **Other Plan Content**

37 In addition to requiring that a plan have plan components, the 2012 planning rule includes other  
38 plan content, some required and some optional. The required content includes the identification of  
39 priority watersheds, a description of the distinctive roles and contributions of the plan area, a plan  
40 monitoring program, and proposed and possible actions. Optional plan content in this preliminary  
41 draft plan includes background information, existing conditions, management approaches, and  
42 contextual information. Management approaches are not plan decisions, but they help clarify how  
43 plan direction may be applied. Management approaches include information and guidance for

1 projects and activity decision making to help achieve desired conditions and objectives.  
2 Management approaches describe priorities, considerations, and strategies for achieving desired  
3 conditions and articulate the strategies needed to effectively make progress toward desired  
4 conditions within the context of the operating environment of the plan.

## 5 **Resource Requirements for Integrated Plan Components**

6 A Forest Plan provides vision, strategy, and constraints to guide integrated resource management of  
7 the plan area. The 2012 planning rule requires that new or revised plans provide for social,  
8 economic, and ecological sustainability within the Forest Service authority and consistent with the  
9 inherent capability of the plan area. Forest Plans must also maintain the diversity of plant and animal  
10 communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area. In addition to the first two  
11 requirements, the Forest Plan must also provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses including  
12 outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within the Forest Service authority  
13 and the inherent capability of the plan area. These resource requirements should be addressed  
14 through integrated plan components.

## 15 **Plan Organization**

16 **Chapter 1 – Introduction** briefly describes the background for this document, introduces the  
17 planning area, and describes plan components and other plan content in this preliminary draft  
18 plan. Later drafts of this document will include information about the analysis of alternatives, but  
19 at this time that information is not available.

20 **Chapter 2 – Forest-wide Desired Conditions** includes forest-wide desired conditions, objectives  
21 (to be included in later drafts), standards, and guidelines. Standards and guidelines are typically  
22 located in the relevant activity section of the plan, but when standards or guidelines pertain to  
23 multiple activities, they are located in the applicable resource section.

24 **Chapter 3 – Management Areas and Designated Areas** contains the plan components applicable  
25 to specific areas that call for site-specific management. The management areas chapter is divided  
26 into two sections: “Designated Areas” and “Management Areas” (MAs). Designated areas have  
27 specific designations such as wilderness or botanic areas and MAs have separate management  
28 direction determined by *purpose*.

29 **Chapter 4 (to be developed) – Suitability** is the appropriateness of applying certain resource  
30 management practices to a particular area of land in consideration of the relevant social, economic,  
31 and ecological factors. Suitability is determined based on compatibility with desired conditions and  
32 objectives in the plan area. The suitability of lands need not be identified for every use or activity;  
33 however per the 2012 planning rule, all plans must identify those lands that are not suitable for  
34 timber production. Descriptions of the criteria used in making the determinations are provided  
35 along with the results. The identification of an area as suitable for a particular use or uses is  
36 guidance for project and activity decision making and is not a commitment or a final decision  
37 approving projects and activities. It also does not mean that a particular use will or will not occur in  
38 the area.

39 **Chapter 5 (to be developed) – Plan Monitoring Program** is continuous and provides feedback  
40 for the planning cycle by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, and  
41 measuring management effectiveness. The monitoring program includes both plan-level and  
42 broader-scale monitoring. The plan-level monitoring program is informed by the assessment  
43 phase; developed during plan development; and implemented after plan decision. The Regional  
44 Forester develops broader-scale monitoring strategies. Biennial monitoring evaluation reports

1 document whether a change to the plan or change to the monitoring program is warranted based on  
2 new information, whether a new assessment may be needed, or whether there is no need for  
3 change at that time. The monitoring strategy provides a framework for subsequent monitoring and  
4 evaluation designed to inform adaptive management.

## 5 **Plan Consistency**

6 As required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the National Forest System Land  
7 Management Planning Rule, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service must be  
8 consistent with the plan by being consistent with applicable plan components. In addition to  
9 consistency with plan direction, Forest projects and activities are developed to be consistent with  
10 applicable laws, regulations, and policies. “Projects and activities” cover all actions under 16  
11 U.S.C. 1604(i).

12 When a proposed project or activity is not consistent with a plan component, the responsible official  
13 has the following options:

- 14 • Modify the proposal so that the project or activity will be consistent;
- 15 • Reject the proposal; or
- 16 • Amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the  
17 project or activity is consistent with the plan as amended. The amendment may be limited  
18 to apply only to the project or activity.

## 19 **Plan Implementation**

20 Project-level planning is the mechanism for plan implementation. Project planning translates the  
21 desired conditions and objectives in the plan into proposals that identify specific actions, design  
22 features, and project-level monitoring. Proposal development for projects addresses site-specific  
23 needs developed locally with input from experts and stakeholders and consideration of the most  
24 current and relevant information. Project decisions are made following public involvement and  
25 analysis. Important considerations in project development include consistency with the plan,  
26 consistency with higher-level direction, projects’ potential effects on achieving desired conditions  
27 at multiple scales, and feedback from project- and plan-level monitoring regarding the effectiveness  
28 of management strategies.

29 Forest projects and activities are to be consistent with the direction in this plan as well as with that  
30 from current law, regulation, and policy. This plan does not reiterate higher-level direction;  
31 instead, it includes a partial list of applicable laws, regulations, executive orders, and policy.

32 In order to ensure a project is consistent with the plan, its design and implementation should  
33 consider its setting, any Management Areas it overlaps, and the guidance for any resources or  
34 conditions that may be present in the area (e.g. cultural resources, nonnative species, geologic  
35 formations, wildlife, etc.). Additionally, it should consider any potential conflicts with other  
36 authorized projects and activities. Project design should be consistent with Forest-wide plan  
37 direction except where superseded by Management Area direction, which takes precedence.

38 When using this plan to develop project specifications, it is important to keep in mind that desired  
39 conditions for all scales are applicable regardless of the size of the project. Smaller projects need to  
40 consider the larger scales in terms of how they contribute to the desired conditions within the  
41 context of the larger-scale unit, and larger projects need to consider the design features required to

1 ensure that the fine scale desired conditions are achieved and maintained across the project area.

2 Consideration of scale is also important when evaluating progress toward desired conditions  
3 because the range of variability and distribution of conditions is affected by the scale at which  
4 they are viewed. For example, when desired conditions are articulated at larger scales, they  
5 represent an average of fine-scale conditions across broader areas. This may make conditions  
6 appear less variable when they are evaluated at large scales, even though variability exists at the  
7 smaller scales.

8 Plan- and project-level monitoring and evaluation are the tools for gathering information on  
9 progress toward desired conditions, the effectiveness of plan implementation, and the  
10 appropriateness of plan direction. This information is subsequently used to determine management  
11 needs and adjust management strategies, which, in part, determine the form of future projects and  
12 activities. As such, monitoring and evaluation are key elements of plan implementation, as they  
13 guide future management occurring under the plan. The monitoring plan contained in Chapter 5 of  
14 this document, in conjunction with project-level monitoring, will provide the framework for  
15 enabling adaptive management on the Cibola.

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