

- 1 ■ Utilize the Built Environment Image Guide in construction or reconstruction of Forest Service
2 facilities to ensure consistency with the scenic character of the Southwestern Region.
- 3 ■ Where non-Federal projects occur under Federal lands, managers may work with
4 owners/developers to achieve scenic integrity objectives for the area.
- 5 ■ Improve areas with poor existing scenic conditions (that is, areas with existing scenic integrity of
6 “low,” “very low,” or “unacceptably low”) by removing unwanted facilities and revegetating
7 bare ground.
- 8 ■ Remove or repurpose facilities (buildings, utility poles/lines, communication towers, and other
9 structures) that are no longer needed or function as intended; retain if they are historic or desired
10 features and prioritize for maintenance and/or restoration.
- 11 ■ Restore scenic integrity in areas where it has been negatively impacted as other project work is
12 accomplished and/or funds are available.
- 13 ■ Consider displaying interpretive or informational signs at sites with impacts to scenery to inform
14 the public about the nature and consequences of such projects or events.
- 15 ■ Cooperate with other entities, such as the New Mexico Department of Transportation, Tribal and
16 local governments, and commercial and private entities to protect scenic integrity on and
17 adjacent to the national forest, including along scenic byways.
- 18 ■ Provide scenery management inventory information to local adjacent and neighboring land
19 management agencies for integration into projects and plans.

20 Special Uses

21 Background and Description

22 Several acts of Congress authorize occupancy and use of National Forest System lands and interests
23 in lands administered by the Forest Service. The applicable statutory authority determines the
24 appropriate special-use authorization. Authorizations are issued when the proposed activities support
25 the Forest Service mission, are in the public interest, and are consistent with Forest land and resource
26 management plans. Authorizations are legal documents capturing the agreement to terms and
27 conditions between the Forest Service and the individual or entity requesting occupancy and use of
28 National Forest System lands.

29 Special-use authorizations are divided into two categories: recreation and non-recreation. Recreation
30 special uses include activities related to resorts, ski areas, outfitting and guiding services, recreation
31 events, commercial filming and still photography, and recreation residences. Recreation special uses
32 are commercial in nature and generate revenue for the Forest Service as well as the local community.

33 Non-recreation special uses include activities related to communication sites, rights-of-way/road
34 access, research and utilities including powerlines, oil and gas pipelines, telephone lines and water
35 transmission pipelines, and military training. Special uses authorizations are administered in a
36 manner to protect the environment, promote health and safety, and serve the public.

37 Communication sites have been developed on the Cibola National Forest, and play a critically
38 important role in ensuring electronic connections across the Nation. Requests for use of Federal
39 lands for communications sites are predicted to increase in the future as the population grows and
40 new technologies emerge. Requests to use Federal lands for utilities transmission and energy
41 development are also predicted to increase due to higher demand.

1 **Desired Conditions**

- 2 ■ Activities authorized as special uses provide goods and services that support the public’s
3 enjoyment and understanding of the Forest and nearby communities, and have a minimal impact
4 on the opportunities for other uses and Forest users.
- 5 ■ Special uses are authorized in accordance with maintaining sustainability of Forest resources and
6 multiple uses.
- 7 ■ Environmental, visual, and sound impacts of emerging technology, communication sites, utility
8 corridors, and other permitted infrastructure are minimized through coordination and co-location,
9 and are in harmony with the surrounding landscape.
- 10 ■ Constructed features, facilities, and management activities do not dominate the views in high
11 scenic integrity areas and developed recreation sites.
- 12 ■ Public safety around authorized communications sites is paramount.
- 13 ■ Research authorized on the Forest is focused on improving the general scientific understanding
14 of natural and social systems. Research on the Forest does not negatively impact long-term
15 vegetation structure and composition and does not introduce new invasive plants or animals.
- 16 ■ Respectful, collaborative relationships and communications are developed and nurtured with
17 internal and external special uses customers.
- 18 ■ Outfitter/guide activities have a minimal impact on the experiences of other Forest users.

19 **Standards**

- 20 ■ Special uses authorizations are administered to agency standards.
- 21 ■ Designated communication sites shall be secured to restrict access to the authorized use only.
- 22 ■ Special uses requests shall be authorized and administered to minimize conflict with other Forest
23 uses.
- 24 ■ Forest Service personnel shall be responsible to educate and ensure clear communication with
25 the public and Forest users concerning activities on the Forest.
- 26 ■ Designated communications sites shall have an approved site management plan in place.
- 27 ■ Special uses authorizations that have a potential to affect any Forest resources shall include
28 appropriate clauses specifying protection responsibilities and liabilities for damage.
- 29 ■ Operating plans covering recreation special uses authorizations shall contain appropriate
30 minimum impact practices.
- 31 ■ Recreation special uses authorized within recommended or designated areas shall contain
32 measures to protect the values or purposes for which those area have been designated or
33 recommended (for example, special uses in wilderness areas contain elements to maintain
34 wilderness character).
- 35 ■ Disturbances caused by special-use authorizations shall be mitigated and rehabilitated when
36 activities conclude in consultation with all resource areas.
- 37 ■ Special use authorizations for the collection of live species with limited distribution (for
38 example, some invertebrates and plants) shall include permit provisions to ensure the species
39 persist on site.

- 1 ■ Subject to valid existing water rights, proposals to pump, transport, or utilize water from NFS
2 lands should not impair resources on NFS lands.
- 3 ■ Water rights will be secured through the appropriate State agency and procedures to support
4 Forest Service activities.

5 Guidelines

- 6 ■ The number of designated communication sites should be the minimal amount consistent with
7 appropriate public services that require the use of Forest lands. Environmental disturbance
8 should be minimized by co-locating communication facilities.
- 9 ■ Environmental disturbance should be minimized by co-locating pipelines, powerlines, fiber optic
10 lines, and associated infrastructure. Existing energy corridors should be used to their capacity
11 with compatible upgraded powerlines, before evaluating new routes.
- 12 ■ When compatible with protection of heritage resources, the use of below-ground utilities should
13 be accomplished in order to avoid potential conflicts with wildlife, scenery, wildfire, and long-
14 term vegetative management.
- 15 ■ Special-use authorizations that authorize improvements should be analyzed in the context of
16 Forest management activities.
- 17 ■ Recreation special-use permits for events and outfitting and guiding services should be analyzed
18 relevant to any current and future capacity studies and administrative capabilities.
- 19 ■ New utility lines should be buried in areas with high concern for scenery, such as areas along
20 scenic byways, nationally designated trails, and within recreation areas unless as needed to meet
21 statutory requirements (such as mining law or laws to protect public health and safety). Existing
22 utility lines that do not meet scenic integrity objectives should be buried or relocated to reduce
23 scenic impacts whenever opportunities become available (such as when poles are replaced).
- 24 ■ New facilities added to existing designated communication sites, astrophysical complexes, utility
25 corridors, and administrative sites should be clustered within existing areas. New or renovated
26 facility colors and materials should blend with the landscape, structures should generally be
27 below the height of vegetation, and vegetation that screens views to facilities should be protected
28 and encouraged unless doing so would not achieve project goals. Consultation with the Built
29 Environment Image Guide to ensure compliance.
- 30 ■ Newly constructed features, facilities, and management activities for special uses should closely
31 follow the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the desired scenic character being
32 viewed to remain visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape, except where the size or
33 design of a structure is such that it would dominate the landscape. For those exceptions, the
34 structures should complement the desired scenic character.
- 35 ■ Power pole installation or replacement under special-use authorization should include raptor
36 protection devices. Raptor protection devices should be installed on existing poles where raptors
37 have been killed.
- 38 ■ Dispersed activities (non-motorized and motorized) authorized under special-use permits should
39 be limited to existing National Forest System trails and roads unless authorized, to protect Forest
40 resources.
- 41 ■ Minimize or do not allow large groups of individuals near nesting or breeding sites.
- 42 ■ Follow State wildlife laws to ensure ethical hunting.

- 1 ■ Project activities and special uses should be designed and implemented to maintain refugia and
2 critical life cycle needs of wildfire, particularly of species of conservation concern.
- 3 ■ Habitat management objectives and aquatic/riparian species protection measures from approved
4 recovery plans should be applied to activities and special uses occurring within Federal listed
5 species habitat.
- 6 ■ Project activities and special uses occurring within federally recognized species habitat
7 management objectives and species protection measures from the most recent approved recovery
8 plan.
- 9 ■ Consistent with existing water rights, Forest Service and permitted water uses, diversions or
10 obstructions should at all times allow sufficient water to support the associated ecosystem and, in
11 streams, to preserve minimum levels of water flow that maintain aquatic life, aquatic habitat, and
12 other purposes of national forest establishment.
- 13 ■ Constraints (such as to maximum limit to which water level can be drawn down or minimum
14 distance from a connected river, stream, wetland, or groundwater-dependent ecosystem) should
15 be established for groundwater pumping sites permitted on National Forest System lands in order
16 to protect the character and function of water resources.
- 17 ■ Recreation special uses authorized in areas recommended for special designation (such as
18 recommended wilderness and eligible wild and scenic rivers) should protect the values for which
19 those areas have been recommended.
- 20 ■ New utility corridors should be located outside of riparian management zones.
- 21 ■ Development of surface waters for consumptive uses will include provisions that support the
22 associated ecosystem, such as managing the point of diversion, return flows, or other methods.
- 23 ■ Activities within 300 feet of riparian areas (except at stream crossings) should not degrade the
24 riparian-dependent values and stream functioning.
- 25 ■ New points of surface water diversions should be located to minimize impacts to water-
26 dependent ecosystems, including instream flows, consistent with special use processes, existing
27 water rights, approved permits, and approved declarations.
- 28 ■ Consistent with existing water rights, developed surface waters should only be allowed where
29 there is enough water to support the associated ecosystem and the proposed use.
- 30 ■ Forest Service activities which could impact groundwater quality should be located to prevent
31 potential impacts to source water protection areas. In these protection areas, gravel pits, mining,
32 septic systems, injection wells, equipment fueling or maintenance, underground storage tanks,
33 landings, garbage storage, confined animal operations, chemical storage, pesticide use, and other
34 potentially polluting activities should not be allowed.

35 Management Approaches

- 36 ■ Designated communication sites have user associations for medium to large sites to assist in site
37 administration.
- 38 ■ Authorized users work cooperatively with the Forest and each other in site administration.
- 39 ■ Include in the operations and maintenance plan of recreation residence special-use authorizations
40 to use the most recent edition of A Guide to Maintaining the Historic Character of Your Forest
41 Service Recreation Residence for guidance on any improvements or maintenance to eligible
42 historic or unevaluated recreation residences.

- 1 ■ Where there are conflicts with law, regulation or policy, implement the highest and most
2 restrictive authority.
- 3 ■ Operating and management plans for special-use-authorized sites includes criteria for
4 maintaining healthy forest vegetation, including treating hazard trees.
- 5 ■ Utilize special-use permit conditions as a means of maintaining surface flows.

6 Infrastructure

7 Roads

8 Background and Description

9 The transportation system road network within the Plan area consists of approximately 3,100 miles
10 of roads. These roads are under Forest Service jurisdiction and are referred to as National Forest
11 System roads. In addition to the National Forest System roads in the Plan area, there are other
12 Federal, State, county and private roads, as well as many unauthorized roads. The road system
13 provides access for a wide variety of recreational opportunities, cattle grazing, mining, forest and
14 resource management, and research sites.

15 The portion of the road system available for motor vehicle use by the public is displayed on motor
16 vehicle use maps. These maps also include motorized trails and areas designated for motor vehicle
17 use. Motor vehicle use maps are reviewed and updated as needed. The motorized transportation
18 system also includes National Forest System roads that are only available for limited administrative
19 and permitted use. These roads are not displayed on the motor vehicle use map.

20 The Forest Service uses the term “maintenance level” to describe the level of comfort provided by
21 and maintenance effort required for a National Forest System road. There are five maintenance
22 levels, ML 1–5, but there are no ML 5 roads on the Cibola National Forest transportation system.
23 Refer to the glossary for complete maintenance level definitions. The following is a breakdown of
24 the transportation system road miles in the Plan area by maintenance level.

25 **Table 21. Transportation system road miles in the Plan area by maintenance level**

Maintenance Level	Miles	Portion of Total National Forest System Miles (%)	Partial Description
ML 1	285	9.1	Closed to all motorized (little to no maintenance required)
ML 2	2,564	81.8	Maintained for high-clearance vehicles
ML 3	275	8.8	Maintained for standard passenger cars
ML 4	10	0.3	Maintained for standard passenger cars (higher level of user comfort than ML 3)

26 As indicated in the table, the vast majority of the road miles in the Plan area fall into the ML 2
27 category, which means they are maintained for high-clearance vehicles. Some of the entrances to ML
28 2 roads are not clearly distinguishable from a typical ML 3 road. As a result, it is possible for a road
29 user in a standard passenger car to mistakenly turn onto a road that is not maintained for this type of
30 vehicle.