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Date: February 3, 2015

Dear Cibola National Forest User and Interested Public:

Based on two years of engaging the public in assessing risks to sustainability and identifying the needs for change, the Cibola National Forest is publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) to revise the 1985 Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This proposed action affects the Magdalena, Mt. Taylor, Mountainair and Sandia Ranger Districts.

Publication of the NOI is a procedural step that starts the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This milestone step is based on the findings of the updated assessment report on conditions, trends, and risks to sustainability to the Cibola's resources, goods, and service; public comments on the initial version of the assessment report, and the needs for change statements drafted in the spring, summer and fall of 2014. It provides another opportunity for the public to review and comment on the revised needs for change statements. The needs for change will drive the development of the proposed plan and alternatives. The information in the sustainability assessment report will be further used and updated to develop the EIS analysis. The *Federal Register* NOI can be viewed at the Cibola's Forest Plan Revision webpage http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3_065627.

The NEPA process is meant to inform the Forest Supervisor so she can decide which alternative best maintains and restores National Forest System terrestrial and aquatic resources while providing ecosystem services and multiple uses, as required by the National Forest Management Act and the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act.

The revised Forest Plan will describe the strategic intent of managing the Forest for the next 10 to 15 years and will address the identified needs for change to the existing Cibola Forest Plan. The revised Forest Plan will provide management direction in the form of desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability of lands. It will identify delineation of new management areas and geographic areas across the Forest; identify the timber sale program quantity; make recommendations to Congress concerning Wilderness designation; and list rivers and streams eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The revised Forest Plan will also provide a description of the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape, identify watersheds that are a priority for maintenance or restoration, include a monitoring program, and contain information reflecting expected possible actions over the life of the Plan.

The revised Forest Plan will provide strategic direction and a framework for decision making during the life of the plan, but it will not make site-specific project decisions and will not dictate day-to-day administrative activities needed to carry on the Forest Service's internal operations.



The authorization of project-level activities will be based on the guidance/direction contained in the revised plan, but will occur through subsequent project specific decision-making, including NEPA analysis.

The revised Forest Plan will not replace, overarching laws and regulations. Though strategic guidance will be provided, no decisions will be made regarding the management of individual roads or trails, such as those that might be associated with a Travel Management Plan under [36 CFR Part 212](#). Some issues, although important, are beyond the authority or control of a Forest Plan and will not be addressed during revision. For example, no plan direction conflicting with U.S. mining laws will be developed, though standards will, if appropriate, be brought forward or developed that would seek to mitigate impacts of mining-related operations which could occur.

The Cibola welcomes written comments on the Needs for Change Statements and the Proposed Action, which is the development of a proposed Forest Plan and alternatives and subsequent EIS analysis. Comments will be considered to complete the identification of the needs for change to the existing plan, further develop the proposed action, and identify potential significant issues. Significant issues will form the basis for developing alternatives to the proposed action.

Comments on the needs for change (see document listed below) and the proposed action will be most valuable if received by April 3, 2015, and should clearly describe specific points.

We desire to fully engage the public in development of the proposed revised plan and alternatives and the associated EIS throughout the revision process. Please send written comments to:

Forest Planner, Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands, 2113 Osuna Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113, or electronically to: comments-southwestern-cibola@fs.fed.us.

The Cibola has also posted updated versions of the following documents on the above website, for your reference.

- *Revising the Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan: Needs for Change to the Existing 1985 Plan*
- *Assessment Report of Ecological/Social/Economic Conditions, Trends, and Risks to Sustainability, Volumes 1 and 2 and Executive Summary of Key Findings.*

We are still reviewing public comments on the inventory of lands potentially suitable for wilderness consideration. We plan to release these second drafts of these maps in April. A comment period will follow the posting of these maps, and after consideration of comments received, an evaluation map will be posted later in the spring or summer.

We will continue to update you on this process and opportunities for involvement as this plan revision effort moves forward. For additional, up-to-date information, visit the Cibola's Forest Plan Revision Webpage at:

http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3_065627

If you have any questions, please send to: cibolamtnsplanrevision@fs.fed.us or write to the mailing address provided above. Thank you for your continued interest and participation in the Cibola's Forest Plan Revision effort.

Sincerely,

/s/Elaine B. Kohrman
ELAINE B. KOHRMAN
Forest Supervisor