

MGT AREA 17 -- WILDERNESS

A VISION

The call of the wild is felt by more and more people each year. The Forest wildernesses have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation. These are areas of the forests primarily affected by the forces of nature, where people are visitors. It is a large enough area so that continued use will not change its unspoiled, natural condition.

Wilderness helps to perpetuate for present and future generations a long-lasting system of high quality areas that represents the natural ecosystems. They provide opportunities for public use, enjoyment, and understanding of a wilderness experience.

The wildernesses maintain the primitive characteristics of the landscape -- a benchmark for other lands. The Forest wildernesses contain the plants and animals native to this area.

This looks into the future, although some of it may be happening now. It is stated in the "present tense" as if it is already that way. This gives a feel of where we are heading. It paints a general picture with a broad brush.

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION

- The visual quality of the natural landscape is preserved (preservation visual quality objective).
- There are high quality wilderness recreation opportunities.
- There is a high quality trail system.
- The watersheds are in good conditions.

This table snaps a more detailed picture of what this management area will look like in the future. Since much depends on natural cycles, which need time, these conditions may take many years to achieve. Some of it may be in this condition now.

DESCRIPTION

Table Wilderness-1. Wilderness on the Carson.

NAME	TOTAL ACRES	ACRES IN THIS PLAN
Columbine-Hondo WSA	43,276	31,200
Chama River	2,900 ²	0
Cruces Basin	18,902 ¹	18,902 ¹
Latir Peak	20,506 ¹	20,506 ¹
Pecos	24,735 ²	0
Wheeler Peak	19,150 ¹	19,150 ¹
TOTAL	116,693	89,058

¹÷ These acreages are based on final wilderness descriptions approved in 1986.

²÷ Acres on the Carson; management direction in the Santa Fe Forest Plan.

D. Management Area Prescriptions

All or portions of the wildernesses listed below are located on the Forest. The management outlined in the Santa Fe Forest Plan will also apply to the Carson portion of the Pecos and Chama River Wildernesses. Prescriptions for other wildernesses on the Carson are part of this Forest Plan.

Standards and Guidelines

This section contains the standards and guidelines against which activities and uses are to be compared. It focus on and provides more details about the "Desire Future Conditions." In some cases it gives the long term 'where and when.' The Forest Plan Implementation Schedule is the tool used for all short-term planning and scheduling. The Implementation Schedule provides the operational perspective [making the commitment -- asking for the dollars and scheduling what year it will be done in.] The tactical perspective [the execution] is the actual implementation on the ground. This is done after we get the funding. It is also documented as accomplishments in the Forest Plan Implementation Schedule.

MINIMIZE REGULATIONS... Manage WOS capacity by utilizing visitor information techniques and mini-mizing regulatory requirements. Encourage "No Trace" use techniques through:

- volunteer or contracted Wilderness Information Specialist Programs
- local community outreach presentations
- audio visual material
- brochures and signs.

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION

- Fire is a critical natural process in wilderness. Wildland fire functions in its natural ecological role on a landscape scale and across wilderness boundaries.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

- FIRE... To allow fire to play a natural role in wilderness, consider a full range of management responses, including planned ignitions (prescribed fire) and unplanned ignitions (wildland fire use and suppression).
- FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES... All fire management actions within wilderness shall be conducted in a manner compatible with overall wilderness desired conditions including the character and values associated with each individual wilderness area.
- Decisions for the appropriate suppression tool or tactic in the wilderness should receive the same considerations for firefighter and public safety and the protection of values at risk as they would outside of wilderness.

INSECT & DISEASE... Monitor and report insect and disease conditions on a continuous basis. Chemical or biological control of epidemic populations will only be recommended if a thorough analysis shows that wilderness values are directly threatened or if resource values adjacent to wilderness will be severely impacted.

LAND ACQUISITION... Classify the private inholdings in Columbine Hondo as priority 1 for acquisition.

MINERAL LEASING... Mineral leasing and location is prohibited within designated wildernesses.

GRAZING IN CRUCES BASIN... Specific congressional direction for Cruces Basin states that; "The designation of this area as wilderness shall not interfere with the construction of additional fencing authorized by the grazing allotment management plan for the area, and shall not be cause to require reductions in existing potential animal unit months under the applicable grazing allotment management plan for the area. "(HR8298 N.M. Wilderness Act).

STRUCTURAL RANGE IMPROVEMENTS... Only allow maintenance, construction, and reconstruction of structural range improvement and facilities which harmonize with the wilderness character of the area.

D. Management Area Prescriptions

USE AT CAPACITY... Manage use at capacity by Wilderness Opportunity Spectrum (WOS) classification.

ANNUAL WORK PLANS... Provide for user contacts, education and capacity management through annual work plans.

MOTORIZED/MECHANICAL USE RESTRICTIONS... Maintain area closed to motorized and mechanical use as required by the Wilderness Act. Motorized or mechanical administrative uses restricted to standards in FSM.

WILLIAMS, HORSESHOE, LOST LAKES...

- Permit only stove fires around Williams, Horseshoe and Lost Lakes in the Wheeler Peak Wilderness. Designate areas on official maps and on site. Increased administrative personnel presence will be provided on site. Additional closures will be made as needed to maintain wilderness values in accordance with limits of acceptable change.

- Horseshoe, Williams, and Lost Lakes may be stocked with fish by helicopters.

GROUP SIZE LIMIT... Manage all areas for a maximum group size of 15 people or 15 stock animals. Enforcement and user contact provided.

POST BOUNDARIES... Maintain posted wilderness boundary at major entry points and problem areas where motor vehicle entry could occur.

PROCESSED HORSE FEED... Permit only processed horse feed to be used.

AIR QUALITY...

- In the Class I air quality areas in the Wheeler Peak Wilderness maintain high quality visual conditions. The form, line, texture, and color of characteristic landscapes will be clearly distinguishable when viewed as middle ground. Cultural resources and ecosystems will remain unmodified by air pollutants. Determine baseline information and the background condition of the above air quality related values and specify limits of acceptable change that will affirmatively protect these values in Class I areas. Recent additions to the Wheeler Peak, Cruces, and Latir Wildernesses are Class II areas.

- Perform Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) Permit Application Reviews to determine the potential effect increased emissions sources will have on air quality related values (AQRV) of Class I area. Impact of air pollution generating activities will be predicted using current modeling techniques. Manage the Columbine Hondo WSA as a Class II air quality area.

VOLUNTEERS... Actively recruit volunteer wilderness information specialists, wilderness rangers and trail maintenance help (adopt-a-trail). Provide for necessary training, supervision and incidental expenses.

OUTFITTERS/GUIDES...

- Schedule outfitter/guide activities to minimize impacts/conflicts with other wilderness users.

- Establish capacities/seasons of use for outfitter guides using animals operating in Wheeler Peak. Establish capacities in other areas when conflicts with other users or impacts on wilderness values warrant.

WATERSHED... Obliterate and revegetate 2 miles of travelways in the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness.

WILDLIFE...

- Cooperate with New Mexico Game and Fish in stabilizing the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and ptarmigan grouse populations to goals established in the New Mexico Game and Fish Department Comprehensive Plan. Bighorn sheep and ptarmigan occur only in portions of Wheeler Peak and Latir Wildernesses.

D. Management Area Prescriptions

- When essential habitat for threatened and endangered species is identified, coordinate activities for species concerned.

RANGE IMPROVEMENTS... Replacement of structural improvements will be planned in a 20-35 year cycle and will take priority over new structures if needed for prescribed management intensity.