



Rio Grande National Forests | April 2025

# Request for Expressions of Interest



Providing recreation services and facilities is a key part of the Forest Service's mission. To fulfill this responsibility, the agency relies upon volunteer, organizational, and commercial partners. Partners help provide an expanded scope of opportunities for people by contributing unique skills, knowledge, equipment, financial resources, and technical capabilities. Although some visitors possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and equipment to enjoy national forests, others may not have the capability to participate in an activity on their own. By permitting commercial services to operate on the Rio Grande National Forest, Conejos Peak Ranger District and Saguache Ranger District, this need can be met. Outfitter and guide services offer opportunities for the recreating public to experience the dynamic landscape of the Forest. Outfitters and guides can include commercial businesses, nonprofit organizations, community organizations, and educational institutions, and they facilitate recreational experiences for individuals or groups by providing services, education, training, and/or equipment on national forest lands.

## Background

The Rio Grande National Forest has evaluated the need for a variety of outfitter and guide services that would benefit the public on the forest and to create possible forest wide opportunities. The purpose of this Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) is to determine whether sufficient competitive interest exists that would warrant issuance of a prospectus. If a prospectus were issued, the Forest Service would review proposals through a competitive bid process and may issue a limited number of priority use outfitting and guiding permits under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Additionally, any use authorized will be limited to use levels outlined in the 1996 Rio Grande National Forest Plan Appendix C Capacity Allocation Process.

## Details

The Rio Grande National Forest is looking for a variety of outfitting and guiding services on the Conejos Peak and Saguache Ranger Districts. Should there be a need to extend beyond the district's offering, please outline that in your opportunity request. The district break out of services are listed below:

### The Conejos Peak Ranger District:

The district is interested in knowing what businesses and individuals wish to offer the following outfitter and guide services listed below.

Outfitter and guide services that will be considered include:

- Avalanche Awareness
- Mountaineering
- Backpacking
- Jeep/OHV tours

- Cross Country Skiing
- Snowshoeing
- Fishing
- Snowmobiling
- Horseback riding
- Photography (Non-Commercial)
- Rock Climbing

### The Saguache Ranger District

The district is interested in knowing what businesses and individuals wish to offer the following outfitter and guide services listed below.

Outfitter and guide services that will be considered include:

- Big Game Hunting
- Backpacking
- Horse Riding (Day Use)
- Horse Riding (Overnight Use)
- Nature Based Education
- Day Hiking

### Requirements

Information Requests:	Submission Format:	Submission Criteria:
<p>For general questions, or questions related to the Request for Information document, please contact Carlos Gonzales by email or by phone at: <a href="mailto:carlos.gonzales2@usda.gov">carlos.gonzales2@usda.gov</a> (719) 872-4021</p> <p>For general information on special use permits with the Forest Service, respondents should visit the RGNF Special Uses webpage: <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/permits/recreation-special-use-permits">https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/permits/recreation-special-use-permits</a></p>	<p>The Forest Service asks interested parties to submit their information either hard copy or electronic file. The electronic file must be in a Microsoft Office program or a PDF file and emailed to: <a href="mailto:divide_special_uses@usda.gov">divide_special_uses@usda.gov</a></p> <p>Please mail or hand deliver hard copies by <b>4:30 pm MDT</b> on <b>Monday, June 23, 2025</b> to: <i>Rio Grande National Forest Attn: Carlos Gonzales 1055 9<sup>th</sup> Street Del Norte, CO 81132 United States</i></p>	<p>Please provide the following in your response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing the attached form, express your interest by including your contact information and a statement describing your technical and financial capability to offer the proposed activity. Describe the proposed activity service day request and other additional information as requested.</li> <li>• Any additional information or considerations relevant to the proposed services and/or experience.</li> </ul>

### Restrictions and Limitations

#### Forest and Regional Closure Orders:

The following orders address forest and regional closures:

#### Travel Restrictions:

Motorized Travel will only be permitted to operate on designated roads and trails associated with the Rio Grande National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

The MVUM can be found at the link below:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/maps-guides/motor-vehicle-use-maps>

## Wilderness Restrictions

*La Garita Wilderness*

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/alerts/la-garita-wilderness-use-restrictions>

*Sangre de Cristo Wilderness*

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/alerts/sangre-de-cristo-wilderness-occupancy-use>

*Weminuche and South San Juan Wilderness*

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/alerts/weminuche-wilderness-and-south-san-juan-wilderness-restrictions>

Food and Refuse Storage

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/alerts/food-storage-regulations>

## Other Forest and Regional Restrictions

A copy of all other Rio Grande National Forest and Regional closure orders can be found at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/riogrande/alerts>

## Restrictions by Ranger District

While this opportunity is open to multiple activities, there are some restrictions and/or limitations broken out by ranger district:

### Conejos Peak Ranger District

Jeep/Off Highway Vehicle tours

- The ranger district **may** allow use of areas not identified as open on the Rio Grande National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map.

Backpacking

- The ranger district would prefer that backpacking utilize existing roads and trails.
- Uses **may** go off route but would be limited to restrictions and mitigations.

### Saguache Ranger District

Big Game Hunting

- There **will not** be offerings of Mountain Lion Hunts in this RFEI.
- The Forest is currently looking for outfitters and guides that are willing to provide services in the Lake Fork of Saguache Creek and the Middle Fork Saguache Creek. Also, in Colorado Parks and Wildlife Game Management Units 68 and 681, excluding Middle Creek.
- There **will not** be offerings in other areas where there are existing outfitter and guiding services for big game hunting being provided.
- Services **will not** be allowed in the Baca Mountain Tract Area.
- Motorized travel will be limited to routes authorized on the MVUM.

Backpacking

- This service **will not** be authorized on trails that are accessed from the North Crestone, South Crestone, Liberty and Willow Creek Trailheads.
- Service could be day trips or multi-day overnight camping trips.
- Multi-day trips could have established camps or dispersed drop camps.
- Services **will not** be allowed in the Baca Mountain Tract Area.

## Horseback Riding (Day Use and Overnight Use)

- This service **will not** be authorized on trails that are accessed from the North Crestone, South Crestone, Liberty and Willow Creek Trailheads.
- Service could be day trips or multi-day trips.
- Multi-day trips could have established camps or dispersed camping.
- Services **will not** be allowed in the Baca Mountain Tract Area.

Other restrictions include but are not limited to gambling, adult entertainment, livestock use, federally illegal drugs, and associated activities. For a full understanding of restrictions please review US Code of Federal Regulations, US 36 § 251. (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-II/part-251>)

## Fees

If a proposal is accepted and the ranger district proceeds with issuing a special use permit, the potential permittee will be responsible for fees associated with outfitting and guiding permits. Fees are generally for permit administration, assigned site fees, and annual fees for the permit, generally 3% of gross revenue for multi-year permits and 5% for short term/less than one-year permits. The 2025 annual minimum fee for outfitting and guiding on the Rio Grande National Forests is \$130 per permit. All new special use permit requests are subject to environmental review and public scoping under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

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## Notice

This document is not intended as a formal offering for the award of any legal authorization. All submissions will be used to gauge public desire and/or need. Respondents should not assume they will receive any preference in connection with future solicitations. The Forest Service reserves the right to withdraw or discontinue the RFEI in whole or in part and use the ideas or materials submitted in response to this RFEI in any manner deemed to be in the best interests of the Forest Service. The Forest Service likewise reserves the right, at any time, to change any components, concepts or approaches of the RFEI. All costs associated with responding to the RFEI are the sole responsibility of the respondent and any such costs shall not be reimbursed by the Forest Service.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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