

## **San Juan National Forest FY25 Land Adjustment Projects**

This document describes land adjustment (land acquisition, exchange, and disposal) projects that the San Juan National Forest is considering working on in Fiscal Year (FY) 25. An overview map (Map 1 – Overview) shows the location of all of these properties, and there are individual maps of most, but not all, of these properties. If a photo is available, one photo of each property is included in this document. The projects are listed below geographically starting from the west side of the San Juan National Forest and moving east across the Forest.

Lizard Head Mesa Purchase: This is an acquisition opportunity and a potential FY26 LWCF proposal. The landowner also owns the Fall Creek property (see below). The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is a 313-acre private inholding surrounded by National Forest System (NFS) land in the headwaters of the Dolores River watershed. (Map 2 – Lizard Head Mesa). The area is used for a variety of recreational opportunities including, hiking, camping, snowmobiling, hunting and fishing. The property contains Canada Lynx habitat, and wetlands. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Conservation Fund is in negotiations with the landowner.



Fall Creek Purchase: This is an acquisition opportunity, with the same landowner as Lizard Head Mesa. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcel is an 80-acre private inholding surrounded by NFS land in the headwaters of the Dolores River watershed (Map 3 – Fall Creek). Acquisition of this property would secure legal public access to the highly used Calico Trail. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Conservation Fund is in negotiations with the landowner.



Jumbo Land Exchange: This is a land exchange opportunity. The level of NEPA documentation has not yet been determined.

This project involves the acquisition of two parcels of private patented mining claims totaling 17 acres surrounded by NFS land at the southern end of La Plata Canyon in exchange for a 2-acre sliver of NFS land between private property and La Plata Canyon Road (Map 4 – Jumbo Land Exchange). Acquisition of these properties would consolidate ownership and eliminate any future requests to construct a road or install utilities to the properties. Access to the properties over NFS land is on very steep topography and any road construction would likely be very impacting. Due to the size and configuration of the NFS parcel, it is not very usable by the public. The conveyance of this parcel would be subject to an easement for La Plata Canyon Road. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently beginning the process to conduct the land exchange.



Rhyolite Lode Small Tracts Act Conveyance: This is a conveyance opportunity for an isolated, difficult to manage, small parcel of NFS land containing unauthorized improvements. The disposal is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

This is a 9-acre parcel of NFS land completely surrounded by private land with no easement held by the USDA Forest Service across the private lands (Map 5 – Rhyolite Lode STA). Several unauthorized improvements exist on the parcel, including a road, cabin, zipline, and trailer. Conveyance of this property would eliminate an isolated piece of NFS land that is difficult to manage and would eliminate the need for the USDA Forest Service to remove or authorize the improvements on this parcel. There are cabins on several of the adjacent private properties. This property is within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently working with the surrounding landowners to determine if conveyance of this parcel is feasible.





Great Western Lode Purchase: This is an acquisition opportunity. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

The parcels are three patented mining claims totaling 31 acres (Map 6 – Great Western Lode). Two of the properties are surrounded by NFS land within the Weminuche Wilderness. The third parcel is surrounded by both NFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. Acquisition of these properties would secure the integrity of the Weminuche Wilderness by preventing development on the private parcels. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Wilderness Land Trust has purchased these properties with the intent of conveying the properties to the USDA Forest Service.

We are currently in the process to acquire these properties.



Needle Creek Purchase: This is an acquisition opportunity. The acquisition is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

These parcels are three patented mining claims totaling 31 acres (Map 7 – Needle Creek Parcels). These properties are surrounded by NFS land within the Weminuche Wilderness. The popular Needle Creek Trail going to Chicago Basin crosses one of these claims. Acquisition of these properties would secure legal access on the Needle Creek Trail and secure the integrity of the Weminuche Wilderness by preventing development on the private parcels. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

The Wilderness Land Trust has purchased these properties with the intent of conveying the properties to the USDA Forest Service.

We are currently in the process to acquire these properties.



First Fork Land Exchange: This is a land exchange opportunity. The level of NEPA has not been determined yet.

This project involves the acquisition of two parcels of private land totaling approximately 0.78 acre in exchange for one parcel of NFS land of approximately 0.89 acre (Map 8 – Proposed First Fork Land Exchange). The parcels that would be acquired include a portion of the First Fork Road (National Forest System Road 622) that the Forest Service does not have an easement on. This road accesses a large area of NFS land within the Piedra River watershed and numerous nonmotorized and motorized trails. The other parcel consists of river frontage and riparian area along the Piedra River. In exchange, the Forest Service would convey one parcel which is contiguous with the private property and contains the driveway and another access road to the adjacent private property. These properties are within the Brunot Agreement Area.

We are currently working on the feasibility analysis for this proposal.



Valle Seco 2019 Land Exchange: This project involves the acquisition of one 880-acre parcel of private land surrounded by NFS land in exchange for approximately 379 acres of NFS lands in nine parcels. This project is not within the Brunot Agreement Area. A decision was signed on June 29, 2022 approving the land exchange.

This project has not been implemented and is currently in litigation.

Additional land acquisition, exchange, or conveyance opportunities may come up throughout FY25.