

Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Report

Carson National Forest

Land Management Plan – Preferred Alternative

Rio Arriba, Taos, Mora, and Colfax Counties, New Mexico



Title Page Photo Credit – Snowmobiling on the Tres Piedras Ranger District, Ricardo Leon.

Final - replaces the previous December 2022 version, not an exact reprint.

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Introduction

This report documents the desired recreation opportunity spectrum developed for the forest planning process of the Carson National Forest. The desired recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) reflects the existing condition of ROS settings based on recreation opportunities, including the physical, social, and managerial settings and off-forest influences (such as motorized roads and motorized trails on other ownerships) combined with plan direction from the preferred alternative. During winter months portions of the Carson NF receive sufficient snow that roads are not drivable but other snow and ice-based recreation opportunities become available. Over-snow vehicle use is allowed on the Carson NF except in areas that have been closed to cross country snowmobile use (see Figure 19) or overlap designated wilderness. Closure to cross country access does not prohibit motorized use on open roads or motorized trails.

What is the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum?

Since the early 1980s, the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) has been used as a framework to identify, classify, plan, and manage a range of recreation settings for both existing and desired conditions. Six distinct settings: urban, rural, roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized, semi-primitive non-motorized, and primitive are defined using specific physical, social, and managerial criteria. The following graphic displays the spectrum of ROS classes. For detailed information on ROS classes and criteria refer to Appendix A. For additional information on applications, refer to FSH 1900 and FSM 2300 directives. During plan revision an inventory of recreation opportunity spectrum existing condition was completed incorporating best available science and public input (USDA FS Carson NF 2018).

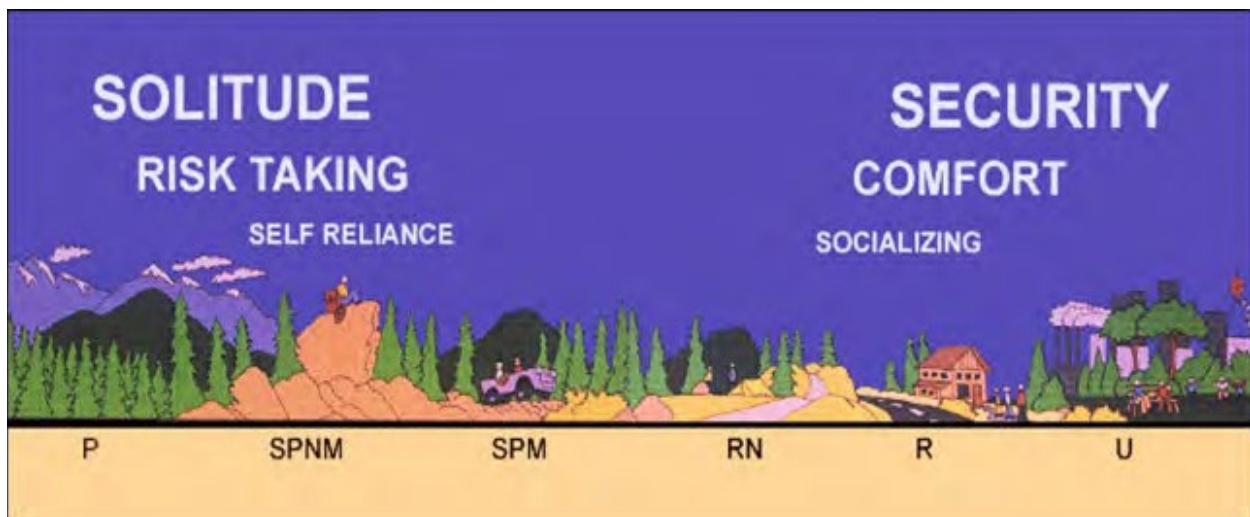


Figure 1. A graphic showing the spectrum of ROS classes. The level of access, development, and social encounters increase when moving from primitive to urban on the spectrum. Level of remoteness decreases when moving from primitive to urban on the spectrum.

Desired Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Standards and guidelines in the plan provide a framework for managing recreation on the Carson NF. Land management activities directed by the plan impact recreation opportunities and settings. Recreation resources are affected when management activities or proposed projects impact the recreation setting or

related opportunities. Based on direction in the final plan all designated and recommended wilderness is classified as either primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized.

The Potential Recreation Site Management Area is classified as semi-primitive motorized - nonroaded. This area was carried forward from Alternative 1 (the 1986 Plan) and was previously classified as semi-primitive motorized. However, since 1986 the Comales Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area has been designated which overlaps the Potential Recreation Site Management Area and prevents road construction. The presence of developed facilities in the semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunity class definition is more consistent with plan description of the management area as a location for future recreation facilities. Motorized uses are allowed in the area; snowmobiling is currently allowed, motorized trails could be constructed, other motorized uses such as snow cats or chairlifts may be acceptable. However, because of the inventoried roadless designation roads cannot be constructed which necessitates this recreation opportunity spectrum subclass of semi-primitive motorized – nonroaded for this area.

Table 1. Summer desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting by acres and percent of the Carson

Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Setting	Final Plan (acres)	Area on the Carson under the Final Plan (percent)
Primitive	93,326	6%
Semi-primitive non-motorized	366,716	25%
Semi-primitive motorized	714,800	48%
Semi-primitive motorized-nonroaded	805	Less than 1%
Roaded natural	308,436	21%
Rural	586	Less than 1%
Urban	1,807	Less than 1%
Undetermined	3,788	Less than 1%

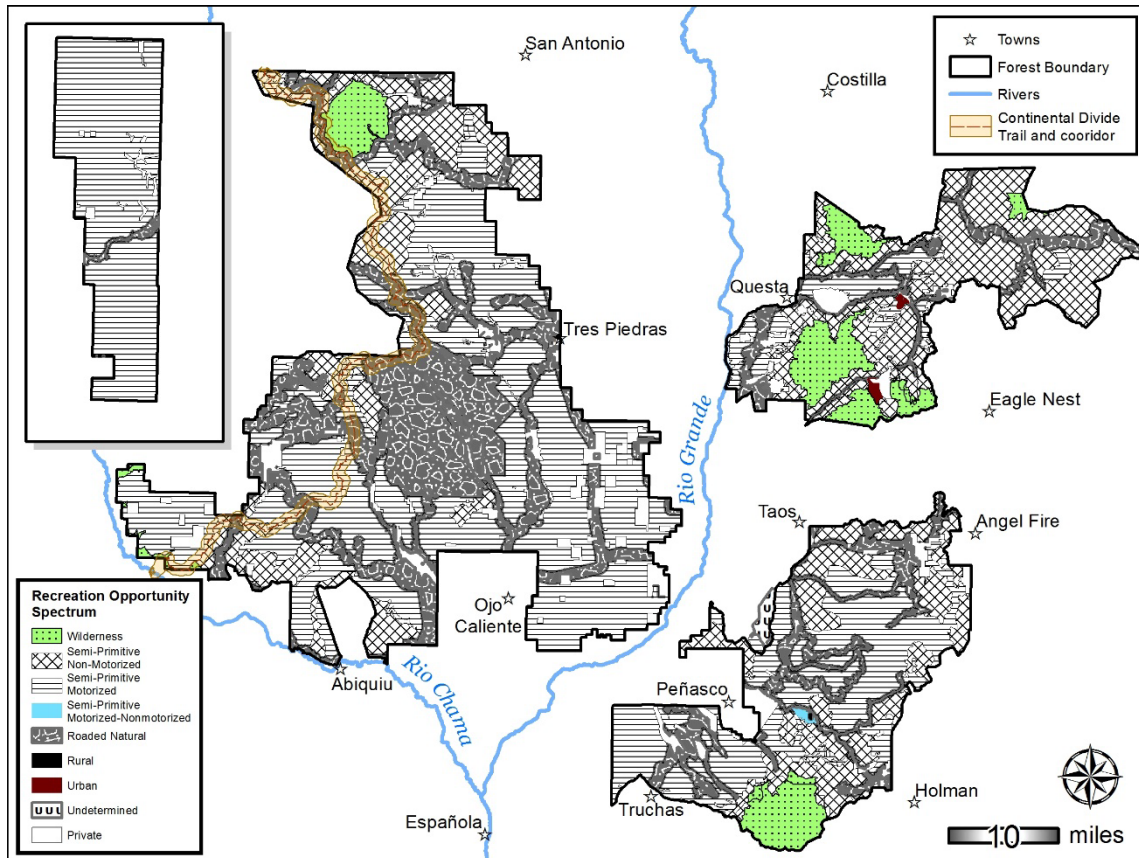


Figure 2. Summer desired recreation opportunity spectrum under the final plan.

Winter Over-Snow Vehicle Use

Recreation opportunities that exist during summer differ from recreation opportunities in winter based on decisions that the Carson NF has made about where over-snow vehicles are allowed and Recommended Wilderness Management Areas. Recreation opportunity settings that are non-motorized during the summer but where snowmobiling is allowed are considered semi-primitive motorized during the winter.

The winter desired recreation opportunity spectrum is based on the inventory of existing recreation opportunity classes, with primitive and semi-primitive settings changed to semi-primitive motorized where snowmobiling is allowed.

Table 2. Winter desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting by acres and percent of the Carson

Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Setting	Final Plan (acres)	Area on the Carson under the Final Plan (percent)
Primitive	84,640	6%
Semi-primitive non-motorized	222,953	15%
Semi-primitive motorized	920,580	62%
Roaded natural	257,261	17%
Rural	3,903	Less than 1%
Urban	2,065	Less than 1%

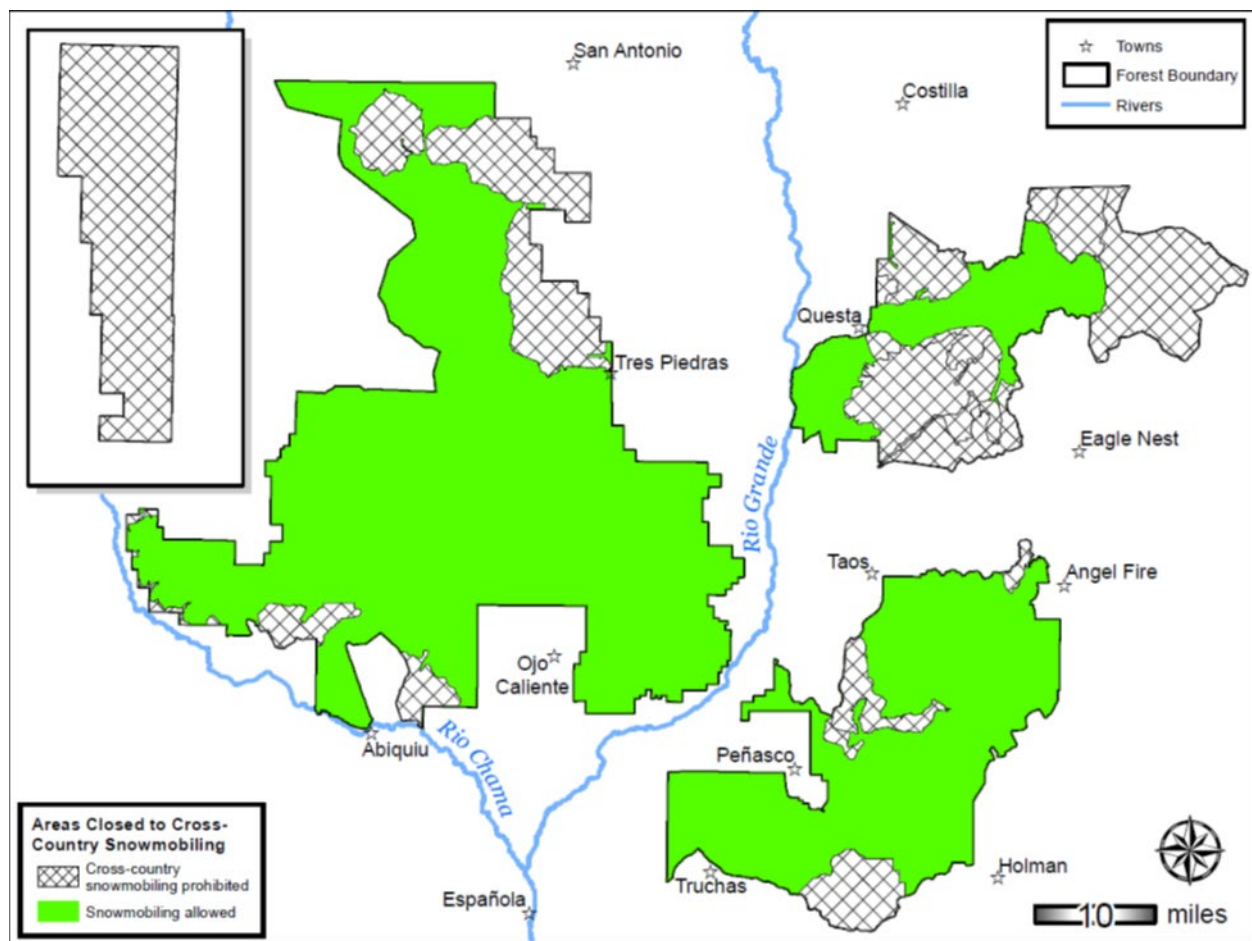


Figure 3. Areas closed to snowmobiles by the 1986 plan or the Valle Vidal Multiple Use Area Guide

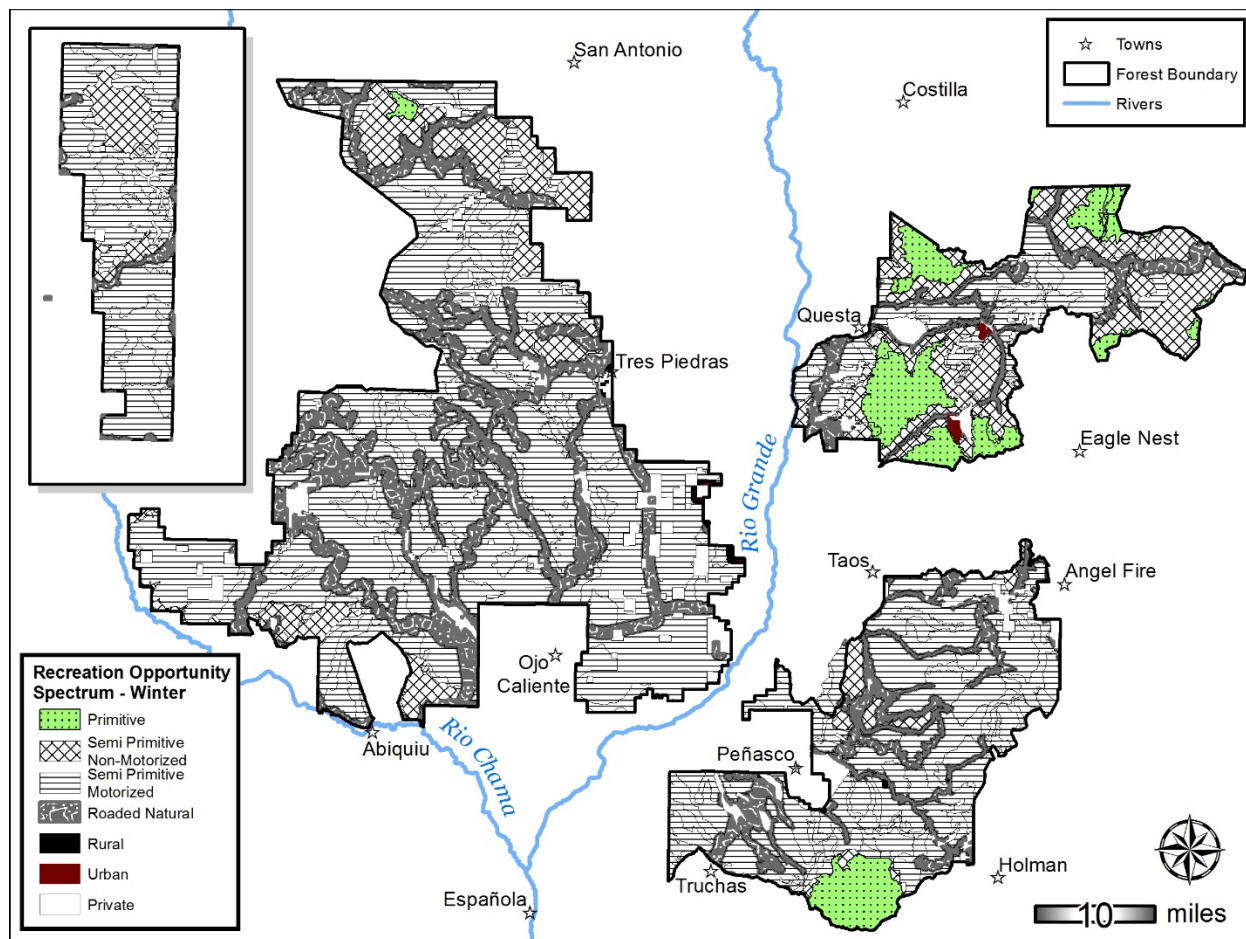


Figure 4. Winter desired recreation opportunity spectrum under the final plan.