



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

**Southwestern  
Region**



# Carson Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report

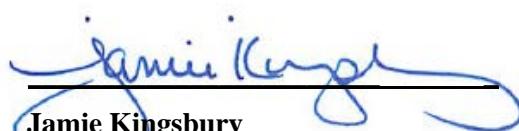
**Fiscal Year 2013**



## **Forest Supervisor Certification of Forest Plan Sufficiency**

The Carson Forest Plan is sufficient to guide management of the Forest over the next year. This document summarizes the monitoring efforts completed on the Forest through Fiscal Year 2013.

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Jamie Kingsbury**  
Acting Forest Supervisor

August 14, 2014

**Date**

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# Part 1- Monitoring Activities and Evaluation

## Summary of Monitoring Conducted and Evaluation of Program Areas

### Biological Environment

#### Wildlife and Fish

##### Goals:

To manage for healthy ecosystems, provide goods and services in an environmentally sound fashion, use new knowledge, develop an integrated inventory, cooperate with other agencies, and promote awareness and appreciation of species.

- **Maintain habitat for viable populations** of all wildlife and fish species found on the forest and improve habitat for selected species. This will be accomplished indirectly through intensive habitat management.
- **Support New Mexico Game and Fish Department** in meeting its objectives of the New Mexico Comprehensive Wildlife Plan and in the reintroduction of native wildlife and fish species. Favor native species over new exotic species in stocking and introductions whenever possible.
- **Maintain and/or improve habitat for presently listed threatened or endangered species** of animals and other species as they are classified as threatened or endangered. Work toward the eventual recovery and delisting of species.

*Threatened and endangered species* populations and habitat will be protected and improved as necessary to aid in the recovery of the species.

##### Monitoring:

##### Threatened and Endangered Species

Threatened and endangered species are surveyed for project and program monitoring requirements (e.g., 1996 Region-wide Amendment for Forest Plans), as well as to provide planning information during project analysis. Monitoring is ongoing for threatened and endangered species on the Carson National Forest for known nesting locations. The primary species monitored on the forest are southwestern willow flycatcher and Mexican spotted owl. Project level inventory provides biologists information on the potential occurrence of threatened and endangered species, as well as, whether management activities (e.g., grazing, recreation, tree cutting, etc.) are a threat to a species' habitat or existence. Supporting documentation for project level inventory is located at each of the ranger districts. Threatened and endangered monitoring results do not indicate significant alterations in occupied or potential habitat that could result in a downward trend of habitat condition or populations.

In 2005, Critical Habitat was designated for the **southwestern willow flycatcher**. The Carson National Forest has one Critical Habitat Unit on the Camino Real Ranger District. The status of this population appears to be stable. Four breeding pairs with nesting sites have been regularly

detected since monitoring began. In FY2013, no protocol monitoring was conducted for southwestern willow flycatcher on the Camino Real Ranger District.

**Mexican spotted owl** populations are very low with the last documented presence on the Jicarilla Ranger District in 1993. The district contains about 3,500 acres of highly fragmented habitat for the Mexican spotted owl, further degraded by severe drought in 2000 to 2002. It is likely that drought has made formerly occupied habitat unsuitable due to the lack of prey species. Additionally, mixed conifer habitat on the Jicarilla Ranger District is in a steep decline, with a significant amount of dead Douglas fir and aspen. The cause of this decline is suspected to be a combination of drought, climate change, and insects. Critical habitat for the Mexican spotted owl was designed in 2004 with two Critical Habitat Units established on the Jicarilla Ranger District. On the Jicarilla Ranger District, protocol surveys were conducted in 2009 and in 2010, with no detections either year. In FY2013, protocol Mexican spotted owl surveys were conducted for the designated SRM-NM-11 protected activity area on the Jicarilla Ranger District. No inventories were conducted on the SRM-NM-12 protected activity area. Additionally in FY2013; numerous potential Mexican spotted owl habitat areas on the Jicarilla Ranger District were inventoried. All of these surveys yielded negative results.

### **Southwestern Region's Sensitive Species**

The primary Region 3 sensitive species inventoried and monitored on the Carson are northern goshawk, American peregrine falcon, and Rio Grande cutthroat trout. This type of inventory and monitoring provide the biologists information on the occurrence of TE&S species on the Carson National Forest, as well as, whether management activities (e.g., grazing, recreation, tree cutting, etc.) are a threat to a species' habitat or existence. Sensitive species monitoring results do not indicate significant alterations in occupied or potential habitat that could result in a downward trend of habitat condition or populations.

Inventory and monitoring of known **northern goshawk** nesting areas produced the following information:

**Table 1. 2006-2013 Northern goshawk inventories and monitoring results**

Ranger District	FY	Inventoried Acres	Results (sightings, nests)	Monitoring of Known Goshawk Nesting Areas
Canjilon	2013	0	0	3 nest sites monitored; no goshawks located
	2012	0	0	3 nest sites monitored; no goshawks located
	2011	2,704	0	3 nest sites monitored; no goshawks located
	2010	800	0	3 nest sites no goshawks located

Ranger District	FY	Inventoried Acres	Results (sightings, nests)	Monitoring of Known Goshawk Nesting Areas
	2009	1,200	3 PFAs established: 1) 2 fledglings; 2) 1 fledgling; 3) 0 young	0
	2008	400	0	0
	2007	0	0	0
	2006	0	0	0
El Rito	2013	0	0	0
	2012	0	0	0
	2011	5,100	0	0
	2010	5,100	0	0
	2009	100	1 PFA established; 1 fledgling	0
	2008	0	0	0
	2007	0	0	1 nest site – no birds
	2006	0	0	1 nest site – no birds
Jicarilla	2013	0	0	0
	2012	160	One female adult sighted flying across FS Road 357 on 7/18/12.	2 historic nest sites – no birds or activity
	2011	850	1 adult in established Foraging Area	10 historic nest sites – no birds or activity
	2010	0	0	2 nest sites, no nesting goshawk located.
	2009	2,929	0	2 nest sites, no nesting goshawk located.
	2008	3,550	0	2 nest sites, no nesting goshawk located. Individual goshawk seen at one site.

Ranger District	FY	Inventoried Acres	Results (sightings, nests)	Monitoring of Known Goshawk Nesting Areas
	2007	36,854	1 new pair, 2 additional birds	1 nest site, no goshawks located
	2006	0	0	Single adult
Camino Real	2013	0	0 <sup>1</sup>	4 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2012	6,252	One adult observed, breeding not confirmed	5 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2011	6,633	0	2 nest sites, no goshawks located
	2010	0	0	3 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2009	229	0	0
	2008	0	0	0
	2007	645	0	5 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2006	0	0	5 nest sites – no goshawks located
Tres Piedras	2013	900	0	2 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2012	4,800	One adult flying across a canyon within the Maquinita Analysis area.	2 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2011	2,327	0	No nest site monitorig
	2010	0	0	2 nest sites – no goshawks located

<sup>1</sup> Four historic places were monitored for Northern Goshawk: Picuris, Maestas, Cebadilla, and Tienditas. No goshawks were detected although photos of an adult goshawk were sent by a private landowner who lives approximately one mile from Tienditas. It is suspected there are goshawks in the area although a new nest site has not been located on FS land.

Ranger District	FY	Inventoried Acres	Results (sightings, nests)	Monitoring of Known Goshawk Nesting Areas
	2009	0	0	5 nest sites – no goshawks located
	2008	0	0	
	2007	0	0	3 nest sites – no birds
	2006	1,500	0	2 nest sites – no birds
Questa	2013	0	0	0
	2012	0	0	0
	2011	0	0	0
	2010	0	0	0
	2009	2,376	0	0
	2008	0	0	0
	2007	0	0	0
	2006	4,000	1 single adult	0

**Peregrine falcon** surveys are conducted by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. There are currently 11 known nest sites on the Carson National Forest. Survey information may be obtained from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

In 2013, peregrine territory U-8 on the El Rito Ranger District and U-65 on the Tres Piedras Ranger District were monitored by Carson National Forest personnel. No breeding success was observed at U-8; however, breeding success was documented at U-65. Three fledglings were reported at this nest site.

**Wild trout population** surveys were conducted on the Rio San Antonio, Red River, Cabresto Creek, El Rito Creek (Figure 1), Comanche Creek, Vidal Creek, Gold Creek, Little Costilla Creek, and the Rito de la Olla (Pot Creek) during 2013 with assistance from New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. These streams occur on the Camino Real, Questa, Tres Piedras, and El Rito Ranger Districts.

Restoration efforts within the Rio Costilla watershed (Questa Ranger District) are ongoing with the final picicide treatment on Allen Creek have been completed this year. After treatment, Allen Creek was restocked with young-of-year and age-1 Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (RGCT; Figure 2).



RGCT were captured for gamete collection from Powderhouse Creek, Alamitos Creek, and El Rito Creeks. These collections were used to produce genetically pure RGCT for stocking and post-treatment population reestablishment.

**Figure 1. Carson National Forest biologists and Pathways student sampling El Rito Creek, El Rito Ranger District**



**Figure 2. Young-of-year Rio Grande cutthroat trout after being released into Allen Creek, Valle Vidal, Questa Ranger District**

Approximately 11,000 young-of-year RGCT were stocked in Horseshoe Lake, Lost Lake, and Middle Fork Lakes within or near the Wheeler Peak Wilderness. Additionally, three high-elevation lakes in the Latir and Pecos Wilderness areas (Serpent, Horseshoe, and Heart Lakes) were surveyed for fish, but none were detected due to shallow depths and lack of overwintering habitat.

To ensure the persistence of RGCT in Paloceinto Creek (Camino Real Ranger District), non-native trout were removed from above the barrier using electrofishing techniques. A ratio of 7:1 RGCT to non-native trout was found and all non-natives were removed from the stream (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Mature Rio Grande cutthroat trout collected during non-native trout removals on Paloceinto Creek, Camino Real Ranger District**

**Boreal toad** surveys were conducted by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish at the Trout Lakes, Canjilon Ranger District and adult toads were found. The reports for these surveys are available by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

#### Management Indicator Species

Eleven management indicator species (MIS) are identified in the 1986 Carson Forest Plan. Thirteen of the 21 forest plan management areas are to be managed for quality MIS habitat. Table 2 provides a list of management areas and what MIS habitat must be considered when activities are planned within these areas.

**Table 2. Forest plan management areas associated with management indicator species**

		<i>Erik</i>	<i>Bighorn</i>	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Abert's Squirrel</i>	<i>Red Squirrel</i>	<i>Hairy Woodpecker</i>	<i>Parmigan</i>	<i>Plain titmouse</i>	<i>Brewer's Sparrow</i>	<i>Resident Trout</i>	<i>Macro invertebrates</i>
1	Spruce <40% Slopes	X					X					
2	Spruce >40% Slopes	X					X					
3	Mixed Conifer <40%	X		X		X	X					
4	Ponderosa Pine <40%	X		X	X		X					
5	Mixed Conifer & Ponderosa Pine >40%	X		X	X	X	X					

		<i>Elk</i>	<i>Bighorn</i>	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Albert's Squirrel</i>	<i>Red Squirrel</i>	<i>Hairy Woodpecker</i>	<i>Parmigan</i>	<i>Plain titmouse</i>	<i>Brewer's Sparrow</i>	<i>Resident Trout</i>	<i>Macro invertebrates</i>
6	Aspen	X		X			X					
7	Unsuitable Timber	X		X	X	X	X					
8	Pinon/ Juniper	X							X			
9	High Elevation Grassland	X	X					X				
10	Low Elevation Grasslands											
11	Revegetation Areas	X		X								
12	Sagebrush	X								X		
13	Oak	X		X								
14	Riparian	X					X				X	X
15	Potential Recreation Sites											
16	Recreation Sites											
17	Wilderness											
18	Wild & Scenic River											
19	Special Area											
20	Semi-Primitive											
21	Valle Vidal											

The summary of population and habitat trends for the MIS identified in the Carson Forest Plan provides biologists with a forest-wide evaluation of MIS habitat to use when analyzing a project's site-specific effects. The original assessment was completed in 2003, but it is a living document with updates as more information, published research, and habitat and population studies, became available. The document was last updated in 2011. The 2011 MIS assessment has been posted on the Carson National Forest website. Portions of the text in this wildlife section were taken directly from the MIS assessment, therefore when seeking references for the information, refer to the [2011 MIS Assessment](#).

In cooperation with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, aerial surveys were conducted for elk in FY2011 and 2012, to determine reproductive and adaptive success. Surveys were done in various locations on the Carson National Forest. In 2013, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish conducted elk surveys within Game Management Units (GMU) 51, 52, and 55 (Valle Vidal). Supporting documentation for elk aerial monitoring is located at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish State Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Elk numbers had steadily increased over the past two decades; however, a decline in herds occurred a few years ago. This decline was believed to be due to drought and increased hunting permits to meet State herd population objectives. Monitoring in 2009 indicated the elk population on the Carson National Forest are stable. The newly estimated population ranges (2009-2010) for GMUs, including all or portions of the Jicarilla, Camino Real, and Questa ranger districts, either include or exceed virtually every population estimate previously developed using the sightability index survey method. And, although estimates are no longer available for the separate GMUs that overlap with the Tres Piedras, Canjilon, and El Rito ranger districts, the population estimate for the north-central Region (that includes all of these GMUs) shows a substantial population of elk in this area.

Taking into account the condition and trend of elk habitat on the Carson National Forest, existing data, and the continued increase in the number of hunting permits issued by the NM Department of Game and Fish, the Carson National Forest is sustaining stable populations of elk. Overall, the habitat condition and trend for Rocky Mountain elk on the Carson National Forest is considered fair and stable.

Annual counts of the reintroduced **Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep** population in the Wheeler Peak, Latir and Pecos Wilderness Areas (majority of the Pecos herd is on the Santa Fe National Forest, with some use on the Carson) are conducted by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Surveys have been conducted from 2009 to present. This monitoring is performed to determine the herd's reproductive and adaptive success. Populations within the Wheeler Peak and Latir herds for 2013 are at or slightly above carrying capacity. To address carrying capacity for the Wheeler Peak herd, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish is planning to trap and translocate 35-50 bighorn sheep from this herd in 2014. The Latir herd is experiencing an increase in ewes and lambs. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has implemented a ewe hunt in 2013 and are planning another ewe hunt in 2014. The habitat for the all three populations of bighorn sheep is considered stable and in good condition.

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory has conducted surveys throughout the Southern Rocky Mountains and notes that populations of this species have shown dramatic increases after natural disasters, such as burns or major insect outbreaks. In 2004 they detected sufficient numbers of this species to provide a density estimate in the beetle infested piñon-juniper habitat. Overall, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory has detected the hairy woodpecker on all the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory point-count transect monitoring projects. On the Jicarilla Ranger District, three additional surveys did not yield any hairy woodpeckers. Additional surveys were conducted in 2013. The Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions report, which includes Carson National Forest monitoring, is available at the Carson National Forest Supervisor's Office.

Point count transects for breeding birds, which include **hairy woodpecker, juniper titmouse, and Brewer's sparrow** are conducted on the Carson National Forest. These transects were monitored from 2003-2006. Three point-count transects for breeding birds were conducted on the Jicarilla Ranger District in 2011. These were replicates of established transects conducted by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory Breeding Bird Survey Program (transects PJ-01, PJ-14, and PJ-32). Results were reported in Migratory Bird and Vegetation Survey Report prepared for: Jicarilla Ranger District, Carson National Forest, sponsored by Williams Production RMT Company & Green River Energy Resources. These counts provide trend data of neo-tropical migratory bird migrations, as well as for management indicator species trend information.

Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's Office. No surveys were conducted on the Jicarilla Ranger District in 2013.



**Hairy woodpecker** is found in all forested habitats. Bark beetle outbreaks typically stimulate an increase in woodpecker populations. The bark beetle outbreaks starting in 2003 and continuing through 2013 have resulted in a changing landscape of the piñon-juniper community on the Jicarilla Ranger District. The majority of the piñon-juniper community now contains only a small percentage of piñon pine. Similarly, die-off in the Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine communities has altered those landscapes. Although all of the die-offs have slowed in recent years, the resulting vegetation communities have been altered. Some species have benefited from this alteration, like the hairy woodpecker, providing habitat for woodpecker populations.

The forested habitats preferred by the hairy woodpecker correspond to Carson Forest Plan management areas - MA 1, MA 2, MA 3, MA 4, MA 5, MA 6, and MA 7. The estimated habitat trend for hairy woodpecker on the Carson National Forest is considered to be in an upward trend.



**Juniper titmouse** is found throughout the piñon-juniper forest type which is Carson Forest Plan Management Area 8. Forest management activities have maintained the habitat for this bird; natural causal organisms caused a loss of habitat in some areas. The trend in juniper titmouse habitat acres has decreased. This is a downward trend of about two percent of available juniper titmouse habitat on the Carson National Forest, since 1986. Monitoring has shown that approximately 327,120 acres of piñon-juniper habitat has been affected by piñon bark beetle during its outbreak from 2000 to 2008; however, the data is not detailed enough to determine how much juniper titmouse habitat has been removed.

Forest management activities have not changed the amount of sagebrush lands available for **Brewer's sparrow** habitat. Sagebrush lands correspond to Management Area 12. Habitat trend for Brewer's sparrow on the Carson National Forest is up by about 55 percent. Existing habitat for the Brewer's sparrow on the Carson National Forest is in good condition with an upward trend.



**Abert's squirrel** surveys showed the density of 0.01 squirrels / ha; 1 squirrel / 247 acres, in 2005 and 2006. Monitoring was conducted in 2008. On the 31 plots monitored since 2003 the overall mean density of 0.016 squirrels / ha; 1 squirrel / 154 acres was recorded. When the six addition plots established in 2006 in the Valle Vidal was included, this changed the mean density to 0.019 squirrel / 130 acres; 1 squirrel / 130 acres. While the numbers are still low in comparison to other studies, they are similar numbers found in Utah in 2003 and in the San Juan National Forest in 2004 (Frey 2005<sup>2</sup>). Comparing monitoring results on the Carson with other recent studies conducted in Arizona and

<sup>2</sup> Frey, J. 2005. Abert's squirrel (*Sciurus aberti*) monitoring on Carson National Forest, New Mexico, 2005. Final Contract Report AG-83A7-P-05-0002 Completion Report. Carson National Forest. December 6, 2005. 32 p.

Utah, two patterns are apparent to Dr. Frey. First, it appears the entire region experienced declines in Abert's squirrel densities from 2001 to 2004. Second, the regional declines are probably attributable to drought conditions. In north-central New Mexico, drought conditions began in 2000 and extended into the beginning of 2004. In contrast with previous years, moisture was high during 2006; therefore, the increased density of Abert's on the Carson in 2006 is most likely due to increased moisture. No Abert's squirrel surveys were conducted in 2013.



**Red squirrel** is a huntable species as indicated by the 2013-2014 Hunting Proclamation distributed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The red squirrel is an indicator for coniferous and mixed forests. These types of forests correspond to Carson Forest Plan management Areas MA 3, MA 5, MA 7. Red squirrel habitat of interlocking canopies in mixed conifer and spruce-fir is estimated to have increased by about 20 percent since 1986. Surveys have shown population levels are consistent with the rest of the state and the population appears to be stable throughout its range (Frey 2004<sup>3</sup>). No red squirrel surveys were conducted in 2013.

**Wild turkey** is an indicator species for the presence of old growth pine. With the increase of harvest (hunting) areas on the forest, it is reasonable to assume a population increase. Population trend can be determined based on increased areas where turkeys are found, increased hunting areas open to the public, and by hunter success. A shift in management practices to increased thinning and prescribed burning should improve conditions favorable to increasing turkey populations over time. Thinning to create clumpy conditions interspersed with openings can reduce competition and create larger tree diversity for roosting and openings for foraging. Prescribed fire would control dense tree reproduction and provide understory forage. Continued development of small, protected water sources and implementation of effective road closures in turkey habitat will also improve conditions. Subsequently, these forest activities will contribute to maintaining turkey populations.

Turkey habitats are located in management areas MA 1, MA 3, MA 4, MA 5, and MA 6. Turkey habitat from 1986 is estimated to have increased, with a slight upward trend of about one percent. There were no vegetation treatments done in FY 2013 that affect old growth pine stands.



**White-tailed ptarmigan** is an indicator species for the presence of alpine tundra and subalpine deciduous shrub. This corresponds to management area 9. The habitat for white-tailed ptarmigan is alpine tundra and subalpine deciduous shrub. Habitats in New Mexico are at the southern edge of the range of this species. By 1981 it was believed this species had become extirpated from the state and reintroduction efforts were made. There are two areas within New Mexico that are known to support the white-tailed ptarmigan. One is the Wheeler Peak Wilderness population and the other is the Pecos Wilderness population. No management actions have changed since the

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<sup>3</sup> Frey, J. 2004. Abert's squirrel (*Sciurus aberti*) monitoring and habitat analysis on Carson National Forest, New Mexico. A Final Contract Report R3-83A7-4-0038 Completion Report. Carson National Forest, December 9, 2004. 21p.

time of the Forest Plan to cause a change in the number of acres of available habitat on the Carson National Forest.

The most important characteristics of white-tailed ptarmigan wintering habitat is the presence of willow (*Salix* spp.) and soft snow to burrow in. Braun (1979)<sup>4</sup> observed the alpine vegetation was in excellent condition, but reported that within the Wheeler Peak Wilderness there is a lack of breeding areas and possibly winter use sites, and bush willows were not abundant. In contrast to the habitats throughout most of Colorado, Braun (1979) noted the taller *Salix* was almost completely lacking in the krummholz of the Wheeler Peak area. The dwarf mat forming varieties were locally abundant, but were unavailable from early November to mid-June. Braun also noted the tall willows were the most important factor in determining where ptarmigan occur in Colorado, as it comprises over 90 percent of their diet from October to June. He considered the lack of tall willow to be the limiting factor for ptarmigan in the Wheeler Peak area. Furthermore, Wolfe (2011)<sup>5</sup> considers the amount of intact, high alpine habitat is likely the primary factor limiting white-tailed ptarmigan distribution.

The Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey data layer indicates there are 10,106 acres of alpine tundra on the Carson National Forest (USDA 1987).<sup>6</sup> This does not mean there is any change in the trend of available habitat, but is a result of a variation in habitat mapping. Incidental observations show that portions of these habitats are still occupied. The overall habitat trend for the white-tailed ptarmigan is stable on the forest. Domestic sheep grazing has been eliminated in ptarmigan habitat that should eventually contribute to willow recovery, and subsequently an improved trend over time. Other potential habitat areas, such as Little Costilla Peak in the Valle Vidal, were visited in 2006. Little Costilla Peak should be considered a possible resting location, but it lacks habitat requirements. Big Costilla Peak on private lands west of the Valle Vidal has been reported to have adequate habitat, and sightings have been recorded. In 2007 and again in 2009, surveys were done on the Camino Real District, and the Carson National Forest can be contacted to obtain results. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish conducted surveys for this species for 2012 on the Wheeler Peak, Questa Ranger District. Survey reports can be obtained from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. No ptarmigan surveys were conducted in 2013.

While the actual numbers of ptarmigan on the forest are uncertain but appear to be low, the species is still present and the population trend appears to be stable across the forest. This trend is based on the conclusion that the Pecos Wilderness population has been established and the fact there has been sightings of ptarmigan in all three areas over the years supporting the fact the ptarmigan are remaining established on the forest in low numbers. It has never been expected that the Carson will achieve large breeding populations due to limitations of suitable habitat in the area.

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<sup>4</sup> Braun, C. E. 1979. White-tailed ptarmigan and sage grouse investigations, New Mexico. Memorandum to Jack R. Grieb, Director, Colorado Division of Wildlife. August 15, 1979.

Bull, E. L.; Blumton A. K. 1999. Effect of fuels reduction on American martens and their prey. Research Note PNW-RN-539. Pacific Northwest Research Sta., United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service Southwestern Region 9 p.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfe, D.H. 2006. Nesting documentation for the white-tailed ptarmigan in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, New Mexico. Publications of the Oklahoma Biological Survey 2nd Series, Volume 7: 21-23. 2006.

<sup>6</sup> USDA. 1987. Terrestrial Ecosystems Survey of the Carson National Forest. USDA Forest Service, Carson National Forest. Taos, NM. Originally Published 1987. Last revised 1993.

**Resident trout** species are used as indicator species for quality perennial streams and riparian vegetation. This corresponds to management area 14. Resident populations reproduce and sustain themselves in the wild. Defined also as “resident trout” in the Carson Forest Plan, rainbow, brown and brook trout are non-native species that have been stocked extensively in northern New Mexico during the last 100 years. Rio Grande cutthroat trout is the only native of the resident trout management indicator species. Approximately 440 miles of perennial stream on the Carson National Forest are known habitat for resident trout. Rainbow, brown or brook trout occupy about 50 percent (approximately 225 miles) of that habitat. Physical habitat conditions related to forest management activities and habitat trend for resident trout is stable. See wild trout population monitoring in Southwestern Region’s Sensitive Species section.

**Aquatic macroinvertebrates** or aquatic insects are found in lakes, streams, ponds, marshes and puddles and help maintain the health of the water ecosystem by eating bacteria and dead, decaying plants and animals. Local populations of certain aquatic macroinvertebrates are indicator species of high quality water. They are an indicator of overall aquatic conditions, quality of fisheries and associated riparian habitat. This habitat corresponds to management area 14 of the Carson National Forest Plan. For the purpose of analyzing the effects of forest management activities, the primary habitat requirement for aquatic macroinvertebrates is perennial water. Habitat conditions on the Carson National Forest vary by stream and by location within the stream. Overall, most habitats appear able to support diverse communities of aquatic macroinvertebrates. Stream habitat surveys, which are ongoing, will better qualify conditions in specific streams over time. Since the implementation of the Carson Forest Plan in most areas of the forest, physical condition of aquatic habitat appears to be stable or improved. Population trends for aquatic macroinvertebrates on the Carson National Forest appear to be stable.

No macroinvertebrate surveys were done in 2013.

## Riparian

### Goals:

To improve the condition of riparian areas through direct treatment and improved resource management, indirectly benefiting fish and wildlife habitat diversity, water quality, and water oriented dispersed recreation.

### Monitoring:

(1) Determine the response in riparian condition resulting from the implementation of the standards and guidelines and; (2) Monitor the activities and uses to insure they are within the Standards and Guidelines.

### Results:

Riparian health is a key to a sustainable, healthy forest ecosystem. Settlement activities (such as intensive grazing, and conversion to haying operations) in riparian areas significantly altered these systems in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s prior to presidential declarations making the public lands Forest Reserves. Although most of these systems have remarkably recovered, many still need improvement to regain their full natural function.

One area of recovery is east of the Talpa, New Mexico community on the Rito de la Olla (Pot Creek). Until the late 1960's the riparian area was grazed and used for haying operations. The shifting of grazing to other pastures within the allotment, reductions in permitted livestock, cessation of the haying operations all contributed to recovery of the riparian area. This particular riparian area is now home to the occupied habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher. This particular area is within the Miranda allotment; however, it is excluded from grazing.

Riparian condition surveys are being completed as a component of the fisheries surveys. These surveys also permit collection of information pertinent to the identification, location, and the condition of existing riparian areas. Properly functioning conditions are also being assessed. For key projects, baseline watershed quality information is being collected. Water quality information is being obtained and provided by the State of New Mexico. Table 3 displays the monitoring and inventories conducted in FY 2103 on the Carson National Forest.

**Table 3. Riparian-related inventory and monitoring conducted in FY 2013**

<b>Monitoring Type</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>What</b>
<b>Riparian inventory</b>	Black Lakes Allotment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 77 springs</li> <li>○ 97 wetlands (186 ac)</li> <li>○ 15 miles of stream channel</li> </ul>
	Ojos Ryan Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 12 springs</li> <li>○ 14 acres wetlands</li> <li>○ 10 miles of stream channel</li> </ul>
<b>Watershed condition monitoring</b>	Midnight Fire Burn Severity Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 400 acres</li> </ul>
<b>BMP<sup>7</sup> implementation monitoring</b>	Alamitos Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alamitos Fish Barrier</li> </ul>
<b>BMP effectiveness monitoring</b>	Valle Vidal Allotment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Comanche Creek bank stabilization (7 mi)</li> </ul>
	Valle de Los Romeros Riparian Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 3 miles motorized trail</li> <li>○ 10 headcut stabilization structures</li> </ul>
	Osha Pass Riparian Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Motorized trail (4 mi)</li> </ul>
	Rio Pueblo at Agua Piedra Day Use Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stream bank stabilization structures</li> </ul>
<b>Road BMP effectiveness</b>	Rio Chiquito Canyon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FR 437 (9 mi) after heavy rains</li> <li>○ FR 438 (8.5 mi) after heavy rains</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> BMP – Best management practice

Monitoring Type	Location	What
monitoring	Pot Creek Canyon	

## Special Areas (Management Area 19)

### Goals:

The proposed Arellano Canyon Research Natural Area, the Tres Piedras Haplopappus microcephalus Botanical Area, the Middle Fork Lake/Sangre de Cristo Pea Clam Zoological Area and other potential research natural areas will be maintained and protected.

### Monitoring:

NEPA analysis of site-specific proposed actions include the evaluation of effects on special areas, to insure that they are not adversely impacted. An interdisciplinary team evaluates a proposal through the NEPA process and recommends restrictions or corrective actions if inspections reveal adverse impacts on the potential RNA or endangered plants or animals.

### Results:

No uses or management activities on the Carson National Forest are causing adverse impacts to special areas. The continuing drought could possibly reduce the size of Middle Fork Lake which could cause a change in suitable habitat in the Pea Clam Zoological Area. The increased moisture levels in 2007 contributed to Middle Fork Lake maintaining near normal size.

## Physical Environment

### Soil and Water 1- Watershed Conditions

#### Goals:

To improve unsatisfactory watershed conditions on 25,000 acres by 2020. As a result of this change, productivity of the land is expected to improve.

#### Monitoring:

Improvement of watershed condition on the Carson National Forest is based on certain activities that will increase or enhance ground cover conditions. These activities include prescribed burning, converting sagebrush to native grasses and forbs, improving livestock distribution and utilization on grazing allotments, thinning densely stocked forested stands, installing sediment retention structures, and implementing proper grazing management through National Environmental Policy Act analysis for permit re-issuance.

The Forest Plan monitoring plan identifies sampling of percent ground cover every three years as specified in Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey Handbook, Chapter 8 as the method for monitoring watershed conditions. Vegetative ground cover was extensively monitored using various

methodologies, principally associated with grazing management and compliance with the annual operating instructions and permit terms and conditions (utilization monitoring, RAM, and pre and post season pasture evaluations).

### **Results:**

Activities that improved forest watershed conditions were accomplished on over 3,680 acres in 2013. The lower accomplishment was due to a reduced window in the fall for prescribed burning. The Forest Service was not in operation for two weeks in October, when conditions can be optimal for burning.

The trend in the types of projects proposed on the Carson National Forest is towards improving watershed conditions and completing treatments that are light on the land. The wildland/urban interface projects proposed in the coming year involve primarily thinning and prescribed burning. Supporting documentation is located at the respective ranger districts.

**Table 4. Some highlights of watershed improvement work 2007 -2013**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Road maintenance (mi) <sup>8</sup>	373	479	768	580	430	454	478
Road obliteration (mi)	2	0	8.5	0	0	10	14
Reseeding (ac)	0	350	100	200	473	417	350
Sagebrush conversion (ac)	0	350	839	200	567	400	350
Thinning (ac)	400	406	956	1,520	1,273	990	1,486
Prescribed burning	3,855	5,927	5,596	4,098	2,005	3,013	1,493

Drought conditions have caused authorized stocking levels on most allotments to be reduced (Table 5). In 2013, the average authorized stocking levels for cattle and sheep were 27 and 37 percent less than permitted, respectively. Thirteen percent of the allotments were not stocked at all in 2013.

**Table 5. Proportion of permitted stocking levels actually authorized by season for each allotment 2008-2013**

100 = no grazing of domestic livestock; 0 = permitted numbers of domestic livestock grazed

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Angostura	-6	0	0	0	0	-8
Black Lake	-50	-55	-44	-57	-65	-62
Capulin	0	0	0	0	0	-7
East Fernandez	-31	0	-42	0	0	0

<sup>8</sup> Road Maintenance is done on a spot basis. These are miles of road where the maintenance was actually done. Many miles are driven over to arrive at the location where maintenance is needed. Miles not needing maintenance are not reflected in mileages in this table.

Allotment	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Flechado	-16	-24	0	-7	-25	-43
Knob	-5	0	-20	0	0	0
Luna-Chacon	0	-1	0	0	0	-19
Rio Chiquito	-20	-15	-1	-83	-62	-88
Rio Pueblo	-90	-50	0	-50	0	-25
Santa Barbara	-18	-14	0	0	0	-24
Tienditas	-30	0	-8	-15	-36	-46
Trampas	-30	-30	-25	0	0	-21
Bateman	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canjilon	0	0	8	11	14	-27
Canjilon Creek	-20	-20	0	0	-60	-8
Cebolla	-6	-12	-5	-5	-12	-30
English	0	0	6	0	0	0
Frenchy-Juaquin	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jarosa	-3	0	0	0	0	-12
Mesa	0	0	0	0	0	-20
Mogote	-10	0	-5	-9	-29	-23
Mogotito	3	5	6	0	0	-10
Nutrias	2	0	0	0	0	-84
Oso	0	0	0	0	0	-31
Alamosa	-6	0	-7	-20	-15**	-20
Comanche	-24	0	-100	-100	-85	-24
Cano	0	0	0	0	0	0
El Rito Lobato			-24	-30	-44	-55
Escondido	0	0	0	0	0	-84
Jarita Mesa	-4	0	-7	-4**	-22**	-90
Jarosita	0	0	0	0	0	-81
Salvador Complex	-60	0	-77 c/c -44 e/l	-77 c/c -55 e/l	-75 c/c -51 e/l	-75 c/c -59 e/l
San Gabriel	-18	0	-15	-11	-35	-92
Bancos	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
Cabresto	-52	-100	-54	-35	-58	-46
Carracas	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
Laguna Seca	0	-16	-10	-61	0	-49
Valencia	0	-13	-13	-100	-49	-53
Vaqueros	-53	-59	-50	-75	-53	-48

Allotment	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Apache Complex	-48	-22	-16	-4 c/c -70 e/l	-36 c/c -4 e/l	-10 c/c -72 e/l
Carson Mojino	-98	-16	-47	-32	-32	-7
Cerro Azul	0	-81	-10	-7	-11	-20
East Piñon	-94	-61	-100	-100	-80	-63
Jawbone	-68	-10	-61	-11 c/c 0 e/l	-11 c/c -11 e/l	-13 c/c -10 e/l
Lagunitas	0	-10	-7	-12	0	-10
San Antone	-10	-94	0	-10	-12	-20
San Antonio Mtn	-74	-22	-40	-34	-33	-33
Santos	0	-11	+44	-20	-100	0
Servilleta	-76	-46	-87	-100	-100	-9 c/c 0 e/l
Spring Creek	-15	-41	-25	-25	-26	-1
Sublette	-4	-6	-6	-6	-6	-25
TCLP	-24	-100	-23	-21	-21	-20
Tio Gordito	-15	-17	-29	-46	-41	-41
Tio Grande	-10	-22	-6	-10	-9	-20
Tres Orejas	-100	-82	-100	-100	-100	-9 c/c -0 e/l
Tusas	-15	-16	-13	-38	-17	-30
Arroyo Hondo	-27	-33	-30	-57	-57	-80
Black Copper/RR	-100	0	-100	0	0	0
Bobcat	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
Columbine	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
Deer Creek	-24	-24	-24	-24	-24	-30
Goose Creek	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
La Cal	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
La Lama	-75	-75	-75	-75	-75	-75
Lake Fork Baldy	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
Main Fork	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
Midnight-Mallette	-38	-37	-35	-37	-28	-29
Rito Segundo	-69	-100	-100	-69	-69	-74
San Cristobal	-35	-35	-35	-19	-15	-91
Sawmill Park	100	100	100	100	100	-100
Valle Vidal	0	0	0	-20	0	-11

## **Soil and Water 2- Best Management Practices**

### **Goals:**

Production of water from forestlands will meet State water quality standards.

### **Monitoring:**

Established designated qualified personnel to check best management practices (BMP) (i.e., seeding disturbed areas, water barring roads, etc.) for implementation on the ground. Best management practices monitoring follows Regional evaluation guidelines and procedures.

### **Results:**

The application of BMPs is standard procedure with any ground disturbing activity undergoing environmental analysis. Implementation of BMPs is the responsibility of each district ranger. Field trips are taken to validate on-site BMP implementation. It is recommended that more emphasis be put on BMP training and the development of a BMP monitoring program to track actual implementation and effectiveness. Several water quality projects have been implemented on the Carson National Forest:

- Baseline and existing condition information are being collected in cooperation with the New Mexico Environment Department for several creeks within the Carson National Forest boundary. Collected information will help determine whether these reaches are in compliance with New Mexico water quality standards. Supporting documentation is located at the respective ranger station and the Supervisor's Office.
- Identification of existing and potential non-point source water pollution on the Carson National Forest is ongoing and helps determine where watershed work would provide the most significant results.

## **Soil and Water 3- Roads**

### **Goals:**

To assure that best management practices (BMP) are implemented in all phases of road design, construction and maintenance. To minimize erosion and maintain on-site productivity and water quality and to assure that road density for public use is not exceeded.

### **Monitoring:**

Road design, construction, maintenance and density.

### **Results:**

BMPs are standard mitigation measures when any road construction is proposed. Analysis of the proposal and alternatives are usually conducted with the assumption that BMPs are integrated into the activities. Much of the maintenance performed on Forest roads is structural measures (e.g., water bars, crowning, resurfacing, etc.) through inspection and maintenance activities in

order to minimize erosion, maintain on-site productivity and water quality. Supporting documentation is located at the respective ranger districts.

**Supervisor's Office:**

- Maintained approximately 478 miles of forest roads forest wide (except for the Jicarilla Ranger District.

**Jicarilla Ranger District:**

- Road maintenance was performed through our continued partnership with the oil and gas companies via the Carson Roads Committee. In addition, about 188 miles of open roads are maintained on a timely basis to access gas well locations and minimize resource impacts from road use.

## **Human Environment**

### **Facilities 2**

**Goals:**

Travel management objectives will be developed for all forest development roads and travelways. This will further determine and verify which roads are needed and should be included or remain on the forest development roads system, which are needed only periodically and should be closed, and which should be added to the obliteration list. New construction of Forest Development Roads is primarily for timber sales and oil & gas development. Approximately 70% of these roads should be local terminal functional classification and should be closed promptly after resource management activities have ended.

**Monitoring:**

The NEPA process to comply with the 2005 Travel Management Rule was completed for the Carson National Forest in September 2013. The Carson National Forest manages 2,253 miles of road open to motor vehicle use. In 2002, an inventory was performed on level 3, 4 and 5 roads. The result was a Forest-wide Road Analysis (RAP) for these arterial and collector roads. The RAP was completed in April 2003. In addition over 3,777 miles of road, levels 1 and 2, have been inventoried, documenting conditions of road surface, drainage, sight distance, and proper signing since 2001. Facility, road, bridge and dam maintenance monitoring is ongoing, although minimal.

**Results:**

In fiscal year 2013 there was no new road construction. A portion (1.2 mi) of FR 437 was reconstructed to remove the road from a riparian zone and avoid an area where beaver activity was impacting the road. Beaver dams increased the size of the riparian zone necessitating relocation of the road.

## Recreation 1

### **Goals:**

Provide the opportunity for the public to obtain a variety of recreation experiences by managing the natural resource setting and the activities that occur within it. Provide a spectrum of opportunities on the Carson National Forest from Semi-primitive to Urban, with emphasis on the less developed end of the spectrum. To offer a balanced level of developed and dispersed recreation experiences, demand for dispersed recreation will be within capacity. Quality of experience will increase due to more intensive management.

### **Monitoring:**

Effects on dispersed recreation are evaluated in the majority of environmental analyses for project proposals – whether or not they are recreation related. Changes to the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) class are assessed and avoided if possible.

### **Results:**

No decisions on site-specific projects in 2013 have caused an analysis area's ROS class to change.

## Recreation 2

### **Goals:**

The Carson National Forest will offer a wide range of opportunities for developed sites in the public and private sector to support recreationists, to provide barrier-free access, and to implement recreational strategies.

### **Monitoring:**

Assessment of goal achievement for the recreation program is based on professional judgment by recreation specialists, public comments and information from Regional, Forest and District recreation managers.

### **Results:**

Customer satisfaction on how well we are managing the Carson National Forest is monitored through evaluation cards, newspaper articles and comments from recreation fee envelopes and walk-in visitors. Developed campgrounds and picnic areas are monitored at least on a weekly basis during the summer months by Forest Service law enforcement, district personnel, campground hosts and/or concessionaires, as well as through cooperative agreements with state and county law enforcement. These comments provide input on the conditions of developed recreation sites, the presence of user conflicts and public safety problems. Supporting documentation is located at each ranger station or in the Forest Supervisor's office.

The National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) project for the Carson National Forest was completed and placed in the public domain in 2008. It is available electronically at: [National](#)

[NVUM Website](#). Continued surveying for the NVUM project was conducted in 2013 final results have not yet been disclosed.

Recreation use and demand appears to be experiencing a small, steady growth. Use is concentrated at developed sites, streams, rivers, lakes, wilderness, and backcountry areas. Several nearly barrier-free recreational facilities have been provided in recent years at Santa Barbara Campground, Echo Amphitheater Picnic Area, and Hopewell Lake Campground. Monitoring ski area operations has not exposed any noncompliance or safety violations.

Taos Ski Valley (TSV) and Red River Ski Area (RRSA) operations are monitored at least once a week during the winter by the Questa snow ranger. Sipapu Ski Area operations are monitored at least once a month. Site inspections by Forest Service lift engineers are made at least once a season at each ski area. Supporting documentation for monitoring operations at TSV and RRSA is located at the Questa Ranger Station and at each ski area. Supporting documentation for monitoring operations at Sipapu is located at the Camino Real Ranger Station and at Sipapu Ski Area. Supporting documentation of lift inspections is located at the Southwestern Regional office in Albuquerque.

Table 6 provides the number of skier visits for the three downhill ski areas on the Carson National Forest since 2002. The Enchanted Forest continues to provide quality cross-country skiing opportunities. The area served 4,784 skier visits in 2013. Visitation per year is dependent on snow conditions. Snow conditions or lack of snow also influences the number of skiers. Red River Ski Area, Sipapu Ski Area and Taos Ski Valley all permit snowboarding with the snowboarders reflected in the number of skier visits. Overall, skiers/snowboarders are satisfied with the conditions of the three ski areas on the Carson National Forest. Taos Ski Valley's Phase 1 projects of its Master Development Plan were approved in August 2012. Implementation of Phase 1 projects began in the fall of 2012 and summer of 2013. Monitoring to assure projects and mitigation measures are implemented as authorized is ongoing.

**Table 6. Skier visits to respective downhill ski areas 2002-2013 ski seasons**

<b>Ski Season</b>	<b>Taos Ski Valley</b>	<b>Red River Ski Area</b>	<b>Sipapu Ski Area</b>
2002-2003	249,682	101,816	15,874
2003-2004	224,565	104,406	18,137
2004-2005	237,441	84,133*	19,791
2005-2006	155,003	76,140	17,751
2006-2007	208,187	83,246	27,084
2007-2008	241,115	86,619	30,151
2008-2009	241,115	89,619	38,732
2009-2010	256,879	91,975	37,453
2010-2011	193,716	83,690	38,374
2011-2012	210,237	88,596	37,442
2012-2013	220,579	82,730	41,265

\* Lower number due to change in method of obtaining visitor count.

## **Recreation 3**

### **Goals:**

Help the public enjoy their forest visit and instill an understanding of the resources and uses of their national forests. Wildlife recreation use will increase by 183 percent by the end of the planning period. This is within capacity for this type of use.

### **Monitoring:**

No specific monitoring of wildlife recreation use has taken place on the Carson National Forest. The NM Department of Game and Fish regulates hunting and fishing on the National Forest System lands. The annual number of permits/licenses sold can be provided by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

### **Results:**

Inquiries and comments received at the ranger stations and the Forest Supervisor's Office verify that many visitors come to see wildlife through active bird watching, camping, hiking and cross-country skiing.

## **Recreation 4**

### **Goals:**

All developments are high quality and well maintained. They fill the needs of the users.

### **Monitoring:**

Assessment of goal achievement for the recreation program is based on professional judgment by recreation specialists, public comments and information from Regional, Forest and District recreation managers.

### **Results:**

Customer satisfaction on how well the forest is managed is monitored through evaluation cards, newspaper articles and comments from recreation fee envelopes and walk-in visitors. Developed campgrounds and picnic areas are monitored at least on a weekly basis during the summer months by Forest Service law enforcement, district personnel, campground hosts and/or concessionaires, as well as through cooperative agreements with state and county law enforcement. These comments provide input on the conditions of developed recreation sites, the presence of user conflicts and public safety problems. Supporting documentation is located at each ranger station or in the Forest Supervisor's office.

Recreation facility construction projects include reviews to ensure contract work meets specifications, environmental assessment requirements, and to monitor how well the design meets user needs. Such reviews have been performed at the Santa Barbara Campground, Echo Amphitheater Picnic Area, and Hopewell Lake Campground. Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's office.

Customer satisfaction on the condition of developed sites varies depending on the location and the age of the facility. The newest campgrounds, such as Agua Piedra and Hopewell Lake, are experiencing positive comments. On the other hand, Taos Canyon facilities are heavily used and sites closest to Taos are frequently vandalized. The campgrounds near Red River are heavily used during the summer months. In response to visitor comments, the Red Rock Campground is being analyzed for upgrades.

The National Visitor Use Monitoring project for the Carson National Forest was completed and placed into the public domain in 2008. This information is available electronically at: [National NVUM Website](#). Continued surveying for the National Visitor Use Monitoring project was conducted in 2013, but the final results have not been disclosed.

## **Recreation 5**

### **Goals:**

Establish a full spectrum of trail opportunities, considering all modes of travel, ranging from challenging and adventurous to opportunities for people with disabilities, and give special emphasis to the protection, development and management of specially designated areas and trails.

### **Monitoring:**

Assessment of goal achievement for the recreation program is based on professional judgment by recreation specialists, public comments and information from Regional, Forest and District recreation managers.

### **Results:**

Hunters who do not rely on the use of ATV's continue to be concerned over the increasing use of ATVs on the forest during hunting season. The forest has been limited in its ability to enforce motorized use off of designated roads and trails. ATV use in unauthorized areas has become a significant problem on the forest for some districts where recreation use is moderate to high. However, the proactive travel management implementation plan, that uses tools such as effective signing and a collaborative approach to motorized vehicle use monitoring, may reverse this trend.

The NEPA process to comply with the 2005 Travel Management Rule was completed for the Carson National Forest in September 2013. The Carson National Forest manages 2,253 miles of road designated for motor vehicle use. In 2002, an inventory was performed on level 3, 4 and 5 roads. The result was a forest-wide RAP for these arterial and collector roads. The RAP was completed in April 2003. In addition over 3,777 miles of road, levels 1 and 2, have been inventoried, documenting conditions of road surface, drainage, sight distance, and proper signing since 2001. Facility, road, bridge and dam maintenance monitoring is ongoing, although minimal.

Segments of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) are located on the Canjilon, El Rito, and Tres Piedras ranger districts. In 2013, volunteer and partnership efforts resulted in 2 miles of new trail construction and 24 miles of maintenance on existing portions of the trail. In addition, biological and archeological surveys were completed to support the out-year program objectives. Each year, significant progress continues to be made on the CDNST. By 2018, the CDNST will be fully implemented on the forest.

In addition, the following trails-related projects were completed to provide a quality recreational experience on the forest, while protecting natural resources. Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's office.

**Table 7. Miles of forest trail activities 2004-2013**

Activity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Trail maintenance	105	106	42	31	72	140	128	120	112
Trail condition surveys	0	8	1	5	9	0	22	0	27
Trail reconstruction	0	4	0	6	0	0	0	10	3

## Recreation 6

### Goals:

Potential wilderness characteristics will be maintained in Management Area 20, in order that the areas can be considered for multiple use or wilderness recommendation when a new plan is prepared in 10 -15 years.

### Monitoring:

In 1999, the President of the United States initiated the Roadless Area Conservation analysis for all National Forest System (NFS) lands. The Carson National Forest's Management Area 20 includes all inventoried roadless areas identified in the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE II), with the exception of a portion allocated for potential expansion of Sipapu Ski Area. The nation-wide Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule would prohibit any road building or timber harvesting in most RARE II inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule was promulgated in 2000. The rule was a source of litigation since 2000. Court rulings in 2013 brought the litigation to an end. The Carson National Forest continues to maintain the integrity of the roadless areas on the forest pending the outcome of the rule making process (additional rules), other methods of congressional intent concerning the roadless issue, or designation by congress of its intent with individual roadless areas.

### Results:

For the most part, the implementation of the Roadless Area Conservation proposal and/or its successor would duplicate protection for Management Area 20 already in place through Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Through the travel management process, corrections to the forest's corporate roads database are being made to eliminate any roads that are incorrectly shown as open on the forest's visitor map.

## Recreation 7

### Goals:

Trails will be reconstructed and maintained at a level that provides public safety, travel and resource protection.

### Monitoring:

The assessment is based on professional judgment of recreation specialists, public comments, review of recent environmental analyses that included recreation assessments and information from Regional, Forest and District recreation managers

### Results:

There are approximately 584 miles of forest system trails (2013 forest corporate trails database query). Forest trails are used by both recreationists and grazing permittees. Depending on season of use and time of week, use levels can be moderate to heavy depending on the location of the trail and trailhead. For example, trails that originate out of areas such as Taos Ski Valley and the town of Red River receive more use than more remote trails. Forest-wide, only a small portion of trailheads provide adequate recreation opportunity, Leave No Trace, and interpretive information. Many trails do not meet trail standards (clearing, logging out, tread maintenance, signing, nonexistent trail logs, etc.) due to budget/staff limitations. Management decisions regarding acceptable limits, zoning, and resource emphases are often made informally, frequently lacking the support of coordinated plans or professionally established analysis methods. At this time, the use of volunteer efforts provides the ability for the forest to maintain and/or improve trail conditions. Volunteer and force account efforts allowed the forest to maintain 112.4 miles of trail to standard in 2013.

On the Camino Real Ranger District, all trail work occurred in or near the Pecos Wilderness. Maintenance activities included tree/brush clearing, trail drainage, and tread maintenance. Trail maintenance efforts reduced erosion and sedimentation into adjacent streams by redirecting use to established trails.

On the Questa Ranger District, there was continued law enforcement activities and signing to address recreational ATV use and the resource damage that can result from this activity. Approximately 90 percent of areas that have been identified as having ATV-related resource damage have been identified, barriers installed and/or signed.

**Table 8. Trail maintenance for 2013**

District	Trail Name	Miles	Maintenance Type
Camino Real	Trampas Lakes (FT 31)	1	Logged out, tread work
	Hidden Lake (FT 45)	0.8	Logged out
	San Leonardo (FT 30)	2	Logged out
	Serpent Lake (FT19)	4	Logged out
	Jicarita Creek (FT 38)	1	Logged out, signage

District	Trail Name	Miles	Maintenance Type
	West Fork (FT 25)	8.6	Logged out, brushing
	Middle Fork (FT 24)	11.7	Logged out, brushing
	East Fork (FT 26)	4.5	Logged out
	Divide (FT 3)	3	Signage (cairns)
<b>Tres Piedras</b>	Continental Divide	24	Logged out, tread work
<b>Questa</b>	Italianos (FT 59)	3	Logged out, brushing
	Yerba (FT 61)	3.9	Logged out, tread work
	Gavilan (FT 2.7)	2.7	Logged out, brushing
	Manzanita (FT 58)	4.2	Logged out, brushing
	Middle Fork (RR)	5	Logged out, brushing
	Lake Fork (FT 82)	4.7	Logged out, brushing
	Bull Creek (FT 85)	7	Logged out, brushing
	Midnight (FT 81)	5.8	Logged out
	Wheeler Peak (FT 67)	1.25	Tread work
	Wheeler Peak (FT 90)	0.25	Logged out, brushing
	Williams Lake (FT 62)	2	Tread work
	East Fork (FT 56)	5.2	Logged out, brushing
	Sawmill Park (FT 55)	4	Logged out
	San Cristobal (FT 78)	2.8	Logged out, brushing
	<b>TOTAL</b>	112.4	

## Wilderness 1

### Goals:

Maintain an enduring high quality wilderness and provide a quality recreational experience.

### Monitoring:

The assessment is based on professional judgment of recreation specialists, public comments, and information from Regional, Forest and District recreation managers. Volunteers and/or recreation specialists perform wilderness patrols several times during a summer. Patrols include inspections of trail conditions, dispersed camping areas and outfitter/guide permit use. Supporting documentation is located at each ranger station.

### Results:

Wilderness use is primarily day-use by recreationists and grazing permittees. Wilderness use is increasing slightly and is primarily concentrated along trails in the Wheeler Peak, Pecos wilderness areas, and Columbine-Hondo Wilderness Study Area. The use of the Latir Wilderness and the Cruces Basin Wilderness is increasing. Much of the use in these two wilderness areas is

for fishing. Most trailheads provide information about recreational opportunities and wilderness resource conservation issues.

Several groups are in the process of requesting the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness Study Area change from its current status to a designated wilderness area. Since designation must be made through the U.S. Congress, it is not known when this process may be completed.

Regular patrols are becoming more infrequent as the number of district employees is reduced. Public complaints about the presence/impacts of cattle grazing on aesthetics and ecosystems have occurred. Many trails do not meet trail standards (clearing, logging out, tread maintenance, signing, nonexistent trail logs, etc.) due to budget/staff limitations. Management decisions regarding acceptable limits, zoning and resource emphases are often made informally, frequently lacking the support of coordinated plans or professionally established analysis methods.

## **Wilderness 2**

### **Goals:**

Maintain an enduring high quality wilderness trail system that is a source of minimal resource damage.

### **Monitoring:**

The assessment is based on professional judgment of recreation specialists, public comments and information from Regional, Forest and District recreation managers.

### **Results:**

Regular patrols are becoming more infrequent as the number of district employees is reduced each year. Wilderness use is primarily day-use by recreationists and grazing permittees. Use is primarily concentrated along trails in the Wheeler Peak and Pecos Wilderness Areas and Columbine-Hondo Wilderness Study Area. Overall, use has slightly increased, with the exception of the new Wheeler Peak Trail (FT 90), which takes off near Williams Lake. Use of this trail, constructed several years ago, has significantly increased daily visitation to Wheeler Peak. The use of the Latir Wilderness and the Cruces Basin Wilderness is also increasing slightly. Much of the use in these two wilderness areas is for fishing.

Public complaints about the presence/impacts of cattle grazing on aesthetics and ecosystems have occurred. The Cruces Basin Wilderness was established with the permitted use of grazing. Most trailheads provide information about recreational opportunities and wilderness resource conservation issues.

Many trails do not meet trail standards (clearing, logging out, tread maintenance, signing, nonexistent trail logs, etc.) due to budget/staff limitations. Management decisions regarding acceptable limits, zoning and resource emphases are often made informally, frequently lacking the support of coordinated plans or professionally established analysis methods. Supporting documentation is located at each ranger station.

## **Wild and Scenic Rivers**

### **Goals:**

Conduct a Wild and Scenic River eligibility assessment on all river and stream segments on the Carson National Forest. Maintain and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing conditions of eligible and designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.

### **Monitoring:**

Eligibility and classification assessments have been conducted on all ranger districts. These assessments involved an analysis team of field personnel – such as a biologist, hydrologist/soil scientist, recreation specialist, archeologist, and technicians – familiar with the district. A representative from the NM Department of Game and Fish also participated. Rivers were sectioned into logical segments for evaluation. Each member of the team reviewed each segment and determined whether it supported any outstandingly remarkable values. Discussions were generated when there were differences of opinion and final determinations were based on consensus. The Bureau of Land Management monitors the wild and scenic designated portions of Rio Grande and Rio Chama that are on National Forest System lands.

### **Results:**

Sixty-five river segments have been identified as potentially eligible for Wild and Scenic designation. The outstandingly remarkable values, for which each segment deemed potentially eligible, will be protected until a suitability study has been completed or Congress designates it as a Wild and Scenic River. Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's Office.

All surface waters of the Valle Vidal Administrative Unit, Rio Santa Barbara, and within wilderness areas were classified as “Outstanding National Resource Waters” (ONRW) by the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission. Surface waters designated as ONRW are recognized as waters that possess outstanding ecological or recreational values. This designation assigns the highest level of water quality protection in order to maintain the quality of these waters into the future for the benefit of both humans and wildlife.

## **Lands**

### **Goals:**

Successfully complete, process or administer planned land exchanges, title claims, purchases, donations, withdrawal reviews, property boundary locations, special uses, memorandums of understanding, and the acquisition of needed rights-of-ways, to meet other program output needs (timber sales, range projects, recreation operations etc.) and the needs of other agencies, private parties and corporations.

### **Monitoring:**

Conditions to be monitored are dictated by individual projects, applications, annual programs, etc.

**Results:**

183 Special Use Permits of the 555 issued were administered to standard on the Carson National Forest in 2013. In 2013, 84 permits were related to water uses (ditches, wells and tanks), 70 were related to outfitting and guiding services, and 37 were recreational residences. Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's Office.

## **Protection 1- Drinking Water**

**Goals:**

Comply with state health and sanitation codes to protect public health. All public potable water supplies will be in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and applicable state laws. Wastewater treatment will comply with state laws.

**Monitoring:**

Monitor all potable water systems open to public use.

**Results:**

Potable Water samples for Nitrate are taken once a year for all public water systems owned by the Forest Service, as required by the Environmental Protection Agency's Drinking Water Act. This includes all campgrounds and administrative sites, as well as permittees who manage water systems located on NFS lands. All water samples are taken by a sampler certified by the New Mexico Environment Department, which oversees the administration and enforcement of the Drinking Water Act. The certified sampler, in most cases, is a private consultant hired either by the Forest Service or a campground concessionaire who has a contract with the Forest Service. No violations of drinking water standards occurred in 2013.

## **Protection 2- Fire Suppression**

**Goals:**

Provide effective fire suppression to reduce or minimize fire risk as the projected increase in population is realized.

**Monitoring:**

Determine the effectiveness of fire suppression by -

1. Periodic inspections and reviews by specialists to determine if fire control organization is effective in controlling fire losses within acceptable limits.
2. Fire reviews of selected fires.

**Results:**

For the 2013 fire season, the Carson National Forest received inconsistent moisture. Light winter snows and then a long period of dry weather. Fuel moisture level decreased to low level

necessitating Stage 1 fire restrictions throughout the forest, which moderated the potential human caused fires. The Carson National Forest had a total of 72 fires, which nearly all remained Class A fires, with one Class B. The largest fire was only 19 acres and all suppression was successful. Safety remained the highest priority on all fires and none were utilized for resource benefit. There were 29 human caused fires and 43 naturally ignited fires. The Carson National Forest averages approximately 35 percent human caused fires. Various treatments for fuels were utilized including prescribed fire and mechanical. In general, most treatments were achieved using force account prescribed fire.

**Table 9. Wildfires on the Carson National Forest 2007-2013**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total acres	31	0.5	113.7	306.7	1,063.1	425	41
Avg size (ac)	0.68	0.1	2.0	3.3	7.8	2	0.6
Number fires	45	30	57	92	55	99	72
Largest fire (ac)	5 Mesa	5 Canada	87 Cabresto Mesa	270 Ojito	720 Osha	363 Midnight	19 Chino

Keeping the wildfires small allows better planning for later prescribed burning, when weather and fuel conditions allow. The total number of fire starts in 2010 (92) and 2012 (99), is larger than the six year average of 68 fire starts per year. The years, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2011, have seen a near average number of fire starts 47 than the years 2012 and 2013. Efforts to reduce fuel loading are expected to continue into the future. The Forest needs to increase the prescribed burning program to at least 10,000 acres per year, and manage more naturally ignited fires for multiple objectives.

### **Protection 3- Insect and Disease**

#### **Goals:**

To meet Federal regulation, ensure destructive insect and disease organisms do not increase to potentially damaging levels following management activities.

#### **Monitoring:**

Determine growth reduction and mortality caused by insect and disease infestations.

#### **Results:**

During June 24 through July 30, 2013, Regional Office staff and a Forest Health Specialist with New Mexico State Forestry conducted the annual insect and disease survey flights over the Carson National Forest, including private lands within the administrative boundary of the forest.

Bark beetle-caused mortality increased considerably in 2013 across all forest types on the Carson National Forest. Douglas-fir mortality nearly tripled since last year's survey, going from 3,000 acres in 2012 to 8,500 acres in 2013. Corkbark fir mortality was observed on over 6,600 acres,

over twice the number of acres as last year. Fir engraver activity tripled in 2013. Ponderosa pine mortality occurred in higher numbers across the Questa and Camino Real RDs, affecting 340 acres. A small area (less than five acres) of piñon pine mortality was recorded on the Canjilon Ranger District.

Spruce beetle activity was mapped on 2,000 acres this year, up from 850 acres in 2012. Most of the spruce mortality was concentrated around the Santa Barbara Divide. A continued increase in spruce beetle activity is expected in the next few years. The aerial “signature” of spruce beetle-infested spruce is not as striking or long-lasting as that of bark beetles in other trees; therefore, aerial detection of spruce beetle activity is extremely difficult.

In 2013, only 710 acres with aspen decline were mapped on the Carson National Forest, which is a decrease from 2012. The areas mapped were new areas of decline or areas where the aspen decline has progressed from light to heavy. The area affected by western spruce budworm dropped from 166,000 acres in 2012 to 98,200 acres this year, but continues to be the most widespread activity on the Carson National Forest. Aspen defoliation increased slightly from 68,500 acres, with the majority of it observed on the Canjilon and Tres Piedras RDs. A large area (590 acres) of unknown ponderosa pine defoliation was observed on the ridge north of Vallecitos on the El Rito Ranger District, ground checking did not occur to identify the damage agent. Table 10 summarizes insect and disease conditions from 2006 through 2013.

**Table 10. Summary of insect and disease conditions (acres) on the Carson National Forest 2008-2013**

Insect/Disease	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Western spruce budworm	162,340	214,510	98,750	172,060	166,810	98,250
Aspen defoliation	8,450	21,760	11,890	41,610	65,370	68,530
Aspen decline <sup>9</sup>			1,500	1,440	830	710 <sup>10</sup>
Piñon bark beetle				<5		<5
Douglas-fir beetle	390	400	100	2,830	3,000	8,490
Spruce beetle (includes corkbark fir mortality)			30	870	850	2,020
Fir engraver beetle	5	120	<5	50	530	1,590
Western balsam bark beetle	17,850	12,380	11,620	3,660	2,810	6,630
Ponderosa pine bark beetles	50	120	10	30	10	340

Table 10 indicates an increasing amount of forested land affected by these insects. One insect population may be on a decline, while another may be increasing. The recent years of drought are

<sup>9</sup> Aspen decline first was noted in 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Areas with new or previously unmapped aspen decline/mortality

likely one of the causal factors increasing insect populations. Other natural causal factors are increased tree densities, reduced bird and small mammal populations due to drought, and reduced populations of parasitical insects.

**Western pine beetle**, *Dendroctonus brevicomis*, primarily affects ponderosa pine. This insect rarely infests trees less than 9 inches in diameter. One beneficial effect of this insect is to create dead or dying trees suitable for cavity nesting wildlife species.

There was little to no detection of this insect in 2006 – 2007 and an increase in affected acres in 2008-2009 with a decrease in 2010. The acres affected increased in 2011 but are still at a low level. The indications are creation of at least 700 ponderosa pine snags 9 inches or greater in diameter in the last six years by this insect. The maps prepared after the aerial observation show the scattered nature of the insect infestations. It is highly likely existing snags in interior forest locations generally preclude removal, authorized or unauthorized, for firewood purposes. Issued permits prohibit removal of ponderosa pine snags. Secondary cavity nesting birds preferred to nest in trees that had recently died. A significant number of nests are found in snags which had been dead less than 20 years with the most heavily used in the 5 to 20 year age since death range. The drought in 2010 and into 2011 may be a causal agent if the beetles involved increase the acres affected in 2013.

**Table 11. Ponderosa mortality and estimated snags created 2008-2013**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Acres affected	50	120		30		340
Est snags created	100	480	0	60	0	680

**Douglas-fir beetle**, *Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*, affects Douglas-fir. The larger trees, greater than 9 inches in diameter, are attacked and killed. A beneficial effect of this insect is to increase snag densities in infested stands. The indications are a creation of at least 33,000 Douglas-fir snags 9 inches or greater in diameter in the last six years. The maps prepared after the aerial observation shows the scattered nature of the insect infestations. It is highly likely existing snags in interior forest locations generally preclude removal, authorized or unauthorized, for firewood purposes. Secondary cavity nesting birds prefer to nest in trees that recently died and a significant number of nests are found in snags that have been dead less than 20 years, with the most heavily used in the 5 to 20 year age.

Douglas-fir beetle has increased its presence from 6,235 acres in 2003 to 15,815 in 2004. In 2005 a decline began with 11,885 acres, 4,826 acres in 2006, 340 acres in 2007. In 2011, the beetle was observed (aerially) affecting 2,830 acres, an significant increase from previous years (Table 12). This could be the result of drought stress or other biological conditions. Insect parasitism in 2005 to 2010 helped reduce the population available for infestation of new trees. These populations, like many other insects, are somewhat cyclic around an endemic population. The declining numbers of infested trees from 2008 to 2010 could have reduced the insect parasites. The decline in parasites and continued drought stress are two causal agents for the increase in the number of infected acres.

**Table 12. Douglas-fir beetle conditions and estimated snags created 2008-2013**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Acres affected	390	400	100	2,830	3,000	8,490
Est snags created	1,560	1,600	400	11,320	12,000	33,960

**Fir engraver beetle**, *Scolytus ventralis*, affects true fir trees. The larger trees, greater than 9 inches in diameter, are attacked and killed. A beneficial effect of this insect is to increase snag densities in infested stands. The indications are a creation of at least 6,360 white fir and corkbark fir snags 9 inches or greater in diameter in the last six years. The maps prepared after the aerial observation shows the scattered nature of the insect infestations. It is highly likely existing snags in interior forest locations generally preclude removal, authorized or unauthorized, for firewood purposes. Secondary cavity nesting birds prefer to nest in trees that recently died and a significant number of nests are found in snags that have been dead less than 20 years, with the most heavily used in the 5 to 20 year age.

Fir engraver beetle has increased its presence from 85 acres in 2003 to 4,100 acres in 2005, a decline in 2006 to 1,727 acres, and another increase to 6,800 acres in 2007. In 2008 the population has significantly decreased to 5 acres; then increase to 120 acres in 2009 and a decrease to less than 5 acres in 2010. The number of infested acres appears to be fluctuating. Available moisture may account for some of these changes. An additional explanation is the number of parasitic insects increased during 2006 and 2007. These conditions were again seen in 2008 to 2009 with increased number of parasitic insects. These populations like many other insects are somewhat cyclic around an endemic population. The declining numbers of infested trees from 2007 to 2010 could have reduced the insect parasites. The decline in parasites and continued drought stress are two causal agents for the increase in the number of infected acres. Infected acres 2013 tripled from 2012 to 1,590 acres.

**Table 13. Fir engraver beetle conditions and estimated snags created 2008-2013**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Acres affected	5	120	<5	50	530	1,590
Est snags created	20	480	20	200	2,120	6,360

**Spruce beetle**, *Dendroctonus rufipennis*, affects spruce trees. The larger trees, greater than 9 inches in diameter, are attacked and killed. A beneficial effect of this insect is to increase snag densities in infested stands. This insect can build to high populations very quickly causing large areas of mortality in the higher elevations. The indications are a creation of at least 2,020 spruce snags 9 inches or greater in diameter in the last six years. The maps prepared after the aerial observation shows the scattered nature of the insect infestations. It is highly likely existing snags in interior forest locations generally preclude removal, authorized or unauthorized, for firewood purposes. Secondary cavity nesting birds prefer to nest in trees that recently died and a significant number of nests are found in snags that have been dead less than 20 years, with the most heavily used in the 5 to 20 year age.



**Figure 4. Spruce beetle-caused mortality near Santa Barbara Divide (Camino Real Ranger District)**

Spruce beetle presence decreased from 5,840 acres in 2003 to 3,905 acres in 2004, and then increased to 6,605 acres in 2005, with a subsequent decline in 2006 to 2,223 acres. In 2007 to 2009 there were no populations detected. In 2010, detection on about 30 acres showed the insect present in the forest. The increase in 2011 (870 ac) and 2013 (2,020 ac) could be a result of drought stress and the low number of parasitic insects attacking the beetles. A large spruce beetle outbreak is in southern Colorado near the Carson National Forest. The number of infested acres is fluctuating. The spruce beetle populations like many other insects are somewhat cyclic around a smaller endemic population. However, the continuing drought could be one agent predisposing spruce trees to attack by the spruce beetle.

**Table 14. Spruce beetle conditions and estimated snags created 2008-2013**

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Acres affected			30	870	850	2,020
Est snags created	0	0	120	3,480	3,400	8,080

**Western balsam bark beetle**, *Dryocoetes confusus*, attacks and kills trees in the true fir group, such as white fir and subalpine or corkbark fir. The larger trees, greater than 9 inches in diameter, are attacked and killed. A beneficial effect of this insect is to increase snag densities in infested stands. The indications are a creation of at least 26,520 fir snags 9 inches or greater in diameter in the last six years. The maps prepared after the aerial observation shows the scattered nature of the insect infestations. It is highly likely existing snags in interior forest locations generally preclude removal, authorized or unauthorized, for firewood purposes. Secondary cavity nesting birds prefer to nest in trees that recently died and a significant number of nests are found in snags that have been dead less than 20 years, with the most heavily used in the 5 to 20 year age.

Western balsam bark beetle was undetected from 2003 to 2004. Populations appeared in 2005 in 3,540 acres, increased to 17,850 acres in 2008 and declined to 2,810 acres in 2012. In 2013, 6,630 of infested acres were detected, over twice as many infected acres as 2012. The populations of both the host insect and parasitic insects like many other insects are somewhat cyclic around an endemic population. Insect parasitism in 2009 to 2011 helped reduce the population available for

infestation of new trees. The possible increase in parasites could be an agent in further reducing the acres of infested trees. However, continued drought stress could be an agent for the increase in the number of infected acres in 2013.

**Table 15. Western balsam bark beetle conditions and estimated snags created 2008-2013**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Acres affected	17,850	12,380	11,620	3,660	2,810	6,630
Est snags created	71,400	46,520	46,480	14,640	11,240	26,520

**Piñon bark beetle** generally infests the entire stand, though an occasional piñon will be attacked. Other tree species within the stand are not infested. The insect is host specific. The effect of this insect is to remove nearly all the piñon pine in the infested stand. The number of acres infested decreased dramatically but still nearly 33,000 acres were attacked in 2004. In 2013 no new piñon pine mortality was detected aerially. It appears that the population of this insect subsided and returned to an endemic level.

The immediate vegetative result of this beetle infestation is loss of tree cover. The longer-term result should be an increase in grass and forbs cover as the dead trees fall and break up, creating ground debris. This in turn provides microsites (shade and moisture) for grass and other plant establishment. Other plants likely to invade the areas of tree canopy loss include big sagebrush and four wing saltbush.

Diseases such as dwarf mistletoes and root disease causing organisms are found scattered about the forest. These diseases can cause the death of individual trees and at times small pockets of trees. Foliage diseases such as Ponderosa Pine Needle Cast are scattered over the Carson National Forest. New Mexico State Highway 518 between Taos and Questa has several pockets of needle cast alongside the road. These locations are expected to increase in size due to drought stress in trees and the increasing amount of inoculum present in the dead needles on the ground. The scattered nature of these dead trees prevents an accurate estimate of the total acreage of dead or dying trees.

Bark beetles are the primary cause of tree mortality in the region and tend to be host specific. They are monitored and detected aerially by the browning discoloration of needles in affected trees called “faders”. Generally the smallest clump of “faders” that can be detected is 3 to 5 trees. Most conifers (excluding ponderosa pine) are normally attacked and killed by a single species of bark beetle. A group of Douglas-fir “faders,” for example, is most often the result of an attack by the Douglas-fir bark beetle, *Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*. Piñon pine mortality is primarily caused by the bark beetle, *Ips confusus*. In contrast, Ponderosa pine are attacked and killed by several different bark beetles. Aspen decline has several causal agents including drought stress, attack by two or more species of small beetles, and fungal attacks in combination.

The insects noted in the previous tables are native to the Carson National Forest. An endemic population of these insects fluctuates depending on year, moisture and temperature regimes, timing of temperature changes, parasitic insects and organism, bird and small mammal populations, and plant densities. Epidemic populations occur when some factor such as the moisture regime changes, drought, or plant densities become high causing intense competition for

soil moisture and nutrients. The population of natural control agents generally lags one to two years behind the insect population increase. These general trends give rise to the cyclic population changes of insects.

In the past six years an estimated 303,240 snags 9 inches in diameter or larger, have been created by the above insects, in the spruce, mixed conifer, and ponderosa pine cover types. These snags over time will fall to the forest floor providing large woody debris after their use by cavity nesting species.

## **Protection 4- Law Enforcement**

### **Goals:**

Law enforcement efforts by the Forest Service, and aided by cooperative agreements with local sheriffs' departments, are adequate and commensurate with the goods and services produced on the Carson National Forest.

### **Monitoring:**

Professionally evaluate trend in law enforcement effectiveness based on reviewing caseloads, solution rates and public compliance. The evaluation will be based specifically on a review of 1) protection of cultural resources; 2) changes in ORV damage; 3) changes in fuelwood theft; 4) changes in the dollar cost of vandalism; 5) trends in user protection; and 6) recurrent law enforcement problems at developed recreation sites.

### **Results:**

- Maintained signing in areas north of Red River to address illegal ATV use. Law enforcement efforts were also increased to address this concern.
- Over one half of violation notices issued were for -- dumping private trash on National Forest System lands, cutting forest products without a permit, and illegally driving a motor vehicle off a designated road.
- Recurring law enforcement problems at both developed and dispersed recreation sites include exceeding the 14 day limit, leaving fires unattended, destruction of government property, and dogs not on a leash.
- Carson National Forest Law Enforcement Officers monitor events such as the Red River Motorcycle Rally and other scheduled event on the forest.

## **Protection 5- Fuels**

### **Goals:**

Fuel treatment will follow the various timber activities as a means of reducing fire hazard and insect and disease potential.

### **Monitoring:**

Maintain a fuel treatment atlas and record areas treated. Data is generated from field personnel who monitor and/or direct fuel treatment by Forest Service crews, logging companies, contractors, etc.

### **Results:**

One timber sale was implemented in 2013, for the purpose of reducing fuels hazard (Figure 5). Approximately 518 acres were treated and monitored in 2013 for forest health and fuels reduction as a part of 8 Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) grants (Figure 6).



**Figure 5. Ponderosa pine thinning in Maquinita Timber Sale area in 2013**



**Figure 6. Chacon CFRP grant monitoring in 2013**

The majority of fuel treatments are occurring in the wildland urban interface surrounding communities located in or adjacent to the national forest. These projects are being prepared under the Healthy Forest Initiative or Healthy Forest Restoration Act or other authorities. The National Fire Plan has focused attention on at-risk communities. Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's office and the individual ranger district offices.

**Table 16. Summary of fuels reduction activities on the Carson National Forest in 2013**

Project Name	Description	Acres Treated
Canjilon WUI Green Fuelwood Commercial Blocks	Commercial thinning/lopping/scattering of activity created fuels	14
Canjilon WUI Personal Use Fuelwood Blocks	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	12
Chimayo Conservation Corps Developing Local Capacity to Restore Forest Health CFRP Grant (Chimayo Conservation Corps)	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	100
Highway 115 Corridor Personal Use Fuelwood Blocks	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	5
Highway 115 Corridor Force Account Thinning	Pre-commercial thinning/piling activity created fuels	21
Mesa Juan Domingo Piñon/Juniper Forest Restoration & Fuel Reduction in the Canjilon WUI CFRP Grant (La Alba, LLC)	Pre-commercial thinning & piling activity created fuels	60
SR 115 SRS Chimayo Conservation Corps Phase II	Pre-commercial thinning/piling activity created fuels	73
SR 115 Pile Burning	Prescribed burning piled material	97
Agua/Caballos Force Account Thinning	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	50
Quality Environment & Economic Sustainability Project CFRP Grant (Jaramillo & Sons Forest Products)	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created & fuelwood removal	23
Forest Business Establishment & Restoration in the El Rito Area CFRP Grant (Andy Chacon)	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created & fuelwood removal	68
Healthy Forests Healthy Communities in Vallecitos CFRP Grant (Alfonso Chacon, Jr.)	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created & fuelwood removal	96
Peak Green Fuelwood	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels & fuelwood removal	83
Ensenada Piles Prescribed Burn	Prescribed burning piled materials	145
Capulin Piles Rx	Pile burning to reduce fuel load from thinning projects & improve forest health	46

Project Name	Description	Acres Treated
Francisco Rx Burn	Broadcast burn conducted in the fall to reduce heavy fuel loading. Broadcast burn implemented to improve understory ground vegetation diversity & improve watershed condition. <sup>11</sup>	586
Taos Pines CFRP	Thinning to improve forest health & reduce fuel loading. Thinning slash was lopped/scattered/yarded to reduce fuel loading. Scattering slash improves organic matter soil content & improves ground cover to improve watershed condition.	57
Flechado HFR TSI Units	Thinning to improve forest health & reduce fuel loading. Thinning slash was lopped/scattered to improve organic matter soil content & increase ground cover to improve watershed condition	213
La Joya Force Account Thinning	Thinning to improve forest health & reduce fuel loading. Thinning slash was lopped & scattered & products were yarded. Yarding of materials reduces surface fuel loading & scattering of slash improves organic matter soil content & improves ground cover to improve watershed condition	30
La Joya Stewardship Blocks	Thinning to improve forest health, reduce fuel loading & provide personal use products to permit-holders. Thinning slash was lopped & scattered & products were yarded to improve organic matter soil content, improve ground cover to improve watershed condition & reduce surface fuel loading.	29
Borrego Mesa Commercial Thin & Group Selection	Commercial thinning & 29 acres of group selection treatments to reduce hazardous fuels, reduce stand densities & regenerate VSS 1 (0-0.9" DBH ponderosa pine trees) in group selection openings to develop unevenaged stand structure	276
Osha Reforestation (Planting Trees)	Hand tree planting to establish ponderosa pine & Douglas-fir seedlings in high-severity burn areas within Osha burn perimeter to improve watershed condition	255
Osha Reforestation 1 <sup>st</sup> Year Plantation Survival Surveys	Survey for survival following the Osha Reforestation project. Surveys conducted to evaluate 1 <sup>st</sup> year survival & for future	255

<sup>11</sup> Highlighting indicates project purpose included improving watershed condition.

Project Name	Description	Acres Treated
	reforestation needs	
Ojos Ryan Force Account Stand Exam	Stand exam survey conducted by "in-house" personnel to obtain data for existing conditions within Ojos Ryan project area	362
Maquinita Habitat Stamp Program Force Account Thinning	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	75
Implementation of Forest Restoration within Maquinita Analysis Area CFRP Grant (Rocky Mountain Youth Corps)	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	53
Maquinita Ecosystem Health Project CFRP Grant (Kuykendall & Sons)	Pre-commercial thinning/lopping/scattering activity created fuels	22
Gordito Timber Sale Cutting Unit 2A	Commercial thin & group selection cuts	58
Red Mesa Prescribed Burn	Prescribed broadcast burning	589
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps Questa/Lama CFRP	Thinning to improve forest health, understory forage diversity & reduce fuel loading. Slash created through the thinning process was lopped & scattered & forest products created through the thinning process were yarded to reduce fuel loading. Scattering slash improves organic matter soil content & improves ground cover to improve watershed condition.	39

Forest-wide, the trend is toward increased fuel loadings, tree mortality, and increased tree density within stands of trees. Management options for dealing with these issues are somewhat limited. Tree mortality caused by insects or disease is difficult to address, due to its widely scattered nature. Insect populations tend to be cyclic. Disease centers are difficult to treat if economically treatable. Fuel loadings increase as trees and other woody material die and fall to the forest floor. The trend has been toward more restrictions on use of active management, both through application of restrictive standards and guidelines related to threatened and endangered, and Forest Service sensitive species and through limitations outlined in litigation.

## Air Quality- Visibility – Class I Areas

### Goals:

Class I areas will retain good visibility to meet Class I standards. Visibility will be retained in form, line, texture and color of characteristic landscapes. Determine baseline condition of visibility and determine if any visibility degradation is occurring in the Class I areas.

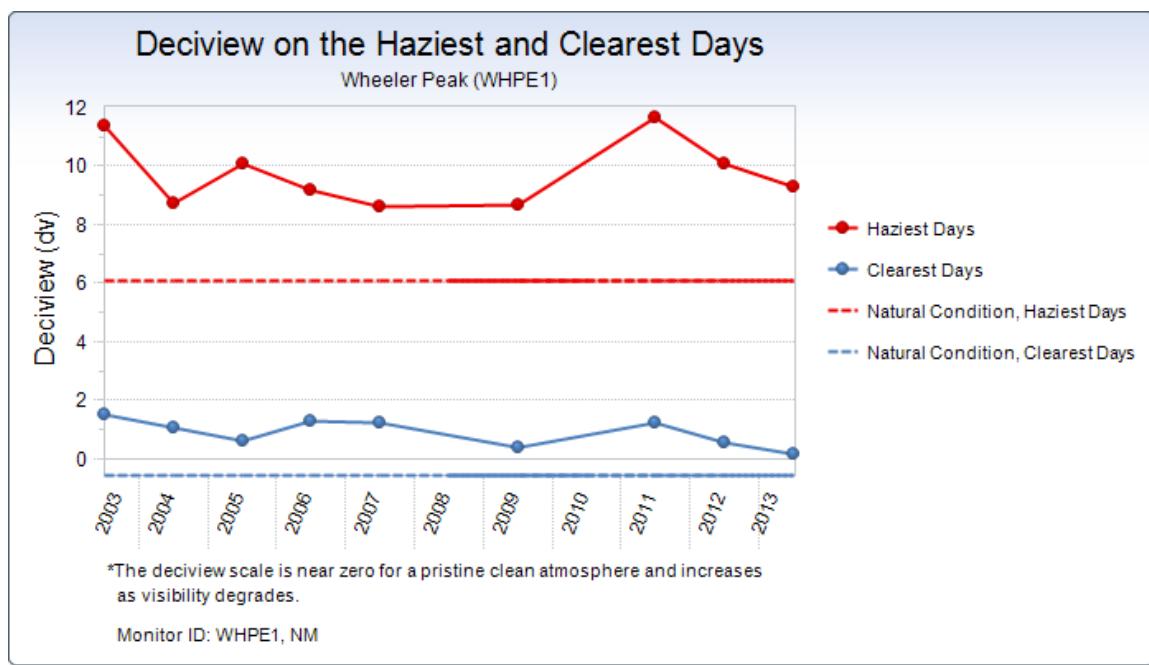
### Monitoring:

Determine baseline condition of visibility and determine if any visibility degradation is occurring in the Class I areas.

## Results:

After nearly 20 years of photo documentation of the Wheeler Peak Wilderness to detect changes in air quality of a Class I airshed, it has been determined that photo comparisons are qualitative data that do not provide substantive results in determining whether quantitative standards for air quality have been exceeded. Late in 2000, a new air quality monitoring station was installed in the Taos Ski Valley to monitor air quality in the Wheeler Peak wilderness area using quantitative data, such as percent particulate matter. The photo monitoring has ceased. Data is collected using the installed monitoring station.

Generally, the visibility on the clearest days is improving towards natural conditions over the last ten years, but visibility under hazy conditions has not improved over the same time period (Figure 7). It is still hazier than it was in the past. As far as the pollutants, under both clear and haze days, visibility is most affected by sulfates (burning fossil fuels) and organic carbon (from vehicle emissions, industrial facilities, fires) when compared to natural conditions.



**Figure 7. Wheeler Peak Wilderness - deciview on clearest and haziest days**

## Timber 1

### Goals:

Achieve a more balanced age class distribution, appropriate growing stock levels, appropriate rotations and provide wildlife habitat and other resource needs.

Ensure that:

1. Rotation age and CMAI assumptions are correct -- silvicultural prescriptions follow management areas standards;
2. Silvicultural prescriptions precede vegetative treatments;

3. Silvicultural prescriptions are practical and achieve desired results.

**Monitoring:**

Determine age class distribution, growing stock levels, rotations and wildlife/resource needs through stand database reports; Timber Management Information System; silvicultural prescriptions; Staff field reviews of 5% of treatment projects.

**Results:**

Forest Plan goals for forest health, especially treatment of mid-serial vegetation to improve diversity, have not been met, but the few small projects accomplished each year continue to move the Carson National Forest towards its desired condition. Mixed conifer and ponderosa pine forests on the forest still contain large areas of small, densely growing trees. These conditions pose a threat of catastrophic wildfire over extensive landscapes.

Approximately 498 acres were treated and monitored in 2013 for forest health and fuels reduction as a part of the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program. Supporting documentation is located at the respective ranger stations. In addition, 646 acres of commercial and pre-commercial thinning was completed in 2013.

Periodic field visits to project areas by sale administrators, specialists and/or line officers usually result in informal monitoring and evaluation of the application of best management practices or actions needed. Documentation is captured through specialist notes, sale administration inspection reports and/or photo points located at the ranger stations.

## **Timber 2- Timber Assumptions**

**Goals:**

Timber plans and projections support a sustained yield of forest products and achievement of multiple-resource objectives. Validate timber assumptions: volume, productivity, Management Area descriptions and acres harvested.

**Monitoring:**

Through sale review, EA's, cruise summaries, TMIS, compartment exams, stand database (use the same conversion ratios as used in Plan calculations), ensure that:

- board foot/cubic foot ratios are correct;
- volume/acre yield is correct;
- management area descriptions are correct;
- schedule of acres harvested is correct.

**Results:**

There was one active timber sale currently active on the Carson National Forest in 2013 that reduced fire fuel hazards. Approximately 493 acres were treated and monitored in 2013 for forest health and fuels reduction as a part of seven Collaborative Forest Restoration Program grants.

The schedule of sales outlined in the Forest Plan is no longer used based on many external factors such as litigation, which alter the timelines.

The board foot/cubic foot ratio used is determined at the region level. The ratio is accurate at approximately 1 CCF (hundred cubic feet) the same as 0.5 MBF (thousand board feet) or stated differently 1 MBF equals 2 CCF. Other measures are not being used. Vigas and latillas were sold on a per foot basis. The amount sold of these two products is small.

The Carson National Forest large sale timber program involved 4 ongoing timber sales that are regularly monitored when actively harvesting.

### **Timber 3- Sawtimber and Products**

#### **Goals:**

Annual sale offerings will be made on a sustained yield basis. Meet Federal regulation, measure output; assure allowable sale quantity is not exceeded.

#### **Monitoring:**

PAMARs or other annual reporting systems and programmed harvest reports.

#### **Results:**

The large sale timber program of the Carson National Forest was implemented in 2013 with 2 ongoing sawtimber sales. There were numerous small commercial sales, primarily fuelwood, and a few involving special forest products such as vigas and latillas. Several of the small commercial sales are associated with grants (i.e., Collaborative Forest Restoration Project), which means part of the grant includes removal of forest products.

The amount harvested was below the minimum ingrowth on the Carson ensuring sustained yield. The allowable sale quantity was not exceeded. The Carson National Forest sold and harvested less than 15 MMBF out of an allowable sale quantity of 42 MMBF.

### **Timber 4- Fuelwood**

#### **Goals:**

Green wood sales will continue on a sustained yield basis. Dead/dry firewood will continue to be available through timber-sale residue and natural mortality.

#### **Monitoring:**

Review annual total of firewood sale reports, total firewood advertised but not sold, free use and administrative or other use.

**Results:**

The Carson continued to provide the necessary firewood, latillas, vigas and other small products to the local populace. The amount of woody material provided met the needs of the communities and local population. The number of permits for small products and fuelwood is shown in Table 17.

**Table 17. Fuelwood and small products 2007-2013**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Latillas and small products not convertible to volume</b>							
Permits	2,392	2,012	2,223	560	400	429	467
<b>Fuelwood</b>							
Permits	3,500	6,304	5,305	5,231	4,872	4,590	3,931
Volume (cords)	13,533	22,067	27,386	23,044	24,727	23,913	20,475

**Timber 5- Openings****Goals:**

Improve wildlife habitat through timber harvest by manipulation of stand sizes, methods of cut and juxtaposition of stands.

**Monitoring:**

Insure stand size of other harvest areas is appropriate through environmental analysis, presale and administrative reviews, and post-sale reviews/project area.

**Results:**

Harvest prescriptions are geared toward the manipulation of wildlife habitat improvement. Guidelines for the Northern Goshawk are used to insure adequate opening size and number, retention of overstory trees. These guidelines are melded with the requirements of Mexican spotted owl recovery plans. The end result is harvest areas meeting wildlife habitat needs with any timber harvest the tool used to provide for wildlife habitat improvement.

**Timber 6- Practices and Assumptions****Goals:**

All lands harvested for timber production as part of the allowable sale quantity are adequately restocked within 5 years after final harvest.

**Monitoring:**

Assure that regeneration is obtained within 5 years after -- final harvest cut, and scheduled planting is accomplished through Annual Reforestation/TSI needs report, plantation survival surveys, silvicultural prescriptions, post sale administrative review, Timber Management Information System (TMIS), Stand Data Base/Acres.

**Results:**

Emphasis is on wildlife habitat improvement, fuels reduction, and to supply local small businesses. Regeneration on harvests for other than timber production emphasis are not required to meet the 5-year time period. No lands were harvested for timber production reasons in 2013.

**Table 18. Regeneration surveys 2008-2013**

Activity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total acres regeneration survey	1,612	586	604	415	485	230
Total natural regeneration survey	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total natural plantation survival	1,612	388	604	415	485	230
Natural regeneration without site preperation	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Timber 7- Unsuitable Timberlands**

**Goals:**

Meet Federal regulations to periodically re-examine lands identified as not suited for timber production to determine if they have become suited and could be returned to timber production.

**Monitoring:**

Evaluate the accuracy of suitable timberlands classification through:

1. Review new or updated soil survey data.
2. Review development of better technology for regeneration establishment.
3. Stand exams.
4. Timber Inventory and planning results.

The data monitored will be used as the basis for an evaluation to determine which lands are suited to timber production.

**Results:**

The soil information, stand examination data, timber inventory, and regeneration establishment technology has not changed since implementation of the Forest Plan. No stands identified as unsuitable were placed in timber production category.

## **Minerals**

### **Goals:**

To meet the requirements of the law, regulations, contract obligations, fiscal accountability, protection of surface resources and successful reclamation. The expected future conditions should be specified in the documentation of the approval of the activity, project, lease, sale, etc.

### **Monitoring:**

The mineral program will be monitored through a combination of the MAR data reporting system, systems designed for project quality control, field examinations by Forest Staff and the activity review system. Management of the minerals activities: Environmental Assessments, bonds, bond justifications, response times for applications and plans of operations, quality of resource coordination, field checks for compliance of the terms of the operating plans, reasonableness of resource protection requirements, mineral sales program, pit plans, accountability, documentation, and reclamation.

### **Results:**

The San Juan Basin (Jicarilla Ranger District) continued to experience a downturn in applications for permit to drill (APDs) in 2013. These APD's are on NFS lands leased prior to 1970. The district staff completed 5 categorical exclusions following the Energy Policy Act. A categorical exclusion was completed for each APD or grouped APDs in 2013. The district staff also conducted 820 field inspections in 2013. Inspections documented compliance of the conditions of approval for operating plans, reasonableness of resource protection requirements and reclamation of oil and gas activities.

## **Range 1- Unsatisfactory Range**

### **Goals:**

Bring unsatisfactory ranges to satisfactory condition through increasing management intensity levels, constructing structural range improvements, adding nonstructural range improvements.

### **Monitoring:**

Use allotment analysis data to update Grazing Statistical Report.

### **Results:**

The drought over the last several years continued in 2013 with abnormally dry conditions on much of the Carson National Forest. In general, drought brings many hardships to cattle producers. Herd adjustments (lower numbers) and entry and exit date adjustments continued to be used as intensive management options to reduce impacts to unsatisfactory ranges where necessary to aid in moving these ranges toward a satisfactory condition. See Table 5, under Soil and Water 1- Watershed Conditions for details pertaining to range condition monitoring and actions to improve conditions.

## Range 2 - Range Condition and Trend

### Goals:

Range conditions will be improved at 2030 by decreasing unsatisfactory range to 68,883 acres; and increasing satisfactory range to 753,244 acres.

### Monitoring:

Conduct range analysis per Regional standards by qualified Range Conservationists.

### Results:

Improved range conditions have resulted from implementation of structural and nonstructural improvements, and more intensive management developed in allotment management plans. Continued NEPA analysis on all of the forest's allotments will help sustain this type of improvement. Ongoing drought conditions have slowed the progress of improving range conditions. Non-native invasive plants are found in scattered locations across the Carson National Forest. These plants have the potential to impact the native plants through replacement by competition, root exudates, and aggressive growth behavior.

In 2013, 204 acres of invasive plants were removed, 188 acres were monitored for invasive plants, and 133 acres were restored on the Carson National Forest. An environmental impact statement addressing treatment of invasive plants on both the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests was prepared and a decision made in 2005, but the decision was reversed on appeal. A supplemental invasive plant control decision is anticipated in 2015.

## Range 3- Management Plans

### Goals:

Prepare or update grazing allotment or unit management plans on 75 percent of the National Forest allotments.

### Monitoring:

Track allotment management plans through PAMARS.

### Results:

The Carson National Forest completed one allotment management plan and signed one grazing allotment decision in FY2013. In 2014, the forest will continue conducting grazing allotment analyses on many allotments and is scheduled to complete NEPA documentation on three allotments on the Jicarilla Ranger District.

## **Range 4- Range Development**

### **Goals:**

To move toward balancing range use with capacity, the structural and nonstructural improvements will be added or reconstructed based on the allotment management plans and funding levels.

### **Monitoring:**

Track data on completed range improvements (fences, waters, revegetation, etc.) through the existing RAMIS system and the annual grazing statistical report.

### **Results:**

The needed data was reviewed, verified, and entered in the Infra database by District personnel. The Range Infra Deferred Maintenance database has replaced the RAMIS database.

## **Range 5- Permitted Use**

### **Goals:**

Through increased management and additional structural and nonstructural range improvements, range capacity is expected to increase from the present 119,000 AUM's to 136,000 AUM's in the fifth decade.

### **Monitoring:**

Track through data generated from grazing permits and displayed in Grazing Statistical Report.

### **Results:**

All permitted use data for stocked allotments was verified and updated in the Range Infra database by forest personnel in 2013.

## **Range 6- Grazing Capacity**

### **Goals:**

Grazing capacity is expected to exceed permitted use through the fifth decade.

### **Monitoring:**

New analysis data updates Annual Grazing Statistical Report.

### **Results:**

In 2013, grazing capacity was not verified for any allotments on the Carson National Forest through the NEPA process.

## **Visual Quality 1**

### **Goals:**

Prevent acres with visual quality objectives of Retention or Partial Retention from being reduced more than 20%.

### **Monitoring:**

The Visual Resource Management System will be used as a basis of the monitoring activity.

### **Results:**

There were no activities in 2013 that reduced the visual quality objectives of Retention or Partial Retention.

## **Visual Quality 2**

### **Goals:**

Visual Quality levels will be maintained or enhanced.

### **Monitoring:**

Projects involving vegetative treatment or manipulation, road or trail construction and major development will be evaluated through the NEPA process to enhance or maintain visual quality levels.

### **Results:**

There were no activities in 2013 that reduced the visual quality objectives.

## **Forest Plan Implementation**

### **Goals:**

Assure compliance with and implementation of the Carson Forest Plan in accordance with its stated mission, goals, objectives and standards and guidelines.

### **Monitoring:**

This will be done in light of funding or any other constraints.

### **Results:**

In FY 2013, 30 NEPA site-specific decisions were made on the Carson National Forest. Each project implemented in 2013 was evaluated to insure consistency with the Forest Plan.

A forest plan amendment to include standards and guidelines for Valle Vidal (Management Area (MA) 21) was scheduled to be completed in FY2013. Since the Carson National Forest is

scheduled and funded to begin forest plan revision under the 2012 planning regulations in FY2014, it was decided that any specific standards and guidelines for MA 21 would be included in the revised plan. Valle Vidal is currently managed under the forest-wide prescriptions of the 1986 Carson Forest Plan.

The Camino Real Ranger District travel management decision was made in September 2013 and completed the process for complying with the 2005 Travel Management Rule. This resulted in Forest Plan Amendment 16, which prohibits motor vehicle use off the designated system of roads, trails, and areas, except as identified on the motor vehicle use map or unless specifically authorized under a written authorization issued under Federal law or regulations by an authorized officer.

## Baseline Inventory Monitoring

- Contracts for annual wildlife population monitoring have been ongoing since 2003. These annual monitoring contracts are expected to continue into the future.
- Vegetation data are being collected on each ranger district. This information is being used to determine existing conditions for wildland urban interface and forest health projects, salvage sales, Mexican spotted owl thresholds and old growth at the landscape level, and Forest Plan Revision preparation. Vegetation conditions are recorded on maps and tracked in the RMRIS database and GIS. Photo history is also used to document changes in vegetation composition, structure and health. Much of this data determines where management activities are needed on the Carson National Forest to help reach a desired condition. Supporting documentation is located at the ranger stations and the Forest Supervisor's office.
- The forest archeologist provides program oversight and quality control by reviewing all heritage resource clearances. The purpose of this type of monitoring is to gain overall knowledge of new sites found on the Carson National Forest and the course of action taken to protect them. Supporting documentation is located at either the ranger stations or the Forest Supervisor's office.
- A National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) Project was completed and placed into the public domain in June 2012. Data for this project was collected from FY 2008 through FY 2012. This information is available electronically at [National NVUM Website](#). An NVUM was conducted on the Carson National Forest in 2013; however the results have not yet been published.

## Implementation Monitoring

- Fuelwood monitoring includes field checking for "leave" trees and assessing how the public is harvesting. Monitoring information is considered when determining cleanup efforts needed for fuelwood areas. Cleanup efforts are also monitored. Recommendations and actions are normally documented and are located at the ranger stations.
- Precommercial thinning and salvage sale activities include post-sale inspections. Areas are examined to ensure contract requirements are met and results are documented in the RMRIS/NRIS database. Supporting documentation is located at each of the ranger stations.

- Forage utilization is monitored periodically in grazing allotment pastures to determine whether over utilization is occurring. Supporting documentation is located at each of the ranger stations.
- Range readiness is monitored on an annual basis to determine the time livestock can be released onto an allotment pasture. Current drought conditions have resulted in later than normal turnouts. Supporting documentation is located at each of the ranger stations.
- Archeological and heritage surveys are completed prior to the implementation of ground disturbing proposals to assure protection or mitigation of cultural and/or historic sites. Supporting documentation is located at the Forest Supervisor's office. 2,267 acres were surveyed in 2013 resulting in the recording or updating of 384 heritage sites.

On the Jicarilla Ranger District, survey work primarily focused on district projects rather than oil and gas development. Just over 600 acres were surveyed for district projects, resulting in the recording or updating of information for 54 archeological sites, one of which was a new Navajo pueblito site (Figure 8).



**Figure 8. New Navajo pueblito site on Jicarilla Ranger District (Note: rubble on top of boulder across middle of photo)**

An unusual rock art panel was one of the highlights of the survey work. What appears to be a chupacabra was found painted on a talus boulder during survey of the project area for a proposed sagebrush mowing project (Figure 9).



**Figure 9. Chupacabra pictograph with archeologist for scale**

## Effectiveness Monitoring

- Prescribed fire treatments are monitored through on-site visits. Usually "before and after" photos are taken for burn projects to determine whether the anticipated objectives have been attained (i.e., has the palatability of the oak browse noticeably improved?). Recommendations and follow-up actions are determined. Supporting documentation is located at each of the ranger stations.
- Numerous public field trips are taken each year on the Carson National Forest to areas where projects have been implemented. These trips result in informal monitoring of the effectiveness of actions taken and provide excellent opportunities for the public to express their opinions about a type of project. Line officers are also involved in these trips. Supporting documentation is located in the NEPA project documentation at each of the ranger stations.
- Damage, erosion and changed conditions of prerecorded heritage resource sites are documented (Figure 10). Project areas are inspected upon project completion to verify that flagged archaeological sites have been avoided. Site monitoring forms are kept on file in the Forest Supervisor's office. No damage assessments were completed in 2013, since none were needed. A Site Steward Program continued to monitor sites throughout the forest by private volunteers.



**Figure 10. The San Antonio Guard Station and Lookout sits on top of San Antonio Mountain. Photo taken September 2013, during a condition assessment.**

- The Carson National Forest manages two wild horse territories – Jarita Mesa (El Rito Ranger District) and Jicarilla. Annual monitoring is conducted on both, to determine whether herds are within appropriate management levels (AML). Horse gathering is performed, when numbers exceed the AML. In 2013, 26 horses were removed from the Jarita Mesa Wild Horse Territory, while 104 horses were gathered on Jicarilla. The Carson National Forest is on the forefront in conducting low impact gathers and working with contraception protocols to reduce reproduction.



**Figure 11. Wild horses on the Jarita Mesa Wild Horse Territory**

Certain assumptions made in the Carson Forest Plan are continually being validated by many of the monitoring activities listed above. Amendments, such as the 1996 region-wide amendment for the Mexican spotted owl, northern goshawk, and old growth, can significantly change how we meet our goals and objectives, but not necessarily the assumptions or desired conditions made in the Forest Plan. Since the Forest Plan primarily focuses on desired condition, we can be flexible in finding and determining better ways of moving toward our desired condition. Upon reviewing Chapter 5 (Monitoring Plan) of the Carson Forest Plan, much of the Carson's monitoring activities are closely linked to the items listed in Chapter 5. Formal evaluation and documentation of these monitoring activities is limited, given the emphasis and budget constraints put on the specialists. The information generated from these monitoring efforts achieves the intent of the majority of monitoring items found in Chapter 5 of the Forest Plan.

## Part 1- Monitoring Activities and Evaluation

# Part 2- Monitoring Results

## Introduction

Specifically this year, what has happened on the forest/grassland or externally that has affected the forest/grassland such as natural changes, social and economic changes, and management actions?

### Drought

Historical evidence and tree ring evidence indicate droughts in the southwest often last for 50 or more years. Within the long term drought short periods of near normal or normal precipitation do occur. The drought began about 1996 and has continued with periods of near normal moisture such as occurred in 2005. The grasslands have been affected with little growth. The mature plants were often times less than 6 inches in height. Grazing was curtailed with some permittees not allowed to graze cattle. The act of not permitting cattle to graze many allotments aided in maintaining grasslands at their current levels.

Forested lands were also affected by the lack of moisture. The moisture stress is beginning to show with increased bark beetle and other insect populations. Small spots of dead, dying, or damaged trees are evident across the forest and are well scattered. These population centers could be a forbearer of increased insect attack and mortality across the forest.

### Social and Economic Changes

The communities adjacent and within the forest boundaries are experiencing a continued influx of people. Many visitors return becoming residents. The attitudes brought by the newer residents conflict with many traditional land uses and at times the cultures of current residents. There were continuing comments concerning cessation of grazing activities to protect the land. Yet many long-term residents have used or have family members who use the forestlands to supplement or provide incomes to sustain their families. The newer residents may conflict with the long-term residents causing tension with the Forest Service in the middle. The economic changes have been in the seasonal business sector, and lodging and food establishments. Many of these jobs are on the lower end of the income level. Businesses capable of using forest products and paying higher wages have not moved into the area.

## Ecosystem Health

Insect populations in combination with periods of continued drought are a potential change agent. Insects have increased their population causing mortality in all the forest cover types on the Carson National Forest. This natural phenomenon provides many wildlife benefits such as snags and insect larva for food. An estimated 303,240 snags greater than 9 inches in diameter have been created by insects in the last 6 calendar years. Insect populations are expected to continue in their cyclic pattern with epidemics not expected. However, an epidemic population can build up in less than one year's time if climatic conditions coincide with other natural factors.

## **Multiple Benefits to People**

In 2013, fuelwood was provided to approximately 6,425 households in northern New Mexico which has a high proportion of residents who use fuelwood for heating and cooking. The Carson provided fuelwood supplies to local communities as is typified by the Camino Real Ranger District's stewardship blocks. Communities are both obtaining fuelwood and creating thinned areas to aid in providing increased fire protection to their homes. The Carson National Forest has a long-standing tradition and desire to provide for the local communities while providing for national needs. The fuelwood program provides for both of these needs.

## **Scientific and Technical Assistance**

Management activities were designed to improve the productivity of the natural resources while providing for the needs of people. The range program continued to monitor the conditions of the allotments with the intent of providing permittees an opportunity to graze the land. Regular contact with permitted livestock owners allows for timely adjustments in management, as monitoring deems necessary for resource conditions.

The Carson National Forest completed 30 individual project level documentation processes under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 2013. Of those NEPA decisions the forest completed and signed, one grazing allotment management decision was made in FY2013. In addition, the forest completed 4 documents related to mineral management, 4 for recreation management and 18 for special use management. Each of these processes necessitated research for the latest scientific information and at times required technical assistance from specialists not residing on the forest.

The Carson National Forest Fire Prevention Program participated in numerous community events to share forest service, fire prevention and defensible space information. Our fire prevention school program focuses on children in all the school systems surrounding the forest. Our emphasis is teaching the importance of wildfire prevention, the principles of fire behavior, healthy forests and the concept of interdependence in forest ecosystems. Community events that included public meetings, visits to schools included over 2,000 children, parents and teachers, parades reached approximately 10,000 people.

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Other events included participation in local community festivals, parades fishing derbies and health fairs. Many of these events included participation from our interagency cooperators.

Many community events and meetings included the sharing of information on creating defensible space around homes in our wildland urban interface areas.