



File Code: 1950

Date: September 26, 2018

Opportunity to Comment on Proposed Projects on the Sacramento Ranger District

Dear Stakeholder:

The Lincoln National Forest, Sacramento Ranger District is proposing the following projects:

- Agua Chiquita Wayland Canyon Dirt Tanks
- Carrissa Storage and Pipeline Off Monument Spring
- Russia Canyon Trick Tank
- Sixteen Springs Pipeline Spur
- Trestle Stewardship
- Rail-Splitter Timber Sale
- American Tower Backup Generator
- New Mexico Rails to Trails Part 1
- New Mexico Rails to Trails Part 3
- Sacramento Peak Frequency Monitoring Station
- Pecos Conference
- Avis Allotment Pipeline, Watering Facilities and Fence

More information about each project and where the projects are located is summarized below. The Sacramento Ranger District is analyzing multiple projects at once to improve efficiency and streamline the analysis process in order to get more projects done on the ground in less time.

This project announcement letter serves to initiate scoping, “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed” (40 CFR 1501.7). Scoping is not limited to a single point in time; we will continue to accept and consider comments until an implementation decision is made. The purpose of scoping is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide early and meaningful comments on a proposed action prior to a decision being made by the responsible official. Public comments received in response to this solicitation will help the responsible official identify issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis for this proposal.

Objection and appeal opportunities cannot be provided on categorically-excluded projects (36 CFR 215 and 36 CFR 218). However, this policy does not limit the public’s ability to comment on Forest Service projects and activities. The responsible official will consider comments received prior to signing the decision on this proposal.

Preliminary Review

My preliminary assessment is that these proposals have the potential to fall under categorical exclusion. Categorical exclusions are a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the environment; therefore, neither and Environmental Impact Statement is required (40 CFR 1508.4). I have reviewed the project proposals in



cooperation with Forest Service environmental specialists. This preliminary review has identified no extraordinary circumstance that would preclude use of the categorical exclusion cited above.

Agua Chiquita Wayland Canyon Dirt Tanks: The purpose of this proposal is to provide sufficient water for cattle operations. There is a need to improve water availability and improve grazing distribution by providing additional water sources. The proposed action is to clean out old dirt tanks in Wayland canyon that were not previously recorded on the permit. An excavator would be used to clean out the dirt tanks. This project is located in New Mexico Meridian, T. 16 S., R. 12 E., Sections 13 and 14. This has potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(9):

Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an allotment management plan is not yet in place. Please contact Orlando Cortez for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or ocortez02@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map is located here:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54692>.

Carrissa Storage and Pipeline off Monument Spring: The purpose of this proposal is to provide sufficient water for cattle operations. There is a need to improve water availability and improve grazing distribution by providing additional water sources. The proposed action is to construct a new storage tank on approximately 10 miles of above ground pipeline. The existing 10 miles of pipeline will be replaced with new pipeline. The storage tank will be placed about 4.5 miles from the beginning of the pipeline. Material would be brought in using ATV/UTV or pack animals to the construction site. Construction would consist of digging and leveling the area using hand tools to place the storage tank and to replace the existing pipeline. The pipeline would begin on the Agua Chiquita allotment and end on the Carrissa allotment. Connected actions may include vegetation clearing for pipeline fence reconstruction on up to 20 ft. on either side of the pipeline. Staging the equipment on existing and closed roads and trails. The re-opening and closing of closed roads and trails may also be a connected activity. When the construction is complete routine maintenance would be administered by the permittee. Access would be by ATV/UTV or pack animal as needed and vegetation clearing such as brush/slash removal may be needed for access. This project is located in New Mexico Meridian, T. 19 S., R. 13 E., Sections 15 to 23 and 25 to 36; T. 19 S., R. 14 E., Sections 31 to 32; T. 20 S., R. 13 E., Sections 4 to 11, 14 to 16, 23. This has potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(9):

Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an allotment management plan is not yet in place. Please contact Orlando Cortez for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or ocortez02@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map is located here:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54693>.

Russia Canyon Trick Tank: The purpose of this project is to improve wildlife habitat. There is a need to improve water availability to wildlife. Adding a trick tank would also improve grazing distribution by providing an additional water source. The proposed action is to install a new trick tank including a catchment pad, storage tank and drinker on the Russia Allotment. The trick tank is proposed to be constructed at a new location outside of the Pierce Mexican spotted owl protected activity center. The exact location is to be determined with the permittee. Material would be brought in using wheeled vehicles to the construction site. Construction would consist of digging and leveling the area to place a catchment pad, storage tank, pipe, drinker, and fence around the portions of the trick tank. When the construction is complete routine maintenance

would be necessary. Access is to be determined and vegetation clearing such as brush/slash removal may be needed for access. Installation of a cowboy gate may be needed to access the tank for future maintenance. The project is located in New Mexico Meridian, T. 16 S., R. 12 E., Section 8. This has potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction. Please contact Orlando Cortez for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or ocortez02@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54694>.

Sixteen Springs Pipeline Spur: The purpose of this proposal is to provide sufficient water for cattle operations. There is a need to improve water availability and improve grazing distribution by providing additional water sources. The proposed action is to tier off 0.25-mile of new above ground pipeline from an existing 6 foot drinker located in handling facilities on the base property. Material would be brought in using wheeled vehicles and possibly heavy equipment to the construction site. Construction would also include road work such as drilling, digging and burying the pipeline under the Forest Service rd. 175. The pipeline buried under Forest Service rd. 175 is the only amount of pipeline that would be buried, the rest of the pipeline would be above ground. When the construction is complete routine maintenance would be administered by the permittee. The project is located in New Mexico Meridian, T. 15 S., R. 15 E., Section 27. This has potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(9): Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an allotment management plan is not yet in place. Please contact Orlando Cortez for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or ocortez02@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54695>.

Trestle Stewardship: The purpose of this proposal is to implement a sanitation cut of approximately 30 acres of mistletoe infested timber. There is a need to remove mistletoe infested timber to prevent spread to healthy trees. This project would aid in landscape restoration and fuels reduction. This project would also assist with industry needs. This would be a commercial logging operation. Actions would include the removal of commercial saw timber, the removal of activity generated slash, and reopening and closing existing road prisms and skid trails. Mitigations for erosion would include water-barring and reseeding native vegetation. All thinning would be adhered to by a prescription. Equipment and machinery needed would include but would not be limited to: chainsaws, feller bunchers, skidders, log loaders, log trucks, graders, dozers, and trucks. The location of the proposed restoration activities is approximately 0.5 miles west of Cloudcroft, NM in mixed conifer and ponderosa pine 8,400 ft., slopes vary throughout the project area between 5 to 10 percent. Treatments would not occur on slopes exceeding 40 percent. This proposal has the potential to fall under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(14): Commercial and non-commercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 mile of temporary road construction, including removal of infested/infected trees and adjacent live uninfested/uninfected trees as determined necessary to control the spread of insects or disease. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing. Please contact Jessie Willett for further information on this project at 575-682-5342 or jkwillett@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map and further information on proposed treatments is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54696>.

Rail-Splitter Timber Sale: The purpose of this proposal is to harvest 40 acres of timber for a commercial logging operation. This project would aid in landscape restoration and fuels reduction. This project would also assist with industry needs. Actions would include the harvest of approximately 40 acres of commercial saw timber. Logging would be adhered to by a prescription. Actions would also include re-opening and closing existing road prisms and skid trails, and erosion control mitigations such as water-barring and seeding native vegetation. Equipment and machinery needed would include but would not be limited to: chainsaws, feller bunchers, skidders, log loaders, log trucks, graders, dozers, and trucks. Long-term maintenance activities may include slash piles and broadcast burning. The location of the proposed activities is approximately 4.5 miles South of Weed, NM in Ponderosa Pine, 7200 ft., slopes vary throughout the project area. Treatments will not occur on slopes exceeding 40%. The project will be accessed from rd. 171 South of Weed, NM. This has the potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(12): Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction. Please contact Jessie Willett for further information on this project at 575-682-5342 or jkwillett@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map and further information on proposed treatments is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54766>.

American Tower Backup Generator: The purpose of proposal is to install a new backup generator for the owners of the existing American tower at the Long Ridge communication site. The owners applied for the tower in May of 2017. There is a need for the generator to keep the tower operational during a power outage. Actions would include the installation of a generator (Genarac SD080-80kW) utilizing a 131bhp internal combustion engine and a 300 gallon diesel fuel tank at an existing tower at Long Ridge. Equipment for this installation would include a flatbed truck and a skid steer. The location of the proposed restoration activities is at the Long Ridge electronic site; New Mexico Meridian, T. 17 S., R. 10 E. Section 14. The site is in pinyon-juniper habitat at an elevation of 7,755feet. This has the potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3): approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land. Please contact Marcie Kelton for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or marciekelton@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map and further information on proposed treatments is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54697>.

Rails to Trails Trail Projects: The purpose of this project is to provide recreational opportunities to forest users. There is a need to further develop the Enchanted Trail, which upon completion would provide a large loop on the west side of the Sacramento Mountains. New Mexico Rails to Trails Association (NMRTA) has proposed to construct segments of trails to fulfill the continuous endeavor to create the Enchanted Trail. In their request there were 3 independent proposals, two of which are currently proposed, parts 1 and 3, which are described below. The trails would be located in the Fresnal Canyon area in New Mexico Meridian, T. 16 S., R. 11 E. Trails would be constructed using ground labor and small wheeled or tracked equipment within the proposed trail corridor or to access the corridor. This proposal has the potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1) Construction and reconstruction of trails. Please contact Marcie Kelton for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or marciekelton@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map for each proposed section of trail is located at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53285>.

In **part 1** of the proposal NMRTA would like to construct 13.51 miles of 4 primitive trails from the western tip of the Switchback trail to the Fresnal Road. These segments (including the part 2 proposal) would be incorporated into the future “Cloud Climbing Rail Trail” which would be part of the Enchanted Trail that would someday end at Sunspot.

In **part 3** of their proposal NMRTA would like to construct a 0.16 mile trail from the Harris Hollow gate to the intersection of the Salado Trail, which would be the “shortcut” trail to Bridal Veil Falls. There is a significant need for this “shortcut trail” to help alleviate or minimize the trespass of the public on the private property, as well as the vandalism to the gate at the cattle guard that people often destroy to gain a shorter access to the water fall. Currently, access to Bridal Veil Falls by existing trails is approximately 2 miles via the Bridal Veil Falls Trail, T129, and about 1 mile via the Salado Canyon Trail, T128. Using the proposed shortcut via the Harris Hollow cattle guard reduces the hiking distance to the falls to approximately 0.33 mile.

Sacramento Peak Frequency Monitoring Station: The purpose of this proposal is to allow for special uses on the Forest in conformance with current laws and regulations. There is a need to issue a new term permit to replace an outdated permit for the continued operation and maintenance of the existing Sacramento Peak Frequency Monitoring Station. The US Army Corps of Engineers is operating under an expired term permit that was issued in 1955 and was authorized from White Sands Missile Range to construct, operate, and maintain the frequency monitoring station. The continued operation of the Sacramento Peak Frequency Monitoring Station is crucial to the success of the White Sands Missile Range testing program and the national defense mission. The frequency monitoring station is located near Sunspot on the existing site known as Sacramento Peak, in New Mexico Meridian, T. 17 S., R. 11 E., Sections 26 and 27. The site is within mixed conifer forest at an elevation of 9,465 feet. This proposal may fall under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(15): Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are not changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorization. Please contact Marcie Kelton for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or marciekelton@fs.fed.us. The project website is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54699>.

Pecos Conference: The purpose of this proposal is for the Heritage Office plans to co-host the 2018 Pecos Conference on the Lincoln National Forest. There is a need to reserve the site because the conference includes 300 to 400 archaeologists of national academic standing in the field of Mogollon Archaeology that are expected to attend. The plan activities include verbal presentation of papers and research projects. A hosted dinner and dance party will be held on the grounds. Tents for round-table discussions and activities, and a stage, individual camp sites, existing fire rings will be set on the former helicopter runway. Areas for parking campers and RV's will be the housing area road surfaces. Portable restrooms will also be placed in various areas of high traffic use. The Pecos Conference Committee traditionally asks that the Forest Service provide the property for all activities, and for potable drinking water. Due to camping areas being in two separate locations (RV/camper and tent area) the Lincoln National Forest will provide 2 water buffalos of potable water. No other equipment or machinery would be used for

this project. Access would be provided to the site through paved roads (Sunspot Highway) and an unnumbered Forest Service road from the housing area to the runway. The anticipated dates of the event would occur from August 7, 2019 to August 13, 2019. The site would be located at the Helicopter pad/runway at Sunspot, NM, UTM coordinates 13S 423403 2628413. This proposal may fall under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3): Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land. Please contact Scott Strom-Hays for further information on this project at 575-434-7206 or shaysstrom@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map and further information on proposed treatments is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54701>.

Avis Allotment Pipeline, Watering Facilities, and Fence: The purpose of this proposal is to provide sufficient water for cattle operations. There is a need to improve water availability and improve grazing distribution by providing additional water sources. The proposed action is to replace an existing pipeline and associated watering facilities and nonfunctional pasture division fence. All improvements would be reconstructed within their original footprint with the exception of one watering facility that would be constructed in an old dirt tank. Connected actions would include the replacement of existing pipeline and fence line, brush/slash management for access, and site preparation for watering facilities. When the construction is complete routine maintenance would be administered by the permittee. The pipeline would begin on private land headquarters located northwest of the allotment and would continue Southeast and East- South to other private lands. T. 18 S., R. 14. E., Sections 25 and 36; R. 15. E. Sections 31 to 33; T. 19. S., R. 15. E., Sections 4 to 8, and 17 to 18. This has potential to fall under: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(9): Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an allotment management plan is not yet in place. Please contact Orlando Cortez for further information on this project at 575-682-2551 or ocortez02@fs.fed.us. The project website which contains a location map is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54703>.

The proposed action description and other information for each project mentioned is available for review at the Sacramento Ranger District in Cloudcroft, New Mexico at #4 Lost Lodge, Cloudcroft, NM 88317; 575-682-2551; jbrusuelas@fs.fed.us; or on the Lincoln National Forest projects website - <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/lincoln/landmanagement/projects>.

How to Submit Comments

Electronic comments including attachments may be submitted by email in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), or hypertext markup language (.html) to comments-southwestern-lincoln-sacramento@fs.fed.us and include the project title in the subject line. Written comments may also be addressed to: Elizabeth Humphrey, District Ranger, c/o Jasper Brusuelas, #4 Lost Lodge, Cloudcroft, NM 88317; or faxed to 575-682-3394. Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at this office via telephone at (575) 682-2551; or in person; or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Comments will be accepted and considered by the responsible official at any time prior to signing these decisions but it would be preferred to receive comments by October 15, 2018. Decisions on these proposals are expected by October 19, 2018; each project described above will have a separate decision document. Please define

which of the above mentioned projects you are commenting on by including the project name with your comments. It is fine to submit one comment letter for multiple project comments, just clearly define which project each comment is referring to. Comments should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider.

Anyone submitting comments are asked to provide their name and postal mailing address so that they can be added to the project mailing list. Comments submitted anonymously will be considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including name and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied; the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within seven days.

Thank you for your interest in the Lincoln National Forest.

Sincerely,



ELIZABETH A. HUMPHREY
District Ranger

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