



**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** August 9, 2019

## Designated Opportunity to Comment: Hale Lake Area Management Project

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

The Smokey Bear Ranger District is proposing changes to the management of US Forest System lands in the vicinity of Hale Lake. These changes would improve the access to a variety of recreation uses within the Hale Lake area, while addressing known issues with travel management and recreation.

Follow the link below for a detailed proposed action that provides more information on the proposed project, including maps. Additional information will become available at this location and will be updated as the project moves through the NEPA process:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56577>.

Proposed changes include, but are not limited to:

- The authorization of new single-track trails.
- The authorization of five 4x4 trails on existing user created routes.
- Reclamation and physical closure of all other user created routes and of decommissioned roads.
- The use of gates, fencing, boulders, and/or bollards to prevent unauthorized access to "administrative use only" roads.
- The creation of three public parking areas.
- The construction of two low standard helispots for EMS access.
- The potential addition of vault toilets at the proposed parking areas, as well as other amenities.

The proposed changes are based on both resource damage caused by existing uses, and on the expected increased demand for all types of recreation in the coming decade.

Implementation of these changes would occur as funding becomes available; however, it is the goal of the district to authorize the 4x4 trails and begin the closure of unauthorized routes to motor vehicles as soon as is feasible following a decision on the project.

We will have a public meeting to discuss the proposal, answer any questions, and accept comments in writing on Thursday August 29<sup>th</sup>, from 4 to 6 pm, at the ENMU campus in Ruidoso, NM.



We will prepare a draft environmental assessment (EA) to document and publicly disclose the environmental effects of implementing these proposed activities on National Forest System lands within the project area. We would like to receive public input on this project proposal, as comments will help us fully develop the proposed action and help identify issues and concerns that should be addressed in the analysis. Opportunities to provide comments on this proposal are outlined below.

### **How to Submit Comments**

Electronic comments including attachments may be submitted by email in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), portable document format (.pdf), or hypertext markup language (.html) to [comments-southwestern-lincoln-smokey-bear@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southwestern-lincoln-smokey-bear@fs.fed.us) and include "Hale Lake Area Management" in the subject line. Written comments may also be addressed to: Jodie Canfield, District Ranger, c/o Andrew Ellis, 901 Mechem Drive, Ruidoso, NM 88345; or faxed to 575-257-6174. 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) 257-4095; 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 the release of the draft EA. A separate designated comment period will occur for 30 days following the release of the draft EA.

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 email address (preferred) or 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,



JODIE CANFIELD  
District Ranger

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