
File Code: 1950
Date: July 20, 2020

Designated Opportunity to Comment on the Hale Lake Area Management Project Draft Environmental Assessment

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

The Smokey Bear Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest is seeking public comments on a draft environmental assessment (EA) for the Hale Lake Area Management Project.

The proposed 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, and reducing environmental impacts from unauthorized motorized use in the area. The proposed action includes but is not limited to:

- The addition of five 4x4 motorized trails that will be designated for motorized use.
- The elimination and restoration of unauthorized routes.
- Restricting the use of administrative use only roads with gates and fencing.
- The future construction of two new single-track trail networks: One for non-motorized and class-1 pedal assist E-bike use, and another for non-motorized and motorcycle use.
- The construction of 3 parking areas.
- The construction of a short, non-motorized single-track trail from forest road 443 to the historic Tunstall murder site.

The roads that are currently designated open to passenger and high clearance vehicles would remain open and unchanged.

One alternative was also analyzed that includes the proposed actions plus an additional OHV trail loop in Hale Canyon.

A virtual Facebook Live public meeting will be held on the [Lincoln National Forest Facebook](#) on Thursday, July 23, 2020 at 5:30 pm. You do not need to have a Facebook account to view the meeting. The meeting will cover the information in the draft EA and you will be able to ask questions.

How and When to Submit Comments

1. **Review the draft EA** and accompanying maps online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56577>.
2. **Write your comments.** Your comments should contain the following:
 - a. Comments should be about what is being proposed in the Hale Lake Area Management Project Draft EA.



- b. Comments must be detailed, specific and include supporting reasoning.
- 3. Submit your comments in one of the following ways.**
- a. Email: Email comments to comments-southwestern-lincoln-smokey-bear@usda.gov and include “Hale Lake Area Management Project” in the subject line.
 - b. Mail: Jodie Canfield, District Ranger, c/o Andrew Ellis, 901 Mechem Dr., Ruidoso, NM 88345.
 - c. Fax: Fax comments to 575.257.6174, (please call the front desk at 575.257.4095 to confirm prior to faxing).

Comments on the proposed project will be accepted from Wednesday, July 22 to August 21, 2020. For full details on the comment process please see the legal notice in the July 22 edition of the *Ruidoso News* or visit the project webpage on, or after, July 22. Failing to submit timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent reviews. It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted.

To be able to participate in the entire NEPA process and to be added to the project mailing list we ask you provide your name, postal address, title of the project, and verification of identity of who authored the comments upon request. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments in order to have eligibility to object as an individual. Comments submitted anonymously will be considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents and may affect your ability to object or participate in judicial review (aka legal action).

You may also obtain additional information about this project by contacting Andrew Ellis, NEPA Planner, at Andrew.Ellis@usda.gov or at 575.257.4095.

NEXT STEPS

After comments are fully considered, the EA will be finalized and if it is determined that there is no significant impact, then a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and draft decision notice will be prepared. If it is determined that there would be a significant impact, either an Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared or the project will be dropped. The final EA, FONSI, and draft decision would be subject to the predecisional administrative review process (objection process) pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. The responsible official, will notify those that previously commented of the opportunity to object on the final EA, FONSI, and draft decision.

Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted substantive formal comments regarding this proposed project during a designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted, timely, specifically written comments regarding this proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

Thank you for your interest in the Lincoln National Forest.

Sincerely,

JODIE CANFIELD
District Ranger

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