

Recreation Facility Analysis

CARSON NATIONAL FOREST

PROPOSED 5-YEAR PROGRAM OF WORK

Background

The Carson National Forest is proposing future management of developed recreation sites through a process called "Recreation Facility Analysis (RFA)." Every national forest in the nation will also complete this process in 2008.

We want to provide healthy, safe, and well-maintained recreation opportunities that are important to local communities and visitors to our area. Through the RFA process, the overall goals of our recreation site program are to:

- Focus resources on the most appropriate recreation opportunities to meet changing public desires and demands.
- Maintain or enhance visitor satisfaction with the sites and services provided.
- Meet quality health and safety standards at all developed recreation sites.
- Be financially sustainable.
- Be environmentally sound.
- Maintain community sustainability.

Many of our facilities had been built 30-50 years ago and have reached the end of their useful life without significant deferred maintenance investment. Other facilities receive little or no use, and no longer serve the demand that existed in years past. The fundamental premise of the program of work is to create an inventory, which is sustainable and flexible enough to be annually adapted to any changes in demand, available resources, and opportunities.

At each forest, the RFA process involves several steps: gathering inventory and financial data; identifying the forest recreation niche; evaluating each developed recreation site against established national criteria (including conformance with the forest niche, financial efficiency, and environmental and community sustainability); and ranking the recreation sites according to those criteria. Using this analysis, as well as professional judgment and assessment of our ability to meet current and future demand, the Forest has documented a proposed 5-Year Program of Work. We welcome your comments and suggestions on this proposal.

What's Happening on the Carson National Forest?

A Forest's recreation niche defines the best-suited recreation experiences or benefits that the forest can provide. It's what makes a forest special, and fosters quality recreation versus quantity, or trying to be all things to all people. It provides a good description of the uniquely specific recreation opportunities provided by the Forest within the context of the forest's ecological features, opportunities provided by others in the area, and the demands and desires of recreation visitors to the area now and into the future. The Carson National Forest niche is:

Share the Culture, Love the Land

The Carson National Forest illustrates recreation and the traditional subsistence way of life working hand in hand. Area residents are tied to its past, from the ‘ancients’ through today. Many have an intimate connection with the resources that have sustained them for centuries. Trails and roads access the Forest for play and work purposes. Understanding these ties is critical to appreciating the Forest.

Settings, Special Places, and Values

Forest Overview – The Carson’s recreational bounty is just part of its appeal. The tapestry of red rock canyons, golden aspen, green pine, black geologic basalt, red clays, and shimmering mica set the stage. The sage scented high desert, evergreen clad mountain sides and alpine meadows further create this visual diversity. Incredible New Mexico skies light up the landscape that can be seen from the highest mountains in the state. The Carson National Forest is at the natural and cultural crossroads of New Mexico: critical for small community survival, especially for what it provides in access and infrastructure, and in the role it plays in the enhancement of the arts. Residents depend on the Forest for water, pasture lands, family gatherings and spiritual renewal.

Family Destinations – Group sites and forest dispersed areas where solitude can be found and yet social gatherings occur frequently, mainly at water related areas.

Travel Corridors – The vistas along the Enchanted Circle National Scenic Byway, Highways 84, 46, 285, and other major roads are the keys to enjoying the forest.

Wildlands – Gems of the Forest where solitude and vistas are guaranteed.

Concentrated Destinations - Actively managed developments that provide for high densities of recreationists in areas like the Red River Valley and Taos Ski Valley.

Activities/Opportunities/Experiences

Forest Overview – Trail opportunities are very popular across the Forest, including the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Wheeler Peak (the highest peak in NM), and the only designated OHV trails in the Region. Wildlife-centered recreation like fishing, viewing wild horses, and hunting occur across the entire forest, but is a focus in areas like the Valle Vidal, the Forest’s west side, and in the Sangre de Cristos where trophy big game are highly sought after. Four-season recreation opportunities like biking, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling and snowshoeing bring visitors back as “new residents”.

Family Destinations – Group Camping, Group Day-Use, Horseback Riding, Medicinal Herb, Pinon Nut and Firewood Gathering

Travel Corridors - Scenic Viewing, Driving for Pleasure, Environmental, Conservation and Heritage Education Opportunities

Wildlands – Day Hiking, Backpacking, Horseback Riding, Winter Sports

Concentrated Destinations – Winter Sports, Major Ski Areas (under special use permit), Camping, Adjacent Rafting, Motorized Recreation

Visitors

Locals	Less than an hour away, these community residents come to the Forest on a daily basis to hike, fish, downhill ski (and other winter uses), find spiritual renewal, medicinal herbs, firewood, and to re-create.
Regionals	Travel from 1-3 hours from communities of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Vegas NM, and southern Colorado for day uses, the Arts, information about Native American and Spanish interests, frequent restaurants and overnight use (on and off the Forest).
Destination Visitors	4-12 hours from Phoenix, Texas, Denver, and Oklahoma for mini vacations, some 2 nd home owners. They come for outfitted and guided activities, RV camping, the Arts and information, especially for Native American and Spanish interests. They overnight primarily off the Forest using hotels and restaurants.
Worldwide Visitors	From > 12 hours away, mostly fly-ins who want the high visibility recreation, like mountaineering, downhill skiing, and hiking the CDT. They stay in hotels and eat in the restaurants around the Forest.

This niche provides an umbrella context for all recreation programs on the Forest and helps

us match up what is most wanted with what we can best provide, to create the most value for the public within our available resources.

Through this Recreation Facility Analysis, we are proposing a 5-year program of work to bring the Forest’s recreation infrastructure into alignment with the forest recreation niche and the resources available to operate and maintain it to standard.

This proposed program of work is also important to address the backlog of needed maintenance at facilities that has been increasing over the years, creating health, safety, and visitor satisfaction concerns. Referred to as “deferred maintenance,” the amount of work needed in sites nationally has reached \$346 million. On the Carson National Forest, the backlog of deferred maintenance is over \$540,000. Along with that, less than one-quarter of all Forest Service developed recreation sites is now being operated to meet all quality standards.

More about the Recreation Facility Analysis:

The Forest completed an evaluation of each developed recreation site using established national criteria, ranking their recreation sites according to those criteria, and making a recommendation for a Proposed 5-Year Program of Work using this information as well as professional judgment, and ability to meet current and future demand. The criteria include:

- Conformance to the forest niche and amount of recreation use (35%)
- Financial efficiency (35%)
- Environmental and community sustainability (30%).

We also considered if sites were under some type of operational or contractual agreement whose terms are longer than the 5-year period of the RFA analysis (i.e. concessionaire-managed campground).

The Carson National Forest evaluated a total of 48 developed recreation sites. The following table summarizes the number of recreation sites evaluated by “site type.”

Carson National Forest Developed Recreation Site Summary

Table 1

Recreation Site Type	Number of Sites Evaluated
Campground	30
Group Campground	1

Picnic Area	5
Trailhead	1
Fishing	6
Interpretive Major	1
Interpretive Minor	1
Other Winter Sports Site	3
TOTAL:	48

The Proposed Actions and Program of Work for the Carson National Forest:

Through the ranking process proposals to increase and improve services were selected 43 times and proposals of no change to operations and maintenance were selected 14 times. Other proposals include: construct a new area, remove or eliminate cost sources, change season of use (shorter or longer opening), change site operator (partnership or concessionaire), convert a site to a different type (campground becomes a day-use site), close 6 sites, and decommission 5 sites (the area reverts back to a natural setting with no facilities).

The specific list of Proposed Management Actions by Ranger District and Site Name is attached. Please feel free to contact your local ranger district or Forest with questions and comments about our process or proposed management actions. We would like to hear from you!

Results

The following results can be expected upon implementation of the proposed management actions described in the attachment. These particular results focus specifically on financial sustainability, reduced deferred maintenance, and meeting quality health and safety standards at all developed recreation sites.

Table 2

Result	Baseline Condition	Program of Work Changed Condition	Percent Change
Appropriated Funds Available ¹	143,064	143,064	0%
Fee Receipts Available	0	2,465	100%
Other Funds Available ²	0	0	0%
Annual Operating Costs	111,868	25,142	-78%
Annual Maintenance Costs	150,110	50,795	-66%
Deferred Maintenance Costs	540,149	431,157	-20%

PAOT Days Managed to Standard ³	335,695	556,924	66%
Annual O&M Costs/PAOT Day	.43	.14	-68%

We will also continue to monitor visitor satisfaction with the sites and services provided, and consider how our developed recreation program contributes to local community stability. Some of the proposed actions will require full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, assuring environmental sound decisions.

How closely the Forest adheres to the program of work will depend upon available funding and resources, as well as the public's interest, and in many cases, involvement and partnership to enhance our recreation program. If you are interested in helping the Forest implement or improve on the proposed program of work, please contact Steve Okamoto.

¹Appropriated funds available are reflected using FY 2006 as the baseline funding year, with the assumption for this analysis that developed recreation funding will remain flat (subject to forest and regional priorities).

²Other Funds Available include funding from partnerships, grants, and other funding made available that are not appropriated funds or fee receipts.

³PAOT = People at One Time (or capacity of a site at any one time). PAOT Days equate to the number of days in a season where sites are managed to standard multiplied by total PAOT.

Attachment
Proposed Management Actions
Carson National Forest
July 9, 2008

CARSON National Forest	\$138,100	TOTAL ONE-TIME COST TO IMPLEMENT TASKS
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**8a. INFO ENTRY: 5-Year Proposed Program of Work -
Table of Tasks**

MNG ORG	SITE NAME	TASK	ONE-TIME COST TO IMPLEMENT ACTION	TASK COMMENTS
30201	CANJILON LAKES	F12,I5	\$8,000	Remove water system; add signing
30201	CANJILON LAKES PG	B1	\$10,000	Grills and tables only
30201	ECHO AMPHITHEATER	C2,F10,F12,F13,I5	\$6,000	DM for signing - Close in winter. Will most likely become a CDNST trailhead.
30201	ECHO CAMPGROUND	C2,F8,F10,F12,F13,I5	\$0	DM for signing - Building a group shelter; need to add host site for \$7,000; Close in winter
30201	PIEDRA ALUMBRE VISITOR CENTER	H2	\$0	Re-issue this permit as a 20+ year long term permit; the Church takes on the O&M and the DM.
30201	TROUT LAKES	B1	\$2,000	Close
30202	EL RITO	F9,F10,F13,G1,H2,H3,I3,J1	\$0	The site master plan was prepared for this site in 2007. A new group shelter is being built in 2008.
30204	AGUA PIEDRA	A1a	\$8,000	
30204	AGUA PIEDRA CG	D5,F10,F17	\$0	Additional \$56,000 for replacement of 4 toilets not shown in DM; decommission 1/2 of the water system (take out some of the line).
30204	AGUA PIEDRA GROUP AREA	F10,F17	\$0	\$28,000 needed for replacement of 2 toilets, (DM increased to reflect this); \$12000 needed for Water System DM
30204	AGUA PIEDRA TRAIL HEAD	F10	\$100	
30204	CAPULIN	D5,I4,J1,F16,F10,F17,K2	\$29,000	Convert some individual units to Group Camping; \$15000 CIP Shelter contingent on site remaining open then charge shelter site fee of \$75 / group; Additional \$14,000 for replacement of toilet not shown in DM. The Action Meeting determined that this site must stay open, so it is now labeled as Non-Discretionary.
30204	COMALES	D5,I4,J1,F16,F10,F17,K2	\$14,000	Propose same plan as Capulin CG above. Proposed 2011 CIP for Shelters (~15,000 x 2 shelters)
30204	DURAN	NC2,F10	\$0	DM covers 12 tables, 12 firerings
30204	FLECHADO	A1a	\$6,000	Decommission

30204	LA JUNTA CANYON	NC2,F10	\$0	Install 33 tables - \$17,000 as part of Rio Pueblo CIP - increase fee to \$15 - predict increase in G/T off-set to \$1,225
30204	LA SOMBRA	B1	\$100	Closure decommission - up to the Forest Supervisor and District Ranger
30204	LAS PETACAS	D5,J1,F16,F10	\$100	Change area from Campground to Day Use area. DM covers replacement of 10 tables. The Action Meeting determined that this site must stay open, so it is now labeled as Non-Discretionary.
30204	POT CREEK	C1,C3,H2	\$0	Turn management of area over to local tribes and have them manage under a Special Use Permit Assume 3% return of \$5 entrance fee
30204	SANTA BARBARA	NC2,F10	\$0	
30204	UPPER LA JUNTA	NC2,F10	\$0	
30204	US HILL SNOW PLAY AREA	NC1,F10	\$0	
30206	HOPEWELL	F10,F12,F13,I5	\$1,000	DM for signing-
30206	HOPEWELL CG	F8,F10,F12,F13,I5	\$1,000	Designate a host site (\$7000) as part of post 2013 CIP proposal - DM for signing
30206	HOPEWELL FISHING SITE	F10,F12,F13	\$0	DM for signing; Implementation costs included in the picnic area
30206	LAGUNITAS	B1	\$1,000	DM for signing
30206	LOS PINOS	A2,K1	\$30,000	Convert to Dispersed site Deferred Maintenance will be reduced to zero when the site's amenities are removed and it is converted to dispersed site..
30207	ANDERSON PARK	NC1	\$0	
30207	CABRESTO LAKE	D4	\$1,000	Reduction in costs due to removal of tables and grills
30207	CEBOLLA MESA	B1	\$0	Close the door and immediately remove the tables
30207	CIMARRON	NC2	\$0	Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.
30207	COLUMBINE	NC2	\$0	Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.
30207	CUCHILLO DEL MEDIO	F16	\$1,200	Install 2 gates.
30207	EAGLE ROCK LAKE	E2	\$0	
30207	ELEPHANT ROCK	NC2	\$0	Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.
30207	FAWN LAKES	NC2	\$0	Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.
30207	FAWN LAKES FISHING SITE	NC2	\$0	
30207	GOAT HILL	NC2	\$0	Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.

30207	GOOSE LAKE	B1	\$6,000	Savings in O&M and DM from removal of toilet; fund in a single proposal with Middle Fork Lake
30207	JUNEBUG	NC2	\$0	On the list for CIP
30207	LA BOBITA	F6	\$1,000	Added AM is for additional tables, grills, and trashcans. Need \$1,000 for tables, grills, and trashcans, \$30,000 CIP to add double SST
30207	LA CUERVA	A1a	\$1,000	Decommission
30207	LOWER HONDO	F8	\$5,000	Turn one existing site into Host site, get volunteer to staff - add emergency satellite phone ~ \$5,000
30207	MCCRISTAL	J2	\$0	Eliminate 20 campsites - reduce annual maintenance by 30%. Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.
30207	MIDDLE FORK LAKE	A1a	\$6,000	Decommission - will require CIP to remove old toilet; Fund together with Goose Lake
30207	SHUREE PONDS FISHING SITE	NC2	\$0	Site Operation costs are low because of Concessionaire operations.
30207	TWINING	H1	\$0	60% reduction in O&M due to conversion to Concessionaire - predict \$90 in G/T off-set from \$8 fee
30207	UPPER CUCHILLA	F16	\$600	Add gate - operate 5-15 to 9-15