

DECISION MEMO

Peralta Watershed Improvement Project

**USDA FOREST SERVICE
JEMEZ RANGER DISTRICT
SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST
T18N, R4E, Sec 22, 23, 27
SANDOVAL COUNTY, NM**

Decision & Location: I have decided to approve the Peralta Watershed Improvement Project, which would improve watershed conditions and fish habitat in Peralta Canyon. This decision approves placement of bollards at the end of FR 280 to block ATVs and full-size vehicles (but maintain single track access and cow trailing); livestock/elk exclusion fencing and willow planting along riparian habitat in meadow reaches of Peralta Creek; cutting, piling, and burning of trees up to 12-inches within 300 feet of the toe of the slope; and cutting and placement of trees between 12 and 24 inches across the creek bed and in the floodplain. This project may be implemented immediately according to the design specifications and timing restrictions included below.

This project is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement under FSH 1909.15, Chapter 31.2—Category 6: Timber stand or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56).

Categorical Exclusion Compliance:

1. **Scoping:** Agency resource specialists were consulted and public involvement for this project included contacting the New Mexico Environmental Department, Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Fish and Game Department, Jemez Pueblo, Santa Domingo Pueblo, Forest Guardians, Center of Biological Diversity, the local chapter of the Sierra Club, the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society, local land owners, and other interested parties. Considering the nature and scope of the project, no additional public contact was deemed necessary.

Four responses were received from scoping efforts. Three of these letters fully supported the proposal, and the fourth letter included several concerns and questions that were responded to directly. Issues raised during scoping were incorporated into the proposed action to the maximum extent possible. Examples of considerations built into the proposed action include timing restrictions to limit tree-felling outside of the breeding season and Jemez Mountain Salamander surveys in areas where they are likely to occur in the project area. One letter that supported the project specifically called for restoration of ecological processes such as fire via prescribed burning in Peralta Canyon. This was considered to be outside of the scope of the project based on the fact it would require a much larger planning effort and may not be feasible given the resource conditions, topography, and access to Peralta Canyon.

2. The project is located within Management Areas “R” and “L” and is consistent with the management direction specific to these areas and Forest Plan forest-wide and management area goals, direction, and standards and guidelines.

3. The action does not involve adverse effects to any extraordinary circumstances, i.e., listed/proposed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, or FS sensitive species; floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds; congressionally designated areas; inventoried roadless areas; research natural areas; or American Indian religious/cultural sites; or archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.



4. A biological and heritage resource report are in the project file.
5. This decision is based on the best available science in watershed and fish habitat improvement and is consistent with the Santa Fe National Forest Plan, as amended.
6. The following restrictions and design specifications are to be implemented as part of this decision:

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| <p>To avoid or minimize impacts to wildlife and sensitive species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not fell trees between March 1 and August 31 • Conduct Jemez Mountain Salamander surveys, if necessary, prior to activities in potential non-meadow habitat. • Avoid ground disturbing activities in survey areas if Jemez Mountain Salamanders are shown to be present |
| <p>To avoid or minimize impacts to water quality and human health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use herbicide or pesticide as part of this project • Any work in a channel below the ordinary high water mark must be limited to low flow periods. Avoid working in these channels during the spring runoff and summer monsoon season; • A 401/404 permit will be issued from Army Corps of Engineers prior to tree felling into the stream and floodplain, if necessary. A copy of the 401 certification permit will be kept at the project site during implementation. |

Appeals and Implementation:

This decision is not subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215.11 (published on June 4, 2003). This project may be implemented immediately.

Contact: For more information on this project, please contact Mike Dechter, Jemez Ranger District Office, P.O. Box 150, Jemez Springs, NM 87025. (575) 829-3535.

Linda Riddle

LINDA RIDDLE
Jemez District Ranger

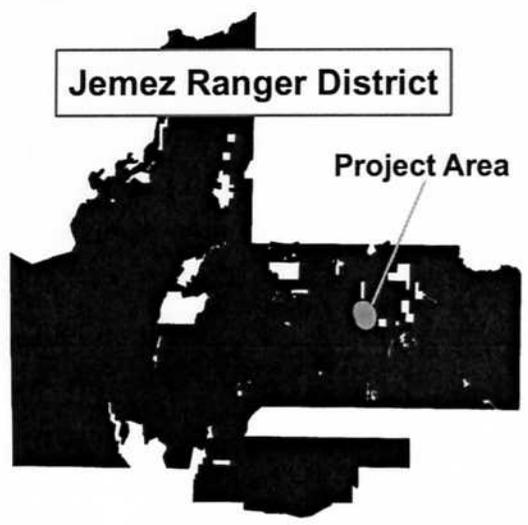
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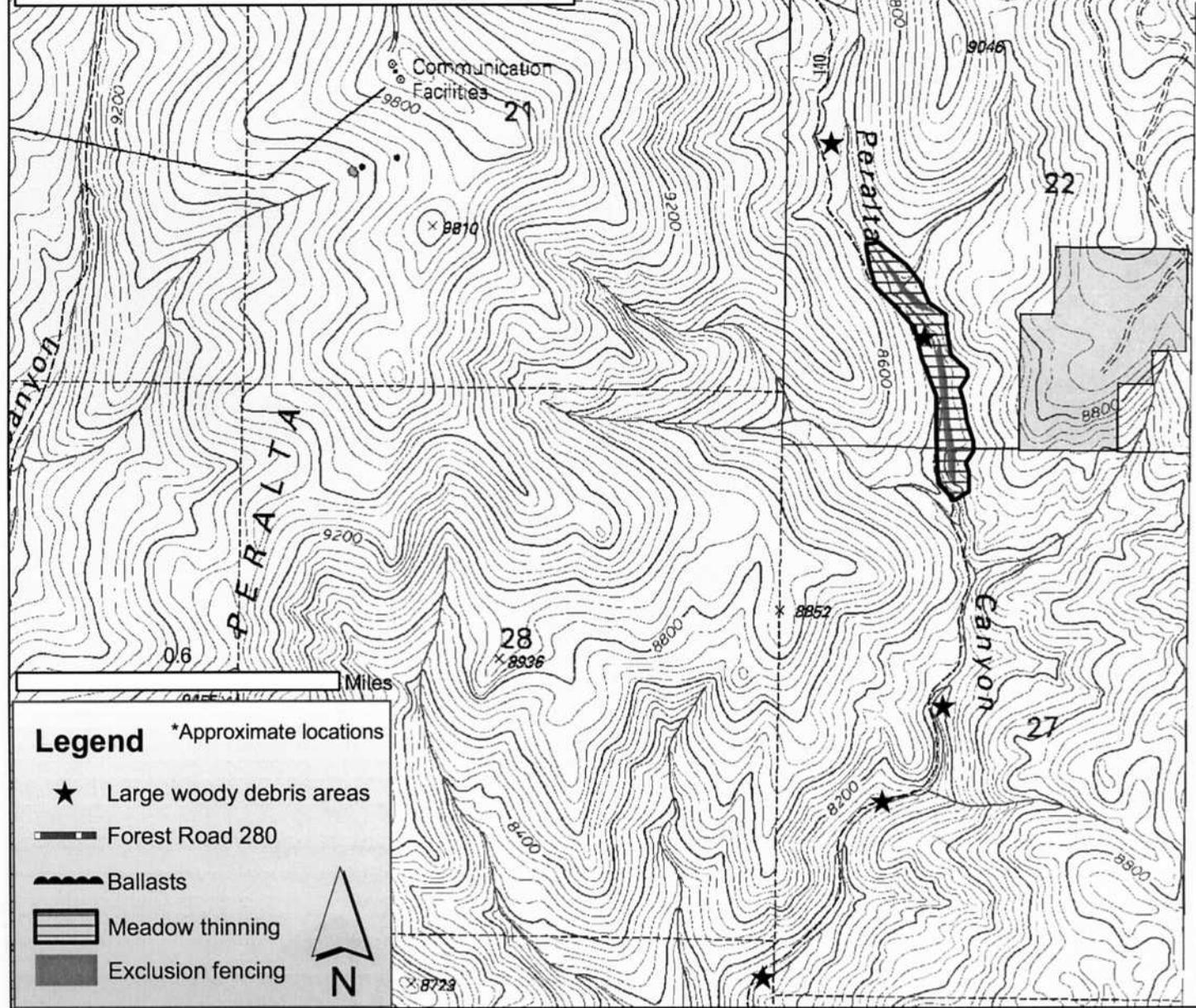
Peralta Canyon Watershed Improvement Project

Jemez Ranger District

Project Area



To State Highway 4,
Valles Caldera National Preserve



Legend

*Approximate locations

- ★ Large woody debris areas
- Forest Road 280
- ~ Ballasts
- ▬ Meadow thinning
- Exclusion fencing

