

Decision Summary - Roadless

Project Name	Northern New Mexico Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland Restoration Project		
Forest	Carson, Cibola, Santa Fe National Forests	Region	R3
Choose Type of Activity (Wilderness, Roadless, Energy infrastructure, Minerals, Vegetation CE, Land Management Plan) and level of Decision (No DM, DM, DN/FONSI, ROD)			
Roadless. DN/FONSI			
Planned Decision Date	March 30, 2021		

Summary Description

Purpose/Need
The purpose is to maintain or enhance watershed and range health by restoring riparian, wetland, and associated upland and aquatic habitats; promoting species recovery and diversity; and allowing for grazing and sustainable human uses, such as hunting, fishing, and recreation, as required by the Land and Resource Management Plans for the Carson, Cibola and Santa Fe National Forests and the Kiowa National Grassland (USFS 1985, 1986, 1987, 2012a).
Intended Selected Action
The Forest Service proposes to restore riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats on the Carson, Cibola, and Santa Fe National Forests and the Kiowa National Grassland in New Mexico by implementing a variety of restoration activities. Projects would include aquatic organism improvement; instream, side-channel, and floodplain projects, including erosion control structures and grade stabilization, fencing, beaver habitat restoration, streambank restoration, and channel reconstruction or relocation; riparian vegetation treatments, including planting and prescribed fire; road and trail erosion control, relocation, and decommissioning; groundwater-dependent and groundwater recharge ecosystems, such as restoration of seeps, springs, and playas. An estimated 2,000 acres of projects would be completed annually across all project types and all three national forests and the grassland. This represents approximately 5 to 20 percent of any given hydrologic unit code (HUC)-6 subwatershed that overlaps the project area (USFS GIS 2019). The flexible toolbox approach allows predetermined treatments to be aligned before they are implemented with current conditions on the ground. Currently comprehensive information about the conditions found across every acre in the landscape is incomplete, however sufficient data is available to make informed decisions about what kinds of treatments work for certain conditions. The EA analyzed one action alternative.
Potentially Significant Effects or Extraordinary Circumstances (if any)
None. However, this project has not identified any specific projects for implementation, rather it clears several project categories for restoration to occur after project level assessments have occurred ensuring that the projects are in compliance with the decision. Road construction could occur in Inventoried Roadless Areas, if currently existing roads that are already present and needed are resulting in resource damage and there is no other option but construction a new road. Currently there are approximately 93 miles of roads that have been identified in IRAs across the three forests that are within the project area. Over the life of this project less than 5 miles would ever be considered for road construction.
Public Involvement (include State, local governments and Tribal consultation)

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Federal, state, and local governments, tribes and the public were invited to participate in a 2-day workshop to develop restoration projects. After scoping, there were 3 public meetings. After the draft EA was released, the 3 forests held an online public meeting. The forests have also hosted 2 meetings with tribes, as well as several other one-on-one meetings where the project was discussed. Several issues brought forward, including ongoing grazing may reduce effectiveness of proposed activities, EA may violate NEPA by not disclosing site-specific baseline conditions.

Timeline Considerations (statutory, court-related, administrative) and Objections Status

The objection period ended on Feb 4, 2021. One objection was filed. Resolution meetings have been scheduled for March 15-16, 2021. Depending on the outcome of the resolution meetings, a signed decision could occur before March 31, 2021.