



Sandia Ranger District, Cibola National Forest & National Grasslands

Forest Service News Release

Media Contact: Patricia E. Johnson

SM.FS.CibolaPAO@usda.gov

O: 505-346-3894

www.fs.usda.gov/ro3/cibola

Area Closure Order for Sandia Crest “Switchback” Hazard Tree and Fuel Reduction Project

To be enforced starting April 30th

(Albuquerque, NM – April 24, 2026) – The Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands issued a closure order (03-03-05-26-02) for the Sandia Crest “Switchback” Hazard Tree and Fuels Reduction Project on the Sandia Ranger District to be enforced starting April 30, 2026. The closure protects public health and safety during mechanized thinning work. **See map attached.**

“The forests around the Sandia Crest contain a significant number of dead trees, both standing and down. A high-severity wildfire could damage or destroy critical infrastructure because of the high fuel loading around the Crest Communication Site,” said Ken Born, Sandia District Ranger. “This project protects both public safety and critical infrastructure that serves our entire region while also providing firefighters defensible space in the event of a wildfire on the mountain.”

Sandia Crest “Switchback” Hazard Tree and Fuel Reduction Project will thin 140 acres of National Forest System lands around the Sandia Crest and New Mexico State Highway 536. The project aims to protect critical infrastructure around the Sandia Crest Recreation Area and the Sandia Crest Communication Site from wildfire through the removal of dead trees that present a hazard to visitors and staff. The closure area includes the Ellis Trailhead, Sandia Crest Recreation Site, and State Highway NM-536 to be closed beyond the 10k Trailhead Parking lot (just past mile marker 11). You can find the official area closure order 03-03-05-26-02 on the forest website, where it describes the parking areas and trails that the agency will close at: www.fs.usda.gov/ro3/cibola/alerts.

The closure will be enforced from April 30, 2026, at 6 a.m. through January 15, 2027, at 6 a.m., unless rescinded.

For more information on the Sandia Crest “Switchback” Hazard Tree and Fuel Reduction Project, Sandia Crest area projects, and alternatives destinations for visitors, visit www.fs.usda.gov/ro3/cibola/newsroom/stories/sandia-crest-area-projects-update

For more information about this order, contact the Sandia Ranger District Office at 505-281-3304

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and technology — and rooted in communities — the Forest Service connects people to nature and to each other. The Forest Service cares for shared natural resources in ways that promote lasting economic, ecological, and social vitality. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest wildland fire and forestry research organizations in the world. The Forest Service also has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 900 million forested acres within the U.S., of which over 130 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live.

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