



Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands

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USDA Forest Service begins Renovation of the Nine Mile Picnic Area

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ALBUQUERQUE, NM – June 20, 2023 – On May 31st, the Sandia Ranger District began renovation of the Nine Mile Recreation Site. Funds for renovation come from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) to support various projects across New Mexico and Arizona. These projects are funded from the Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) established by the Great American Outdoors Act.

“Opportunities like the Great American Outdoors Act allows for major reinvestments back into our treasured sites like Nine Mile that otherwise would not be possible. This project has our staff excited as the planned improvements will welcome visitors for generations to come.” said Crystal Powell, the District Ranger for the Sandia Ranger District.

Since 2021, the Forest Service has completed more than 122 deferred maintenance projects across 53 national forests in 25 states with more than 880 additional projects currently funded and in various stages of completion.

The Nine Mile Picnic Area is a beautiful site nestled within large aspen groves that offers opportunities for hiking, nature viewing, and picnicking. This site is located four miles before the Sandia Crest Recreation Area along the Turquoise Trail Scenic Byway on Highway 536. Improvements to the site include repairs to the picnic area road, installation of new picnic tables, restrooms, and hardened walkways. These renovations will enhance the experience of our recreationalists by increasing the sustainability of the picnic area and improving ADA accessibility. After construction Nine Mile will have nine picnic sites, one group picnic site, and will serve as an access point to nearby trails in the area.

“We have been looking forward to breaking ground on this project since it’s conception in 2021. To help facilitate a speedy renovation and grand re-opening to the public, we ask our visitors to continue to respect the closure of the site until it reopens.” Said Julie Padilla, the Recreation Staff Officer for the Sandia Ranger District.

Forest Service Trail 5233 also known as the “Challenge Trail” passes by the picnic area will remain open for use, however, trail users should be aware of the increased presence of construction traffic to the site and should stay on the designated trail. Observing this will help protect the visitors to the area as well as those actively working in the site. Construction is expected to conclude within the next two months, with the site reopening shortly after completion.

This project supports the recent announcement by both the Department of Agriculture and Interior proposing a combined \$2.8 billion in funding for Fiscal Year 2024 to improve infrastructure, recreation facilities, public lands access, and land and water conservation as the legislation enters its third year out of five.

For additional information about the Forest Service implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act, visit:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/gaoa>.

The Great American Outdoors Act continues to address the over \$7 billion backlog of deferred maintenance on National Forests and Grasslands. The Forest Service currently administers more than 370,000 miles of roads, 13,400 bridges, 159,000 miles of trails, 1,700 dams and reservoirs, 1,500 communications sites, 27,000 recreation sites and 40,000 facilities of other types across the United States and Puerto Rico.

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