



File Code: 2310; 1900
Date: June 28, 2019

Dear Interested Party:

The Sandia District of the Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands proposes the Sandia Trails Improvements project to expand and improve recreational opportunities and access points for the Sandia Ranger District designated trails system. Trails on the Sandia Ranger District are highly sought after for recreational opportunities of various types due to their close proximity to the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The current designated system of trails on the Sandia Ranger District provides an inadequate number and type of opportunities for the current and anticipated levels of use. Ever-increasing demand for trail-based recreation opportunities has contributed to the proliferation of user-created trails and parking areas resulting in varying levels of damage to natural, cultural and wilderness resources as well as contributed to recreational user conflict.

The project is needed to expand existing trail systems on the Sandia Ranger District, reduce the proliferation of user-created trails and associated parking areas and ensure the designated trail system(s) are designed and managed to reduce the overall maintenance burden, and establish a sustainable trail system. There is also a need to balance the provision of recreation opportunities with protection of natural, cultural and wilderness resources and addressing recreation conflicts.

The project area lies within "Management Area II" according to the 1985 Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan with an emphasis on "providing opportunities for a variety of year round recreation experiences consistent with the guidelines established for maintaining viable wildlife populations and ecosystem health." The project encompasses the following actions to address this emphasis.

Three areas of the Sandia Ranger District (Placitas, Sandia Mountains, and Casa Loma (see enclosed map (overview) 1 of 5)) are being proposed for improvements as follows:

- Designate as National Forest System Trail (NFST) approximately 11 miles of user-created trails. Implement trail maintenance projects including small scale relocations to improve sustainability.
- Construct approximately 27 miles of new multi-use, non-motorized NFST.
- Construct (and designate as NFST) approximately 3 miles of purpose-built cross-country skiing trails. Prohibit all other uses on designated trails.
- Designate (as NFST) and rebuild approximately 3 miles of user-created purpose-built mountain bike trails. Prohibit all other uses on designated trails.
- Decommission/rehabilitate approximately 7 miles of user-created trails and prohibit further use.



- Install barriers at a select number of informal parking areas/trailheads along FS Rd 445 to prevent further resource damage and expansion. Close/rehabilitate a number of informal parking areas and cross-country motorized routes along 445.
- Designate (as NFST) 1.5 miles of user-created trails west of Sandia Museum of Natural History. Trails will be designated as open to foot traffic only.

Providing Input

I value your interest in the management of the Sandia Ranger District, Cibola National Forest and Grasslands. I will begin preparation of a categorical exclusion in order to determine the potential effects of this proposed action under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1). Your input on the Sandia Trails Improvements Project will be essential to assisting the District in their environmental analysis efforts. Scoping for this project will begin on Monday, July 1, 2019. Comments received by July 30, 2019 will be most helpful. Please send your comments to the project manager, Kerry Wood, at Kerry.wood@usda.gov with Sandia Trails Improvements in the subject line or to the following address:

Cibola National Forest
Attn: Kerry Wood
2113 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque NM 87113

I will respond to any significant issues identified from public comments within the Decision Memo.

Sincerely,



CRYSTAL POWELL
District Ranger