



The Voice of General Aviation in New Mexico

April 8, 2015

TO: Champe Green, Forest Planner  
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands

FROM: Cathy Myers, President  
New Mexico Pilots Association

RE: Comments for Preliminary Statements of Needs for Changes, Cibola NF Plan Update

NMPA appreciates the opportunity to submit the following input for your consideration regarding the Cibola National Forest Plan Revision. Aviation plays such a vital role in both commercial and private enterprise and so much of the general population is unaware of how diverse and valuable it is as a means of transportation to not only areas accessible by ground, but to those pristine and tucked away back country areas equally accessible by air. Many states have worked tirelessly and successfully to open backcountry recreation areas to access by air.

By including recreational aviation as part of the Cibola forest use planning, these areas become accessible by a different means of transportation and to a different group of folks who can now combine their love of flying with their desire to enjoy the New Mexico wilderness and national forests. By and large this particular group of enthusiasts are very protective of low impact access to these lands and can be relied on to further the protection of resources and wildlife. In addition, the plan for the USFS strips should address the already existing and future support by volunteer organizations for air strip maintenance and improvements to ensure safe access.

Not only does air access to USFS areas promote hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, wildlife appreciation and environmental protection, it also provides access to historical sites and emergency service assistance when needed. Air strip access to remote USFS sites can make a vital difference in forest fire suppression or evacuation for other emergencies as well as provide another perspective and set of eyes for the USFS system.

Recreational opportunities are most commonly thought of as being accessed by ground or water but air access opens up a whole new perspective of the recreational setting. It has been suggested that Information, identification and evaluation of infrastructure within the plan area be updated regularly to include not only the forest road system, recreational facilities, resorts, trails, water diversions, fences, communication towers and bridges, but airstrip condition as well.

NMPA agrees that the common, coordinated mission of the RAF and the USFS as it pertains to "...preserving, maintaining and creating public use recreational and backcountry airstrips nationwide..." with references to aviation in the Planning Rule and Planning Directive is vital and critical in solidifying aviation as "a legitimate mode of access" by aircraft landing on both land and water.

NMPA will continue to be available for input to FS planners during this revision process and appreciate the opportunity to work with both FS and aviators on the revisions for airstrip access. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time and we look forward to working with you in the future to make these directive revisions a permanent part of the USFS planning process.

Sincerely,

Cathy Myers, President  
New Mexico Pilots Association