



Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts

Desired Conditions and Management Area Comment Form



Public comments submitted, including names and street addresses of commenters will be available for public review as part of the planning record. Individual commenters may request the Forest Service to withhold their name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act by checking the box below. We will accept anonymous comments.

I wish to withhold my name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Yes

Date: 21 Sept 2015 **Name:** James Travers

Phone (with area code): 575 838 7072

Email: jmt@dm.com

Address: PO Box 859 Dat. 1 NM 87821

Subject of Comment: Dat. 1 Mtns

Comment:

continue on back

21 Sept 2015

To: USFS Landscape Team Magdalena Ranger District

From: James M. Travers, D.V.M., President, Whitehouse Ranch Inc. Datil, NM

I am writing in regards to the present study regarding the suitability of lands within my grazing allotment that are being looked at as possible Wilderness Act areas. It is my understanding that giving these areas a Wilderness classification would prevent all mechanical devices from being used in these areas. This would, I believe, make motorized vehicle use including tractors and excavating equipment illegal to operate within these areas. I believe this classification and the ramifications of the mechanical restrictions would be seriously deleterious to the area and it's surroundings. I believe that Wilderness classification would limit the ability to manage this area for wildlife, timber and natural beauty.

The fire suppression practices and European settlement practices of the last century have changed the flora and fauna of the Datil Mountains from the pre-Columbian era. The elimination of buffalo and migratory grazing caused a change in forage harvest characteristics. These changes have been addressed with domestic livestock grazing but less intensive and less migratory patterns caused changes in the grass to broadleaf ratios due to continuous and specific grazing of more desirable species. This caused the overproduction of some less desirable species such as rabbit brush to overpopulate specific areas. Forest fire suppression restricted ground water availability to grass and broadleaf species causing excessive erosion.

Although the above paragraph only touches on the changes in the natural environment in the Datil mountains, the two situations mentioned above can account for the need of human and mechanical intervention in this area to manage the resultant changes in the environment caused by European settlement. The infinite repercussions of these two situations are most likely incomprehensible. Mechanical augmentation of grazing through management of invasive weed species has been shown to help rejuvenate prairie flora diversity on private lands. These practices are needed on the federal lands.

Mechanical thinning of timber to manage timber stands was a given when fire suppression was instituted in the twentieth century. It was only put in bad favor due to transient political policies enforced in the last few decades. The forests were allowed to become overpopulated in order to have a continuous supply of timber in the area. Now that the timbering industry has been destroyed in the area, timber management is an expensive but necessary practice to maintain the ground water levels and prevent super fires that have proven to be extremely damaging throughout poorly managed forests throughout the western United States and Canada.

The Wilderness classification would make all of the management practices illegal. The unnatural forest density, although aesthetic to some, is not sustainable in the New Mexican climate. It is not a matter of if the forest will burn, it is a matter of when. Experience has shown that overly thick forests burn to the point of soil sterilization resulting in unprecedented erosion and poor regrowth potential. Overly populated forests use up ground water that is needed by lower vegetation. It is the lower

vegetation such as grasses and broadleaves that inhibit soil erosion. It has been shown on private land that decreasing tree density increases lower vegetation and inhibits erosion.

Springs and natural water in the area has also decreased within the last 100 years. This makes human intervention in the form of dirt tanks, wells and spring development necessary for wildlife and livestock watering. These are practices that need mechanical intervention at this time. Again, Wilderness classification will not allow these practices to occur.

As a permittee in the Datils for close to fifteen years, I have seen and appreciated the amount of use that this permit area gets from the public. Most of the public use revolves around hunting, antler gathering and pinion nut harvest by locals and out of state visitors. Few if any that I have consulted with are in favor of Wilderness classification. The resultant changes in road use would make 90% of the forest permit unavailable to the people that are using it now.

I have noticed that water levels in most of the 24 wells that I have water rights to on and around the permit have fallen over the last 40 years. All wells produce less water than they did when first permitted and registered. It is also readily evident on the permit that the vast number of invasive trees are less than fifty years old. The recent overgrowth of pinion and juniper in the area is most likely the reason for the decrease in ground water. Photos of the area from the early twentieth century show a much less forested ecosystem than what is apparent today. Wilderness classification will destroy any chance of returning the area to a more natural and balanced environment.

Eventually with the use of mechanical intervention, the forest may be able to be maintained more naturally with fire and grazing. At this point in time, we need to cope with the problems that our predecessors have created. Wilderness classification will not allow the necessary steps needed to return the area to it's previous state of balance.

There is also the obvious concern that I have as a permittee. That concern centers around the ability to maintain and improve the multitude of improvements that are already present and active on the permit. These improvements include but are not limited to 26 wells, 30 dirt tanks (40 more in the NEPA plan) two pipelines, close to 80 miles of fence, miles of approved and unapproved roads as well as multiple wildlife umbrella tanks. As grazing permittee, these improvements are more or less my responsibility.

The Datil mountains contain quite a bit of private land. The Whitehouse Ranch Inc., of which I am president, owns multiple parcels throughout the permit. These parcels are important to the grazing and are all used as temporary domiciles for myself and my workers as well as water and management sites for cattle. The access to these areas is vital to the continuation of their usefulness. The improvements necessary for the usefulness of these areas predicate the use of motorized vehicles. This vehicular use would be jeopardized by Wilderness Classification.

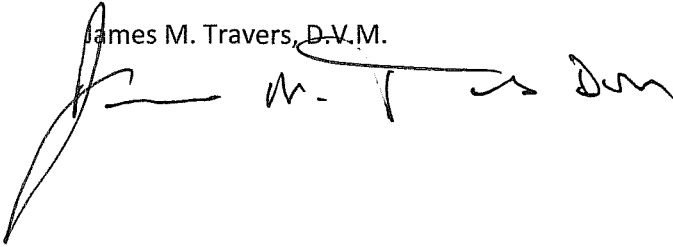
Before I came to New Mexico, I was a ranch veterinarian and also a part time Texas Parks and Wildlife veterinarian in central Texas. I was involved in rehabilitation and management of wildlife in my area. This experience has shown me how important hunting can be to prey species control as well as

predator control. The balance of native species is greatly augmented by hunters. The state also gets an incredible financial reward from wildlife management. I believe that the hunting income to the state and the amount of management benefit we get from local hunters in the Datils will decline drastically if Wilderness classification is instituted. Modern hunters rely on their vehicles more than some of us feel is good, but never the less they do. Decreasing vehicular access to the area will decrease hunting pressure at least in the near future.

These are just a few of the reasons that I oppose any Wilderness classification for areas D3 5K 10-13 in the Cibola Forest.

Sincerely

James M. Travers, D.V.M.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James M. Travers, D.V.M.', written over the typed name.



Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts

Evaluation Criteria Definition Matrix and Comment Form



The Cibola National Forest plan revision interdisciplinary team developed draft questions and measures to address each of the five wilderness characteristic criteria listed in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70- Wilderness. These are to be used to evaluate the Phase 2 Inventory areas for wilderness characteristics, and are outlined below.

Please use this form to comment on individual areas from the Phase 2 Inventory maps. Please use one form for each individual identification area, and note its identification number and location. If your comment is not addressed in the "considerations" column of each criterion, please include additional information in the "other" narrative section.

You can also comment using the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool available at this website: <https://my.usgs.gov/ppgis/studio/launch/39829>. Please consider the evaluation criteria below when inputting comments on the online mapping tool.

Inventory Identification Number/Location:

East Antelope

D3 EK 10 13,785.3 Acres

Criterion 1- Apparent naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

Question 1a. What is the composition of plant and animal communities? The purpose of this question is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural.

Considerations	Narrative
How are concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals distributed across the land?	Pinyon Juniper, 3-winged saltbush encroachment on the Ponderosa grama grass ecosystem
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	Prior to European settlement, Buffalo kept the ecosystem in balance. Cattle are necessary to fulfill the role Buffalo had in the past. Brush control along with cattle grazing is necessary to replace the effect of large buffalo herds on the land.

Question 1b. What is the extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?

Considerations

Narrative

Extent that current vegetation species composition and structure has changed from historical conditions (pre-EuroAmerican settlement).¹

The Ponderosa grassland ecosystem is severely encroached by an unnatural composition of pinion juniper due to natural fire suppression.

Vegetation restoration treatments (e.g. thinning) or timber harvest areas and distribution across the land (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated). This also includes associated railroad beds, skid trails, and logging decks of timber harvest areas.

The area is honeycombed with old logging roads & skid trails that have developed into erosion areas in need of mechanical intervention.

Does the forest appear natural (consider elements, including but not limited to, vegetation, wildlife, soil, air, etc.)?

No - the forest is not in a natural state. There is intense erosion due to poor sod coverage. This is the result of over a century of fire suppression and poor species management.

Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

The springs & natural water supply for wildlife has deteriorated due to recent changes in the forest species populations - most notably Pinion Juniper encroachment. There are areas of intense erosion that have damaged natural & man made erosion control areas. This situation needs mechanical intervention to ever reverse the man made changes (fire suppression).

¹ Species composition is the number and proportion of species present. Structure refers to the size, density, and arrangement of plants.

Question 1c. What is the extent to which improvements² included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?

Considerations

Appearance of airstrips, heliports, and/or landing zones. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance and density of maintenance level 1 roads³ measured by road length per sq. mile, and spatial distribution (broadly interspersed vs. concentrated), occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Appearance and density of unauthorized routes (includes decommissioned, temporary, and user created routes per sq. mile) and distribution (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated, occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Miles of fencing or pipeline per square mile.

Appearance of areas of mining activity that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory.⁴ Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation)

Appearance of range or wildlife improvements that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance of watershed treatment areas (such as contouring, diking, channeling) that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Narrative

The VLA is visible from

There are unauthorized ATV roads criss crossing this area

The area has perimeter fence that must be maintained

There is a well (windmill) & multiple earth tanks that supply water for wildlife. They need mechanical maintenance. There are multiple planned new earth tanks that are in the NEPA for livestock & wildlife water & erosion control

² The use of the term "improvements" in this context is taken from the Forest Service Handbook, and means the evidence of past human activities in the area as a whole.

³ For a glossary of road terminology, please see the *Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts Assessment Report*, Vol. II, page 258.

⁴ See Appendix A for Substantially Noticeable criteria used in Phase 2 inventory, and Appendix B for results from the Phase 2 Inventory.

Extent to which the improvements cause the appearance to depart from apparent naturalness to the area as a whole (Consider improvements listed above as well as water tanks, aviation crash locations, wreckage sites, locations of cemeteries or gravesites, bombing or ordinance locations, and viewshed analysis for proposed developments)
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Note: The word "or" means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.

Question 2a. Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.

Note: Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area.

Considerations

Narrative

Describe the general topography of the area in context of sight, sound, and screening. Can a traveler see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area? Is the area quiet and free from motorized noise?

The VLA is visible from the Peaks. The light from Ravenport Tower is visible - Private land in close proximity has moderate vehicle use on all sides

Proximity to area of recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, non- Forest Service roads, and/or activities that impact opportunities for solitude. Consider effects of the area's adjacent, cherry-stemmed roads.⁵

Private land in area is used for shooting & has generators that can be heard for miles

Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

⁵ The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.

Question 2b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature.

Note: Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature. This question also relates to miles of fence information from Criterion 1, Question 1c, due to the potential for miles of fence to restrict unconfined recreation opportunities.

Considerations	Narrative
Describe the types of primitive recreation activities in the area.	
Percent of area with a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class. ⁶	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

There are no stand-alone areas less than 5,000 acres on either the initial inventory or Phase 2 inventory maps. Those who offer such areas for evaluation please identify and describe how it is of sufficient size to make its preservation or use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Note: These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

⁶ The Forest Service's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provides a framework which allows administration to manage and users to enjoy a variety of recreation environments. ROS is not a land classification system; it is a management objective, a way of describing and providing a variety of recreation opportunities. A "primitive" ROS class is one typically associated with a largely unmodified environment, a very high probability of solitude, self-reliance, little evidence of people, and no motorized use is permitted. The ROS Inventory Existing Condition maps have been completed for the Forest, and the existing condition of primitive ROS classes is being used as a measure. These maps are only existing condition, and are subject to change based on desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes developed during the interdisciplinary process of Forest Plan Revision. Please refer to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Handbook and Primer for more information: http://www.fs.fed.us/edu/carrying_capacity/rosfieldguide/ros_primer_and_field_guide.htm

Question 4a. Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems?

Note: Rare in this context is defined as local or regional.

Considerations	Narrative
Average modeled species richness value from New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool.	
Presence of threatened or endangered species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat (from National Heritage database and other data sets as available).	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Question 4b. Are there any outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?

Considerations	Narrative
Description of any unique geologic features in the area.	
Presence of outstanding scenic features within the area or percent of area with distinctive scenic attractiveness class. ⁷	
Other (include any additional information related to the question above)	

⁷ The Forest Service's Scenery Management System (SMS) provides the framework to effectively inventory, assess, and manage scenic resources. Scenic Attractiveness is a component of the SMS inventory, and is the primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty based on commonly held perceptions of preferred scenery and landscape features. The three scenic attractiveness classes are: Class A-distinctive; Class B-typical; Class C-indistinctive. To determine these classes, the landscape elements of landform, vegetation, rocks, cultural features and water features are mapped using General Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey (GTES) information for the Forest, with District personnel input on areas of the Forest that were not picked up at the GTES scale. The Scenic Attractiveness map is based largely on existing landscape features. Refer to the Forest Service Scenery Management Handbook for more information: http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/carrying_capacity/landscape_aesthetics_handbook_701_no_append.pdf

Question 4c. Are there historic and cultural resource sites in the area?

Considerations	Narrative
Presence of structures, dwellings, and other relics of past occupation when they are considered part of the historical and cultural landscape of the area. Also consider potential historical railroad beds/berms associated with timber harvest areas from Criterion I, Question 1b.	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Note: (Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056)).

Question 4d. Are there any research natural areas?

Considerations	Narrative
Percent of area that is part of a research natural area.	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Question 4e. Are there any high quality water resources or important watershed features?

Considerations	Narrative
Miles within the area of eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers	
Miles within the area of Outstanding Natural Resource Waters	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Question 5a. Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?

Considerations	Narrative
Shape and configuration of the area.	
Presence and extent of legally established rights or uses within the area.	cattle grazing allotment
Presence and extent of any specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics.	
Presence and extent of non-Federal land in the area	There are private lands within & surrounding this area
Describe management of adjacent lands.	agricultural & timber
Describe presence and extent of cultural and traditional uses of the area (e.g. shrines, ceremonial use, etc.)	
Presence and extent of wildland urban interface in the area. Include acres if possible.	
Describe any other management activities or restrictions within in the area (e.g. upcoming management decisions).	- multiple dirt tank development for water shed maintenance & wildlife & livestock water
Describe existence and extent of motorized uses within the area (trails, routes, special activities).	ATV traffic for fence maintenance Public access for hunters & campers
Presence and extent of special use permits and authorizations within the area.	cattle grazing permit
Presence and extent of "cherry stemmed" ⁸ roads or other linear features.	throughout area - every canyon
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	This area has historical timbering necessitating these roads

⁸ The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.



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Please use this form to comment on individual areas from the Phase 2 Inventory maps. Please use one form for each individual identification area, and note its identification number and location. If your comment is not addressed in the "considerations" column of each criterion, please include additional information in the "other" narrative section.

You can also comment using the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool available at this website: <https://my.usgs.gov/ppgis/studio/launch/39829>. Please consider the evaluation criteria below when inputting comments on the online mapping tool.

Inventory Identification Number/Location:

North Antelope

03 5K11 35,848

Criterion 1- Apparent naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

Question 1a. What is the composition of plant and animal communities? The purpose of this question is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural.

Considerations	Narrative
How are concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals distributed across the land?	Fire suppression has caused an unnatural concentration of trees in this area. This has set the area up for the
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	high likelihood of a super fire followed by intense erosion & habitat damage. This area is in need of intense forest thinning which would not be possible as a wilderness.

Question 1b. What is the extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?

Considerations	Narrative
Extent that current vegetation species composition and structure has changed from historical conditions (pre-EuroAmerican settlement). ¹	The Ponderosa Grasslands that were prevalent in this area in pre-Columbian times have been changed due to fire suppression. There is an incredible
Vegetation restoration treatments (e.g. thinning) or timber harvest areas and distribution across the land (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated). This also includes associated railroad beds, skid trails, and logging decks of timber harvest areas.	overgrowth of transitional species most notably Pinion/Juniper. These species concentrations promote fire hazards & erosion by damaging the native grasslands
Does the forest appear natural (consider elements, including but not limited to, vegetation, wildlife, soil, air, etc.)?	-No - it is dangerously thick
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	This area needs to be managed. The fire suppression was instituted to facilitate timber production. Suppressing fire for 100+ years has created an artificial environment that must be managed intensively to safeguard the area & to bring it back to a more natural area. Even the historic springs have dried up from the heavy water consumption that the dense forest has created,

¹ Species composition is the number and proportion of species present. Structure refers to the size, density, and arrangement of plants.

Question 1c. What is the extent to which improvements² included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?

Considerations

Appearance of airstrips, heliports, and/or landing zones. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance and density of maintenance level 1 roads³ measured by road length per sq. mile, and spatial distribution (broadly interspersed vs. concentrated), occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Appearance and density of unauthorized routes (includes decommissioned, temporary, and user created routes per sq. mile) and distribution (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated, occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Miles of fencing or pipeline per square mile.

Appearance of areas of mining activity that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory.⁴ Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation)

Appearance of range or wildlife improvements that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance of watershed treatment areas (such as contouring, diking, channeling) that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Narrative

Davenport Tower light is visible from all areas

There are roads up every canyon in this area.

There are fences to cross fences all through this area as well as water improvements, developed springs etc

There are uranium mining areas in this area

multiple dirt tanks, swales & old roads that have been dammed up for erosion control.

² The use of the term "improvements" in this context is taken from the Forest Service Handbook, and means the evidence of past human activities in the area as a whole.

³ For a glossary of road terminology, please see the *Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts Assessment Report*, Vol. II, page 258.

⁴ See Appendix A for Substantially Noticeable criteria used in Phase 2 inventory, and Appendix B for results from the Phase 2 Inventory.

Extent to which the improvements cause the appearance to depart from apparent naturalness to the area as a whole (Consider improvements listed above as well as water tanks, aviation crash locations, wreckage sites, locations of cemeteries or gravesites, bombing or ordinance locations, and viewshed analysis for proposed developments)
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Note: The word “or” means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.

Question 2a. Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor’s opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.

Note: Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area.

Considerations	Narrative
Describe the general topography of the area in context of sight, sound, and screening. Can a traveler see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area? Is the area quiet and free from motorized noise?	The commercial flight paths to Albuquerque are directly over this area. Jets are a constant, both commercial & military
Proximity to area of recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, non- Forest Service roads, and/or activities that impact opportunities for solitude. Consider effects of the area’s adjacent, cherry-stemmed roads. ⁵	There are vehicle roads that honeycomb this area & are also located throughout the neighboring Ranches
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	The US military uses this area for vital defense testing of missiles. This area should be kept available for US military testing.

⁵ The term “cherry stemmed” road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase 1 Inventory process.

Question 2b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature.

Note: Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature. This question also relates to miles of fence information from Criterion 1, Question 1c, due to the potential for miles of fence to restrict unconfined recreation opportunities.

Considerations	Narrative
Describe the types of primitive recreation activities in the area.	
Percent of area with a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class. ⁶	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

There are no stand-alone areas less than 5,000 acres on either the initial inventory or Phase 2 inventory maps. Those who offer such areas for evaluation please identify and describe how it is of sufficient size to make its preservation or use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Note: These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

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Question 4a. Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems?

Note: Rare in this context is defined as local or regional.

Considerations	Narrative
Average modeled species richness value from New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool.	
Presence of threatened or endangered species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat (from National Heritage database and other data sets as available).	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Question 4b. Are there any outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?

Considerations	Narrative
Description of any unique geologic features in the area.	
Presence of outstanding scenic features within the area or percent of area with distinctive scenic attractiveness class. ⁷	
Other (include any additional information related to the question above)	

⁷ The Forest Service's Scenery Management System (SMS) provides the framework to effectively inventory, assess, and manage scenic resources. Scenic Attractiveness is a component of the SMS inventory, and is the primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty based on *commonly held* perceptions of preferred scenery and landscape features. The three scenic attractiveness classes are: Class A-distinctive; Class B-typical; Class C-indistinctive. To determine these classes, the landscape elements of landform, vegetation, rocks, cultural features and water features are mapped using General Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey (GTES) information for the Forest, with District personnel input on areas of the Forest that were not picked up at the GTES scale. The Scenic Attractiveness map is based largely on existing landscape features. Refer to the Forest Service Scenery Management Handbook for more information: http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/carrying_capacity/landscape_aesthetics_handbook_701_no_append.pdf

Question 4c. Are there historic and cultural resource sites in the area?

Considerations	Narrative
Presence of structures, dwellings, and other relics of past occupation when they are considered part of the historical and cultural landscape of the area. Also consider potential historical railroad beds/berms associated with timber harvest areas from Criterion 1, Question 1b.	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Note: (Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056)).

Question 4d. Are there any research natural areas?

Considerations	Narrative
Percent of area that is part of a research natural area.	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Question 4e. Are there any high quality water resources or important watershed features?

Considerations	Narrative
Miles within the area of eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers	
Miles within the area of Outstanding Natural Resource Waters	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Question 5a. Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?

Considerations	Narrative
Shape and configuration of the area.	
Presence and extent of legally established rights or uses within the area.	Cattle grazing permit mining interests
Presence and extent of any specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics.	
Presence and extent of non-Federal land in the area	Bordered on east by Double H Ranch
Describe management of adjacent lands..	Forest & cattle
Describe presence and extent of cultural and traditional uses of the area (e.g. shrines, ceremonial use, etc.)	
Presence and extent of wildland urban interface in the area. Include acres if possible.	
Describe any other management activities or restrictions within in the area (e.g. upcoming management decisions).	
Describe existence and extent of motorized uses within the area (trails, routes, special activities).	Multiple roads - every canyon has a road
Presence and extent of special use permits and authorizations within the area.	grazing permit
Presence and extent of "cherry stemmed" ⁸ roads or other linear features.	Throughout area - every canyon
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	Timbering industry necessitates these roads

⁸ The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.



Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts

Evaluation Criteria Definition Matrix and Comment Form



The Cibola National Forest plan revision interdisciplinary team developed draft questions and measures to address each of the five wilderness characteristic criteria listed in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70- Wilderness. These are to be used to evaluate the Phase 2 Inventory areas for wilderness characteristics, and are outlined below.

Please use this form to comment on individual areas from the Phase 2 Inventory maps. Please use one form for each individual identification area, and note its identification number and location. If your comment is not addressed in the "considerations" column of each criterion, please include additional information in the "other" narrative section.

You can also comment using the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool available at this website: <https://my.usgs.gov/ppgis/studio/launch/39829>. Please consider the evaluation criteria below when inputting comments on the online mapping tool.

Inventory Identification Number/Location:

Downport

D3 5K12

9866.9 ac

Criterion 1- Apparent naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

Question 1a. What is the composition of plant and animal communities? The purpose of this question is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural.

Considerations

Narrative

How are concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals distributed across the land?

extremely heavy rabbit brush intrusion into areas of Forest that have been mismanaged in the past. There is an unnatu

Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

concentration of all species of tree in this area due to fire suppression. This area is very dangerous as it is so densely overpopulated that superfires are a high possibility. Mechanical thinning is necessary due to past practices of fire-suppression in this area

Question 1c. What is the extent to which improvements² included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?

Considerations

Appearance of airstrips, heliports, and/or landing zones. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance and density of maintenance level 1 roads³ measured by road length per sq. mile, and spatial distribution (broadly interspersed vs. concentrated), occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Appearance and density of unauthorized routes (includes decommissioned, temporary, and user created routes per sq. mile) and distribution (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated, occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Miles of fencing or pipeline per square mile.

Appearance of areas of mining activity that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory.⁴ Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation)

Appearance of range or wildlife improvements that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance of watershed treatment areas (such as contouring, diking, channeling) that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Narrative

Damport tower visible
Day & night in all areas

Unauthorized roads are present
& used heavily by the public

Cross fencing & perimeter
fences are throughout the
area

uranium interests
There are uranium wells drilled
all through this area

multiple dirt tanks in
area
wells in area on private
& forest land

² The use of the term "improvements" in this context is taken from the Forest Service Handbook, and means the evidence of past human activities in the area as a whole.

³ For a glossary of road terminology, please see the *Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts Assessment Report*, Vol. II, page 258.

⁴ See Appendix A for Substantially Noticeable criteria used in Phase 2 inventory, and Appendix B for results from the Phase 2 Inventory.

Extent to which the improvements cause the appearance to depart from apparent naturalness to the area as a whole (Consider improvements listed above as well as water tanks, aviation crash locations, wreckage sites, locations of cemeteries or gravesites, bombing or ordinance locations, and viewshed analysis for proposed developments)
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Note: The word "or" means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.

Question 2a. Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.

Note: Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area.

Considerations	Narrative
Describe the general topography of the area in context of sight, sound, and screening. Can a traveler see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area? Is the area quiet and free from motorized noise?	Flight path of commercial & military air traffic light pollution from Albuquerque Esocorro & Grants
Proximity to area of recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, non- Forest Service roads, and/or activities that impact opportunities for solitude. Consider effects of the area's adjacent, cherry-stemmed roads. ⁵	There is high traffic in hunting season on the roads that honeycomb this area
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	There is a long history of use by public on these roads

⁵ The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.

Question 2b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature.

Note: Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature. This question also relates to miles of fence information from Criterion 1, Question 1c, due to the potential for miles of fence to restrict unconfined recreation opportunities.

Considerations	Narrative
Describe the types of primitive recreation activities in the area.	
Percent of area with a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class. ⁶	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

There are no stand-alone areas less than 5,000 acres on either the initial inventory or Phase 2 inventory maps. Those who offer such areas for evaluation please identify and describe how it is of sufficient size to make its preservation or use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Note: These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

⁶ The Forest Service's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provides a framework which allows administration to manage and users to enjoy a variety of recreation environments. ROS is not a land classification system; it is a management objective, a way of describing and providing a variety of recreation opportunities. A "primitive" ROS class is one typically associated with a largely unmodified environment, a very high probability of solitude, self-reliance, little evidence of people, and no motorized use is permitted. The ROS Inventory Existing Condition maps have been completed for the Forest, and the existing condition of primitive ROS classes is being used as a measure. These maps are only existing condition, and are subject to change based on desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes developed during the interdisciplinary process of Forest Plan Revision. Please refer to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Handbook and Primer for more information: http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/carrying_capacity/rosfieldguide/ros_primer_and_field_guide.htm

Question 4a. Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems?

Note: Rare in this context is defined as local or regional.

Considerations	Narrative
Average modeled species richness value from New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool.	
Presence of threatened or endangered species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat (from National Heritage database and other data sets as available).	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Question 4b. Are there any outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features?

Considerations	Narrative
Description of any unique geologic features in the area.	
Presence of outstanding scenic features within the area or percent of area with distinctive scenic attractiveness class. ⁷	
Other (include any additional information related to the question above)	

⁷ The Forest Service's Scenery Management System (SMS) provides the framework to effectively inventory, assess, and manage scenic resources. Scenic Attractiveness is a component of the SMS inventory, and is the primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty based on commonly held perceptions of preferred scenery and landscape features. The three scenic attractiveness classes are: Class A-distinctive; Class B-typical; Class C-indistinctive. To determine these classes, the landscape elements of landform, vegetation, rocks, cultural features and water features are mapped using General Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey (GTES) information for the Forest, with District personnel input on areas of the Forest that were not picked up at the GTES scale. The Scenic Attractiveness map is based largely on existing landscape features. Refer to the Forest Service Scenery Management Handbook for more information: http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/carrying_capacity/landscape_aesthetics_handbook_701_no_append.pdf

Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Question 5a. Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?

Considerations	Narrative
Shape and configuration of the area.	
Presence and extent of legally established rights or uses within the area.	There are private landholdings & residences throughout the area
Presence and extent of any specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics.	
Presence and extent of non-Federal land in the area	There are multiple private residences & land holdings in the area
Describe management of adjacent lands.	agricultural
Describe presence and extent of cultural and traditional uses of the area (e.g. shrines, ceremonial use, etc.)	
Presence and extent of wildland urban interface in the area. Include acres if possible.	
Describe any other management activities or restrictions within in the area (e.g. upcoming management decisions).	Planned water resource improvement project tanks for wildlife & livestock water
Describe existence and extent of motorized uses within the area (trails, routes, special activities).	Heavy use by hunters, public & grazing permits
Presence and extent of special use permits and authorizations within the area.	grazing permit
Presence and extent of "cherry stemmed" ^a roads or other linear features.	heavy concentration
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	Most of these roads go to water improvements or private residences

^a The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.



Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts

Evaluation Criteria Definition Matrix and Comment Form



The Cibola National Forest plan revision interdisciplinary team developed draft questions and measures to address each of the five wilderness characteristic criteria listed in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70- Wilderness. These are to be used to evaluate the Phase 2 Inventory areas for wilderness characteristics, and are outlined below.

Please use this form to comment on individual areas from the Phase 2 Inventory maps. Please use one form for each individual identification area, and note its identification number and location. If your comment is not addressed in the "considerations" column of each criterion, please include additional information in the "other" narrative section.

You can also comment using the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool available at this website: <https://my.usgs.gov/ppgis/studio/launch/39829>. Please consider the evaluation criteria below when inputting comments on the online mapping tool.

Inventory Identification Number/Location:

D3 5K13 8724.6 Hay Canyon

Criterion 1- Apparent naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

Question 1a. What is the composition of plant and animal communities? The purpose of this question is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural.

Considerations

How are concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals distributed across the land?

Narrative

Heavy invasion of Rabbit Brush
Needs mechanical treatment

Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

intense over forestation
& heavy erosion in this area
Fire suppression in past has
created a condition that
necessitate timber thinning
& management -

Question 1b. What is the extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention?

Considerations	Narrative
Extent that current vegetation species composition and structure has changed from historical conditions (pre-EuroAmerican settlement). ¹	This area has changed due to fire suppression & sheep grazing in early 20th century. The grasslands forest ecology has changed due to
Vegetation restoration treatments (e.g. thinning) or timber harvest areas and distribution across the land (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated). This also includes associated railroad beds, skid trails, and logging decks of timber harvest areas.	unnatural forest density and consequent loss of soil moisture.
Does the forest appear natural (consider elements, including but not limited to, vegetation, wildlife, soil, air, etc.)?	NO - Springs have dried up & Pinon / Juniper invasion of Ponderosa grasslands, Rabbit brush encroachment due to erosion from lack of good grass stands
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	This area needs intensive management to survive. It is set up for a superb wilderness classification will eliminate all necessary management practices & soon this & all areas of the District to eventual fire devastation

¹ Species composition is the number and proportion of species present. Structure refers to the size, density, and arrangement of plants.

Question 1c. What is the extent to which improvements² included in the area represent a departure from apparent naturalness?

Considerations

Appearance of airstrips, heliports, and/or landing zones. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance and density of maintenance level 1 roads³ measured by road length per sq. mile, and spatial distribution (broadly interspersed vs. concentrated), occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Appearance and density of unauthorized routes (includes decommissioned, temporary, and user created routes per sq. mile) and distribution (broadly dispersed vs. concentrated, occurrence of stream crossings, and proximity to streams channels.

Miles of fencing or pipeline per square mile.

Appearance of areas of mining activity that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory.⁴ Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation)

Appearance of range or wildlife improvements that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Appearance of watershed treatment areas (such as contouring, diking, channeling) that were not eliminated in the Phase 2 inventory. Include size of area and description of disturbance (soils, vegetation).

Narrative

Davenport tower light visible. Flight path for commercial airlines & military planes. Cherry stem roads in 80% of all canyons. Legal roads necessary to maintain wells, dirt tanks, erosion control swales & other mechanical improvements are prevalent throughout the area.

These improvements are necessary for wildlife maintenance.

² The use of the term "improvements" in this context is taken from the Forest Service Handbook, and means the evidence of past human activities in the area as a whole.

³ For a glossary of road terminology, please see the Cibola National Forest Mountain Ranger Districts Assessment Report, Vol. II, page 258.

⁴ See Appendix A for Substantially Noticeable criteria used in Phase 2 inventory, and Appendix B for results from the Phase 2 Inventory.

Extent to which the improvements cause the appearance to depart from apparent naturalness to the area as a whole (Consider improvements listed above as well as water tanks, aviation crash locations, wreckage sites, locations of cemeteries or gravesites, bombing or ordinance locations, and viewshed analysis for proposed developments)
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Note: The word "or" means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.

Question 2a. Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area.

Note: Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area.

Considerations

Narrative

Describe the general topography of the area in context of sight, sound, and screening. Can a traveler see or hear evidence of civilization from within the area? Is the area quiet and free from motorized noise?

Highway 60 noise is constant
Flight path above

Proximity to area of recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, non- Forest Service roads, and/or activities that impact opportunities for solitude. Consider effects of the area's adjacent, cherry-stemmed roads.⁵

Cherry stem roads are in
80% of all canyons & have
been used historically for
100 yrs

Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)

⁵ The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.

Question 2b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature.

Note: Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature. This question also relates to miles of fence information from Criterion 1, Question 1c, due to the potential for miles of fence to restrict unconfined recreation opportunities.

Considerations	Narrative
Describe the types of primitive recreation activities in the area.	
Percent of area with a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class. ⁶	
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

There are no stand-alone areas less than 5,000 acres on either the initial inventory or Phase 2 inventory maps. Those who offer such areas for evaluation please identify and describe how it is of sufficient size to make its preservation or use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Note: These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

⁶ The Forest Service's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provides a framework which allows administration to manage and users to enjoy a variety of recreation environments. ROS is not a land classification system; it is a management objective, a way of describing and providing a variety of recreation opportunities. A "primitive" ROS class is one typically associated with a largely unmodified environment, a very high probability of solitude, self-reliance, little evidence of people, and no motorized use is permitted. The ROS Inventory Existing Condition maps have been completed for the Forest, and the existing condition of primitive ROS classes is being used as a measure. These maps are only existing condition, and are subject to change based on desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes developed during the interdisciplinary process of Forest Plan Revision. Please refer to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Handbook and Primer for more information: http://www.fs.fed.us/ed/carrying_capacity/rosfieldguide/ros_primer_and_field_guide.htm

Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

Question 5a. Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?

Considerations	Narrative
Shape and configuration of the area.	
Presence and extent of legally established rights or uses within the area.	grazing permit
Presence and extent of any specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics.	
Presence and extent of non-Federal land in the area	Private residence
Describe management of adjacent lands.	agricultural
Describe presence and extent of cultural and traditional uses of the area (e.g. shrines, ceremonial use, etc.)	Hunting through out area
Presence and extent of wildland urban interface in the area. Include acres if possible.	
Describe any other management activities or restrictions within in the area (e.g. upcoming management decisions).	water shed improvements in progress & planned in future NEPA approved
Describe existence and extent of motorized uses within the area (trails, routes, special activities).	Heavy motorized use during Hunting Season
Presence and extent of special use permits and authorizations within the area.	cattle grazing permit
Presence and extent of "cherry stemmed" ⁸ roads or other linear features.	Heavy cherry stem road use
Other (Include any additional information related to the question above)	

⁸ The term "cherry stemmed" road refers to a road removed from the inventory using the 30 meter (98.4 feet) road buffer screening from the Phase I Inventory process.