

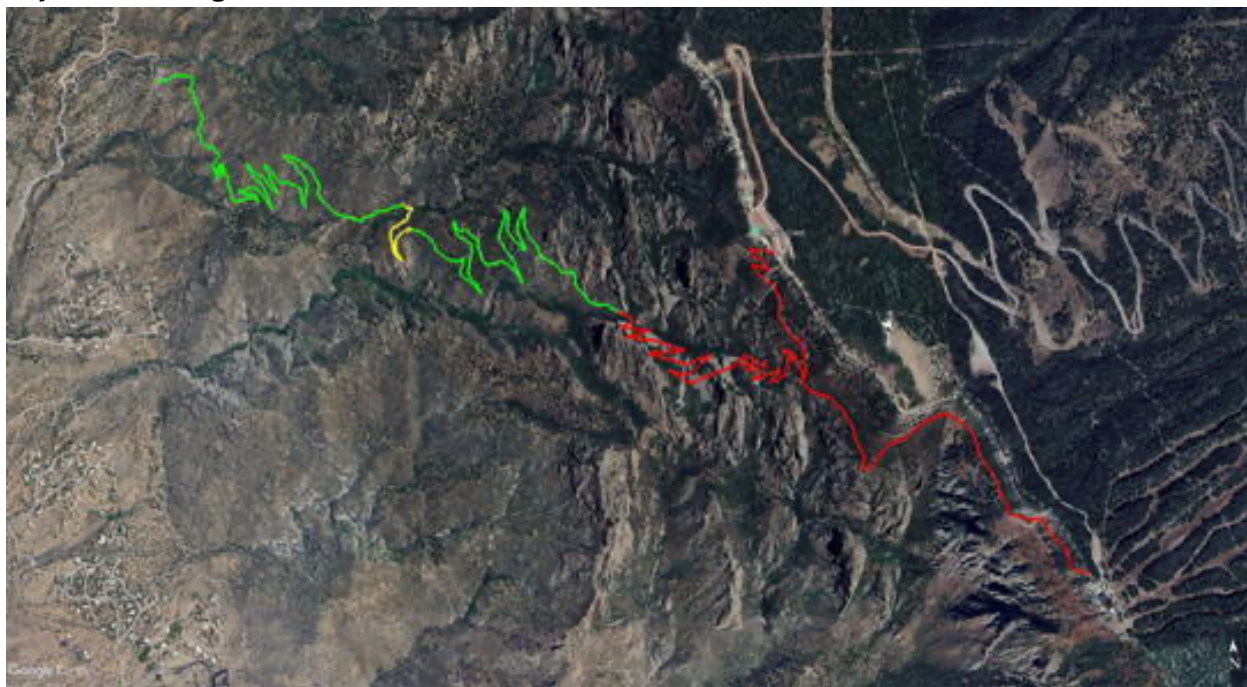
**From:** Young, Canyon - FS, NM <[Canyon.Young@usda.gov](mailto:Canyon.Young@usda.gov)>

**Sent:** Monday, November 25, 2024 2:35 PM

**Subject:** 11/22 La Luz Trail Condition Report

Hey everyone,

I hiked the La Luz with Jonathan Yales of Cibola SAR from lower trailhead up to the Crest Spur junction (approx. 6.5 miles in of the 7.5 mile trail), to match up with a recent trail condition report sent by another CSAR member. See my trail condition report below for your information in sharing with the public as they may ask – feel free to distribute to anyone who might find this information useful.



**Mile 0.0 to 2.4:** Mostly clear & dry

**Mile 2.4 to Ponderosa Point (Mile 2.7):** Persistent, hard-packed snow/ice on shaded northern exposure – slippery with difficult footing

\*I recommend micro spikes to navigate this segment\*

**Mile 2.7 to 4.5 (Ponderosa Point, up to just past La Cueva Overlook, before base of rockslide area):** Short, intermittent patches of snow & ice on northern exposures and other shaded areas; otherwise clear

**Mile 4.5 to 6.5 (just below 5 Mile Sign/base of rockslide area, up to Crest Spur Junc.):** Persistent deep snow & ice. 1 to 3 feet of settled snowpack in most places. Decent bootpacking track has been established, but you'll sink if you step outside of it. Snow is more difficult to traverse out on exposed rockslides vs in the timber, with multiple reaches where windloaded/drifted snowpack has created a hardened, outsloped surface above steep, open exposures that must be traversed with great care, and other places where

snowpack has shallowly covered crevices in the rockfall and creates potential to break through and fall into crevices without warning.

\*Overall conditions make this segment slower and more physically taxing than normal hiking\*

\*I recommend micro spikes, knee-height waterproof gaiters, and trekking poles with powder baskets to navigate this segment\*

\*I do NOT recommend snowshoes due to snow drifting and rocks sticking up through snowpack, combining to create a very narrow surface\*

**Mile 6.5 to top:** See the following report from 11/15, from a CSAR member hiked down the Crest Spur Trail to the Crest Spur Junction from the top. Based on the weather in the past week since this information was gathered, I would suspect conditions described here on the Crest Spur and upper mile of the La Luz have remained fairly stable and unchanged. *There was only 1/2 other set of tracks, so it hasn't seen much use since the large snowstorm. The snow depth varied as usual based on sun exposure and slope aspect/tree cover. It's extremely well consolidated, pretty much zero movement, sliding, or propagating slabs due to the recent freeze/thaw, and snowshoes keep you on top very well. Even crampons weren't doing a ton of sinking unless you got into deeper and shadier areas. Because of the drifting however, the trail is considerably narrow, and much steeper in spots, so if you're a bit newer with snowshoes that could be a hazard because you have less flat surface area, which increases a tripping hazard. In which case, crampons would be a better choice. Snow depth varied from 2ft+ to bare in certain sunnier spots, to ice on the stairs at the top, and the stairs down at the halfway point.*

**This week's outlook:** The weather in the coming days is forecasted to be relatively stable in the Sandia backcountry, with no precipitation predicted. Above-freezing daytime high temperatures over the next couple of days will allow for freeze/thaw of the snowpack, and therefore potential for surface crust development, which would make over-snow travel more difficult. This has the most potential to affect conditions on the Crest Spur Trail and the La Luz above the Crest Spur junction, both of which have reaches with direct sun exposure, whereas the rockslide area (between 4.5 and 6.5 miles) gets very little direct sunlight all winter. However, daytime temps will drop to at or below freezing on and following Thanksgiving Day, allowing for less change in snow & trail conditions.



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