



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Friends of Sandia Mountains Meeting

April 1, 2025

Ken Born
District Ranger
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands
Sandia Ranger District

Overview

I. Introduction

- Forest Service Overview
- Purpose and Mission
- District Organization

II. Management Direction for the Sandia RD

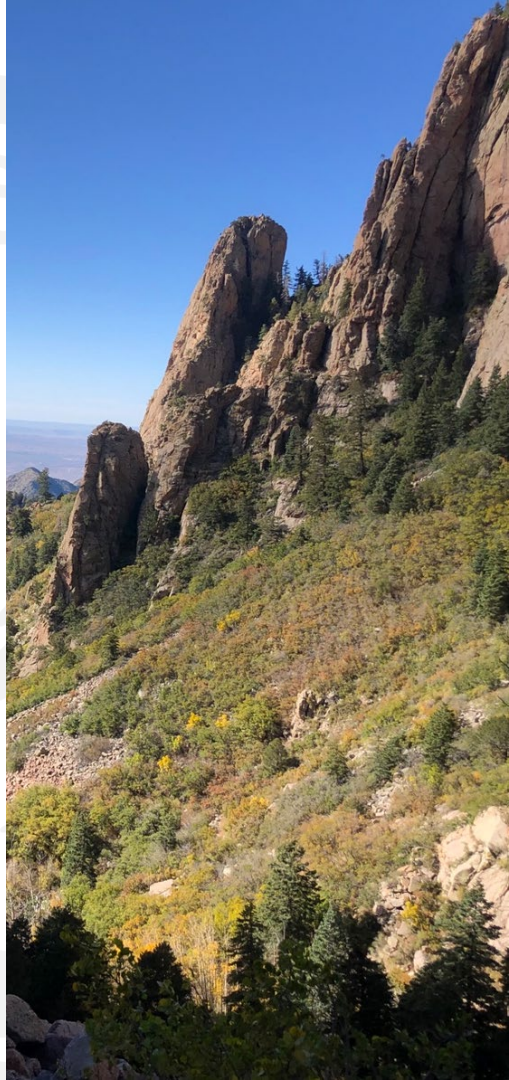
- Simpler Times
- Laws, Regulations and Policies
- Land Management Planning
- Fire Restrictions

III. Project Implementation

- Program of Work Process
- Priority Projects

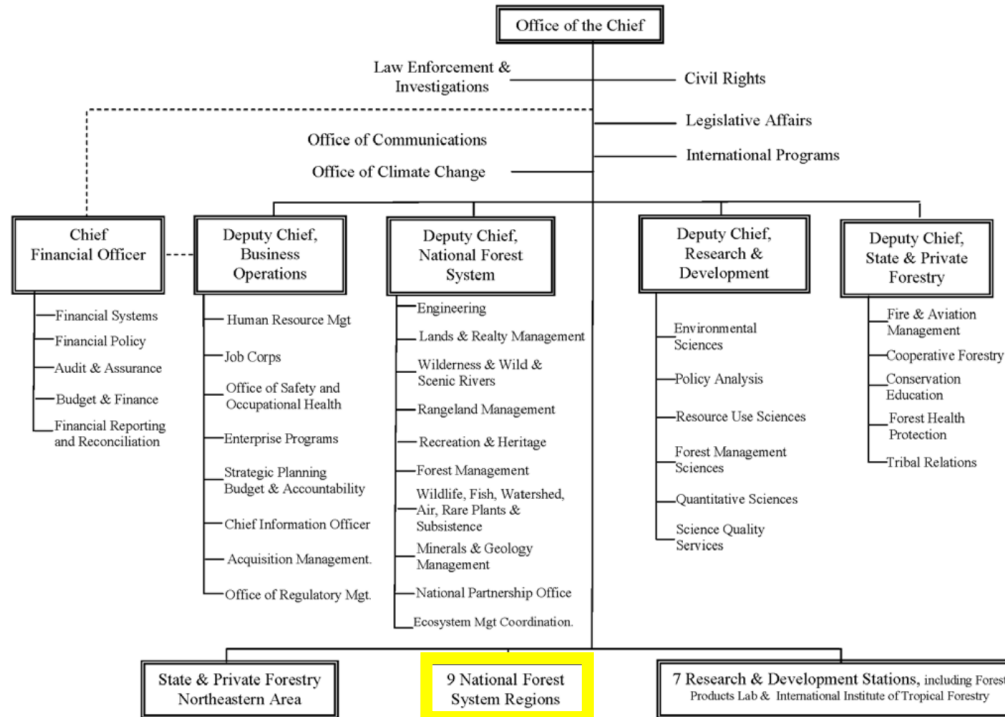
IV. Partnerships at the Core of Our Mission

- Benefits of Partnering
- Forest Service Challenges
- Partnership Opportunities



Welcome and Introduction

How is the Forest Service organized?

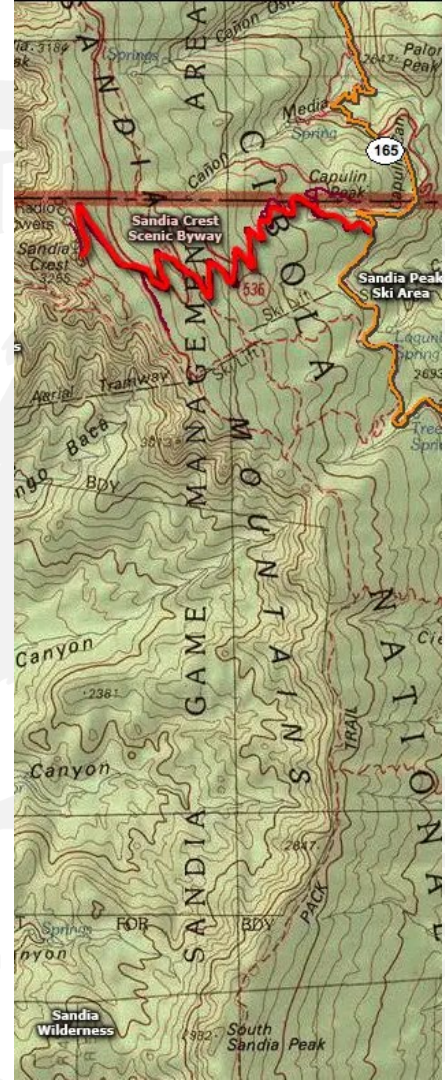


Welcome and Introduction

National Forest System

The National Forest System is the largest of the divisions by far. From inception, it has had four hierarchical levels:

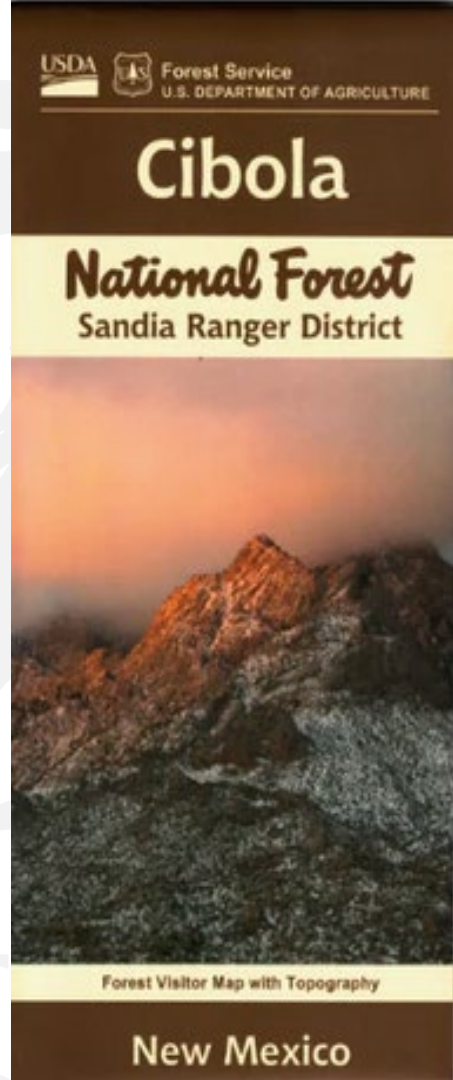
- **Ranger Districts**, subdivisions of national forests, where most fieldwork is carried out
- **Supervisor's Offices**, the administrative offices for each individual national forest
- **Regional Offices**, providing an intermediate administrative level below the headquarters (there are nine regional offices in existence today)
- **National Headquarters**, located in Washington, DC.



Welcome and Introduction

Ranger Districts

- The Forest Service has over 600 ranger districts
- Each district has a staff of 10-100 people under the direction of a district ranger, a line officer who reports to a forest supervisor
- The districts vary in size from 50,000 ac to more than 1M ac
- Most on-the-ground activities occur on ranger districts:
 - Trail construction and maintenance
 - Operation of recreation sites
 - Oversight of activities authorized under special use permit
 - Management of vegetation and wildlife habitat
 - Cultural resource management
 - Fire and fuels management



Purpose and Mission

District's Primary Purpose

- To manage National Forest System lands for multiple uses, including recreation, resource protection, and watershed production.

Forest Service's Mission

- To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations, managing these lands for multiple uses and benefits.



Welcome and Introduction

What does a district ranger do?

- Leadership and Management
- Resource Management
- Recreation and Public Access
- Fire Management
- Community Engagement
- Policy Implementation
- Staff Supervision
- Decision Making
- Communication



Simpler Times

Early Days in the Forest Service

- Early rangers had to pass an exam that included shooting, riding, using an ax, throwing a diamond hitch, and lashing freight on a mule or horse
- They had to be able to clear trails, string telephone wire, and build lookout towers and their own residences
- Early rangers were essential to the development and success of the Forest Service; their legacy continues to shape the agency today

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Oct., 1925

Sheet 2

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

FOREST RANGER EXAMINATION

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SECOND SUBJECT—PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS TO THE COMPETITOR—READ CAREFULLY

Place of Examination _____ Examination No. _____
(City or town) (State)

Date _____ Time commenced _____ Time finished _____

One sheet of scratch paper will be issued with this sheet.
Three hours are allowed for this sheet.

Insert your answers in the spaces provided.

RATING

GENERAL

1 to 5. Give in the blanks below the names of five leading breeds of beef cattle suitable for open range grazing.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6 to 22. In the following statements supply the missing words:

6. A good 1,100-pound saddle horse doing average work requires _____ pounds of oats per day.

7. Such a horse requires _____ pounds of hay per day.

8. A horse of this kind should carry a 160-pound man with 50 pounds of equipment an average of _____ miles per day for 20 days each month.

9. An 800-pound pack mule will in an emergency, without injury, carry _____ pounds for 5 miles over trails with slopes not exceeding 20 per cent.

10. Such a mule will without injury carry _____ pounds for 20 miles per day over similar trails for 20 days each month.

11. A team of 1,400-pound draft horses hitched to an ordinary farm wagon should be able to pull a load of _____ pounds, not including weight of wagon, on a dirt road with occasional adverse grades up to 15 per cent.

✓12. A team of heavy draft horses, hauling lumber from a sawmill to a railroad a distance of 7½ miles, should be able to make _____ round trips per week.

✓13. For a ten-day trip in the mountains with two companions I would take along _____ pounds of flour, assuming that no other breadstuffs were taken.

14. For such a trip I would take _____ pounds of sugar.

15. I would take for this trip _____ pounds of cured meat provided no fresh or canned meats were available.

✓16. It takes about _____ tons of hay to winter 40 head of cattle through a 4-months' feeding period.

✓17. A sound log 16 feet long, with a top diameter inside the bark of 10 inches and butt diameter of 14 inches, contains _____ board feet.

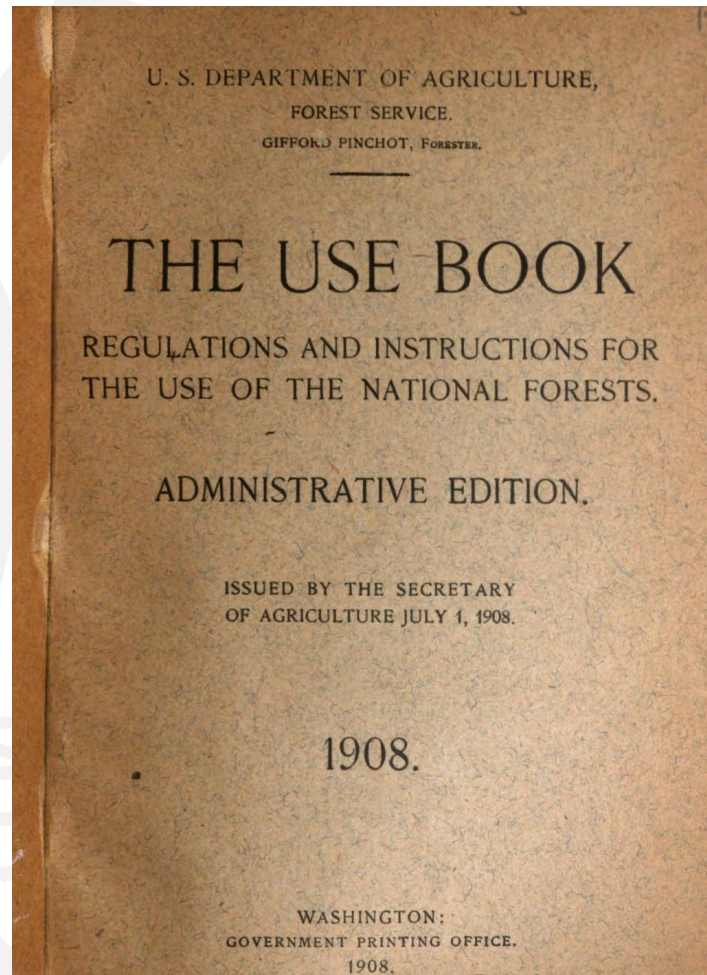
✓18. It would require _____ feet of flooring for a room 12 feet by 16 feet.

[OVER]

Simpler Times

The Use Book

- In the early days of the Forest Service the "Use Book" was a crucial manual that guided rangers, containing all the laws and regulations for managing national forests
- Today, the laws require a book of 1,163 pages, while the regulations required to manage the national forests fill several bookshelves



What laws, regulations and plans guide our work today?

Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act (MUYSA) of 1960

National Forests shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, fish and minerals for the multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services obtained therefrom.

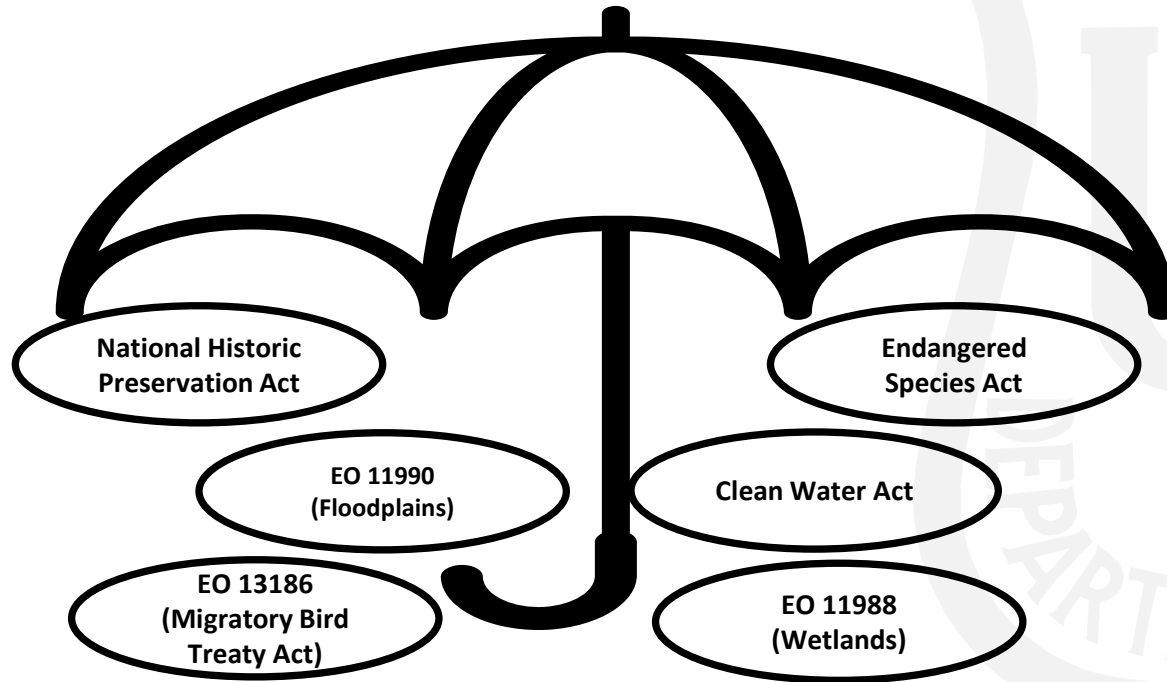
National Forest Management Act of (NFMA) 1976

Requires each national forest to implement a long-term, strategic resource management plan for each unit based on multiple-use, sustained-yield principles

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970

Requires environmental analyses to assess the nature and importance of the physical, biological, social, and economic effects of projects and activities. All environmental analyses require public notification and opportunity to provide input

What laws, regulations and plans guide our work today?



National Environmental Policy Act

- NEPA can involve three different levels of analysis:
 - Categorical Exclusion determination (CE)
 - Environmental Assessment (EA); and
 - Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)
- NEPA often also acts as an “umbrella” statute to structure the entire environmental review process

Land Management Plan

National Forest Management Act

- The forest plan provides a general framework to guide the management of forest resources, goods and services
- Forest plans are consistent with and do not override law, regulation or established policy
- Forest plans are to be periodically revised, usually every 15 years

USDA Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Southwestern Region Cibola National Forest MB-R3-03-31 July 2022

Final – Replaces the previous September 2021 Version (not an exact reprint)

Cibola National Forest Land Management Plan

Bernalillo, Catron, Cibola, Lincoln, McKinley, Sandoval,
Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Valencia Counties,
New Mexico



Land Management Plan

Management & Designated Areas

Management Areas: A land area identified within the planning area that has the same set of applicable plan components

Designated Areas: An area or feature identified and managed to maintain its unique special character or purpose

Desired Conditions

A description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics toward which management of the land and resources should be directed

Objectives

A concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions

Standards & Guidelines

Standard: Mandatory constraint on project decision-making, established to help achieve or maintain desired condition

Guideline: A constraint on project and activity decision-making that allows for departure from its terms, if purpose of the guideline can be met

Required Plan Components

- Sustainable recreation; including **recreation settings, opportunities**, and access; and **scenic character**
- Protection of cultural and historic resources
- Management of areas of tribal importance
- Protection of congressionally **designated wilderness areas** as well as management of areas recommended for wilderness designation
- Protection of **designated wild and scenic rivers** as well as management of rivers found **eligible or determined suitable** for National Wild and Scenic River system
- Appropriate management of other **designated areas** or recommended designated areas in the plan area, including **research natural areas**



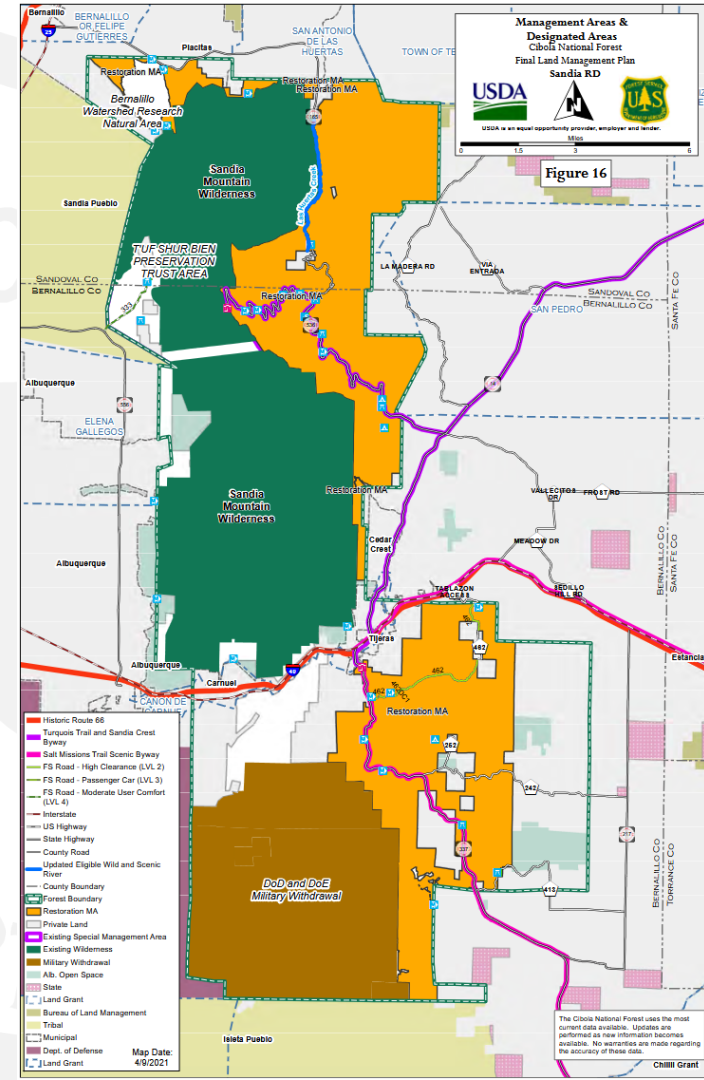
Management Areas and Designated Areas

Management Areas

- Las Huertas Creek Eligible Wild & Scenic River, 3.8 miles
- Restoration Management Area in Sandia & Manzanita Mountains (35,760 ac)

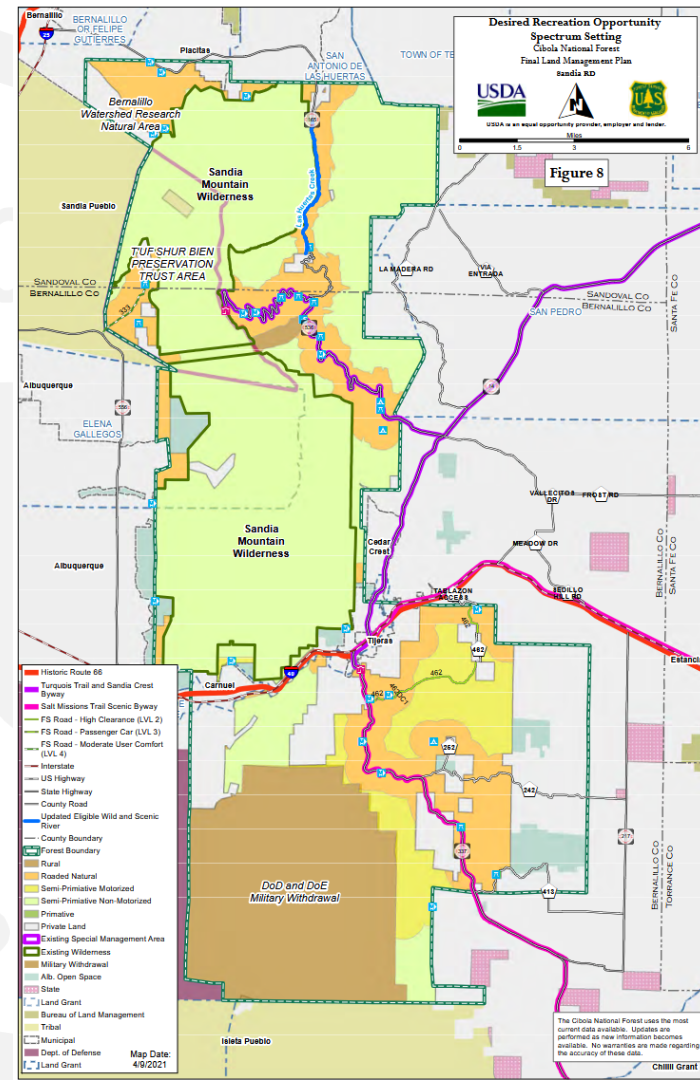
Designated Areas

- Sandia Mountain Wilderness (37,877 ac)
- Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway
- Withdrawl Area (20,486 ac)
- Bernalillo Watershed RNA (1,030 ac)
- Sandia Cave National Historic Landmark
- T'uf Shur Bien Preservation Trust Area (9,890 ac)



Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Setting

- Desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings serve as the desired conditions for recreation
- Opportunities, settings, and activities for obtaining experiences are arranged across a continuum or spectrum of six classes: primitive, semi-primitive nonmotorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban



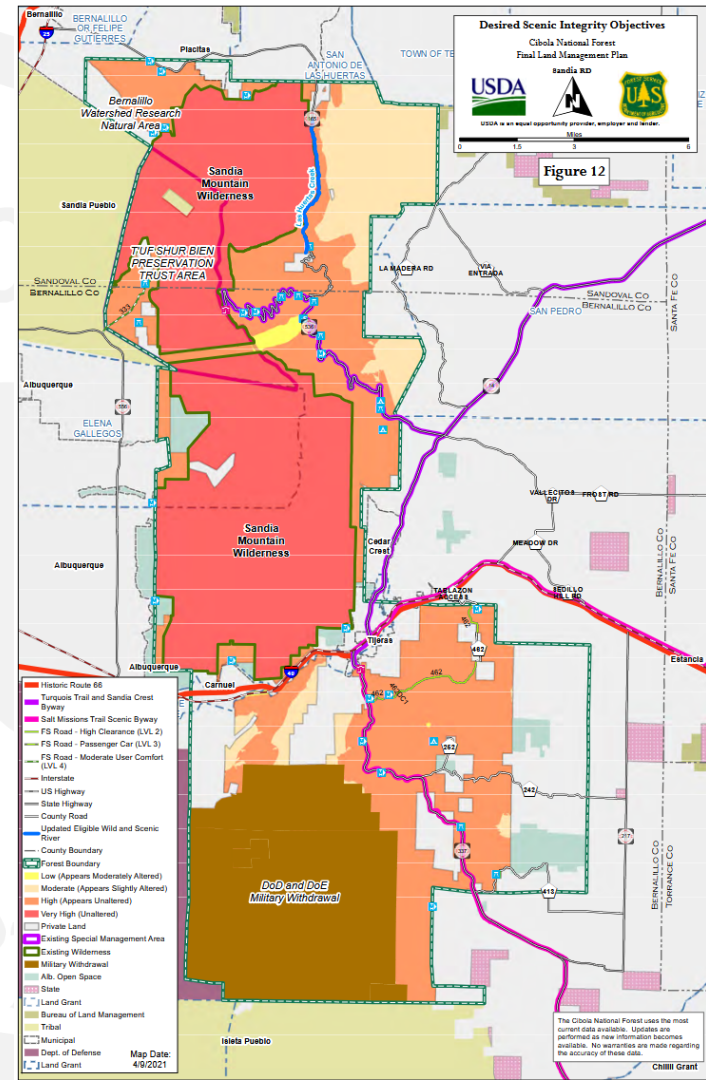
Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Setting

- ROS Setting Characteristics are also depicted on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Poster



Desired Scenic Integrity Objectives

- Scenic Integrity Objectives represent desired conditions for the visual landscape to be managed for or toward throughout the life of a Forest Plan



Desired Conditions for Ecological Sustainability

- Desired seral-stage proportions
- Vegetative conditions (composition, structure, function)
- Snag densities
- Fire regime
- Group and patch size
- Basal area

Table 6. Desired seral-stage proportions for dry mixed conifer forest

Seral Stage	Proportion	Description
Early*	9%	Trees absent or seedlings and saplings only.
Mid* (open)	3%	Dominated by small, shade-intolerant trees with open canopy structure.
Mid* (closed)	3%	Closed canopy state supporting small shade-tolerant and mixed-tolerance tree species.
Late (open)	60%	Dominated by medium to very large shade-intolerant trees with an open canopy structure.
Late (closed)	25%	Dominated by medium to very large shade-tolerant and mixed-tolerance trees with a closed canopy structure.

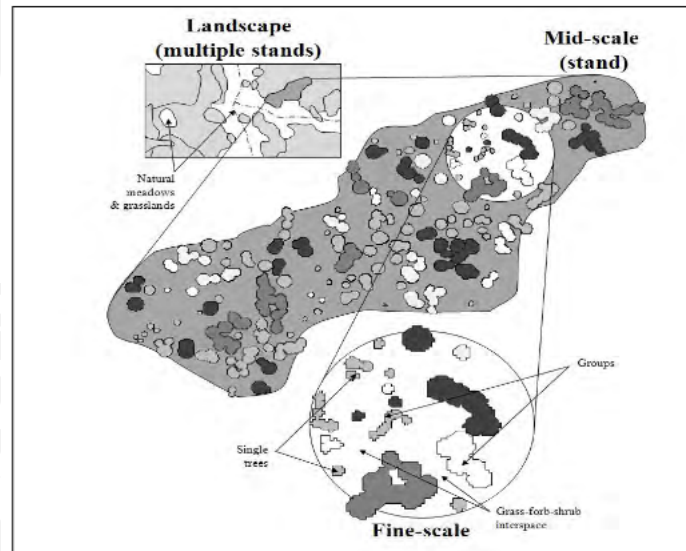


Figure 2. Desired conditions at three spatial scales

FY Program of Work (POW) Planning

***Decision Tool
and Program
Guidance for
work that
occurs on
district***

Annual Planning: POW is typically developed annually, allowing for flexibility and adaptation to changing conditions and priorities.

Project Development: POW includes specific projects, activities, and tasks that will be implemented to achieve the forest's objectives.

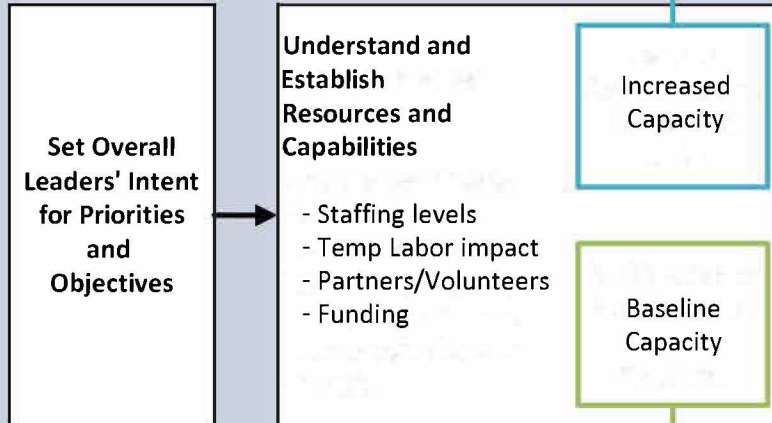
Prioritization and Resource Allocation: POW helps prioritize projects and allocate resources (staff, funding, equipment).

Alignment with Land Management Plan: POW needs to align with the desired conditions and objectives outlined in the Forest Plan.

FY Program of Work Planning

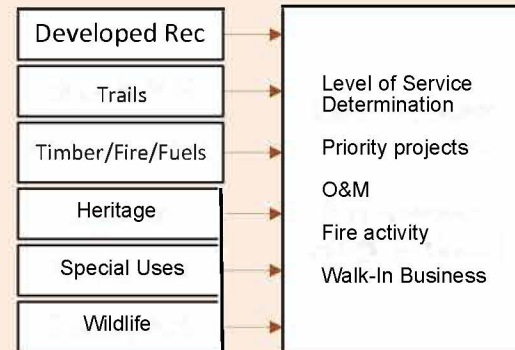
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Forest-Wide Prioritization



2

Programmatic Prioritization

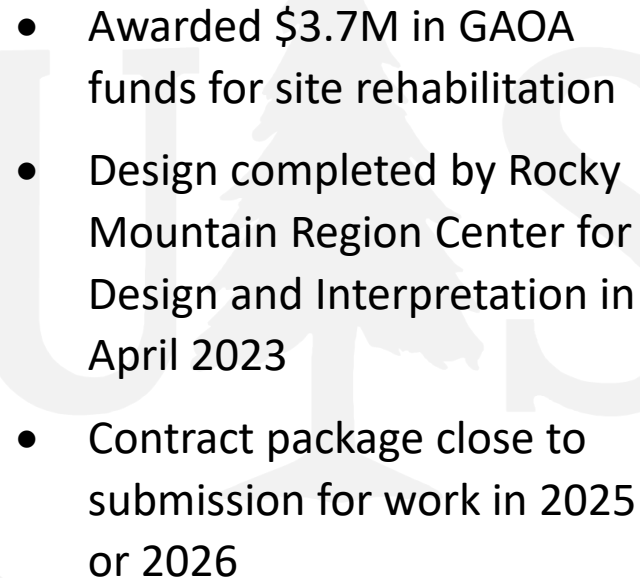
*Enhanced Workload**Shifted Capacity***2025 Program of Work**

Sandia Peak Ski Area Improvements



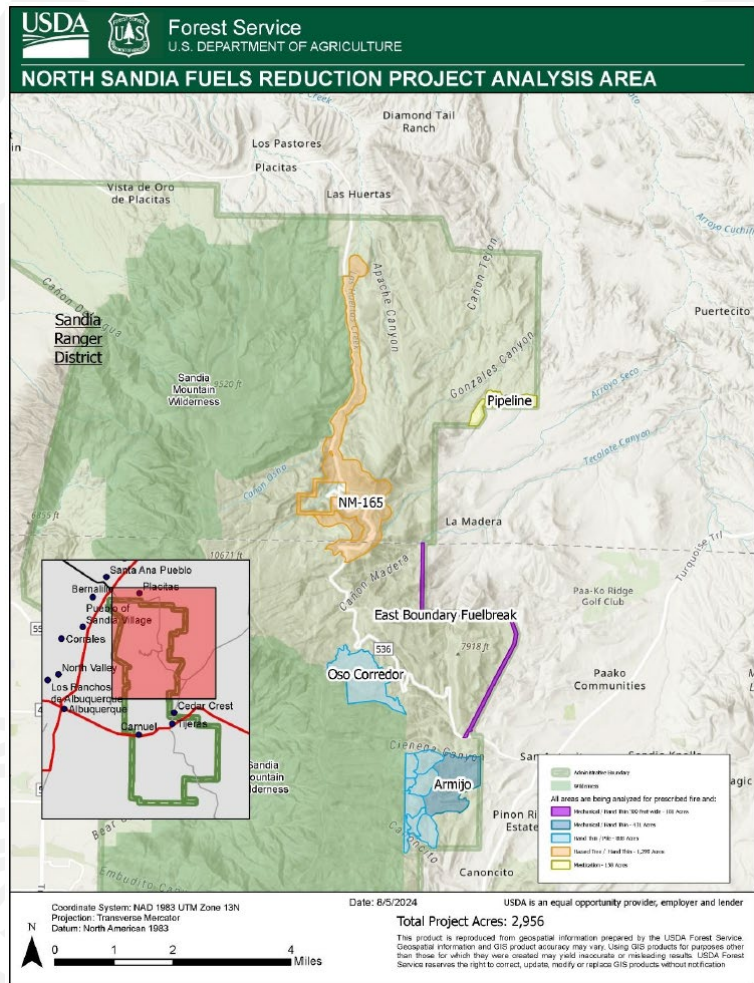
- Mighty Mite tow replaced with conveyor belt lift during 2024-25 season
- NEPA process kicked off for Lift 1 replacement in April
 - Old lift installed in 1980; decommissioned in 2017
 - New lift will handle 2,400 persons/hr; take 7.5-minutes to reach summit

Sandia Crest Recreation Complex GAOA Project



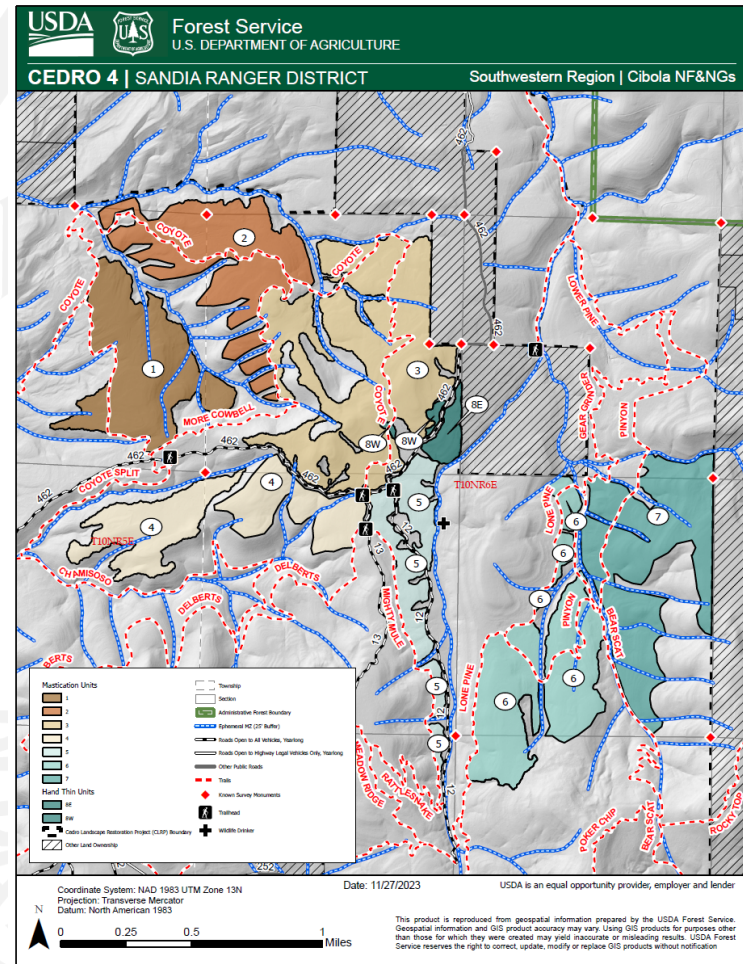
North Sandia Fuels Reduction Project

- Decision signed on November 13, 2024
- Current priorities for treatments include starting with the upper NM 165 corridor and moving to Armijo > Pipeline > East Boundary > then lower NM 165
- Prior to implementing fuels treatments in Las Huertas Canyon, we intend to engage with interested Pueblos and Land Grant communities
 - First meeting scheduled for May 21

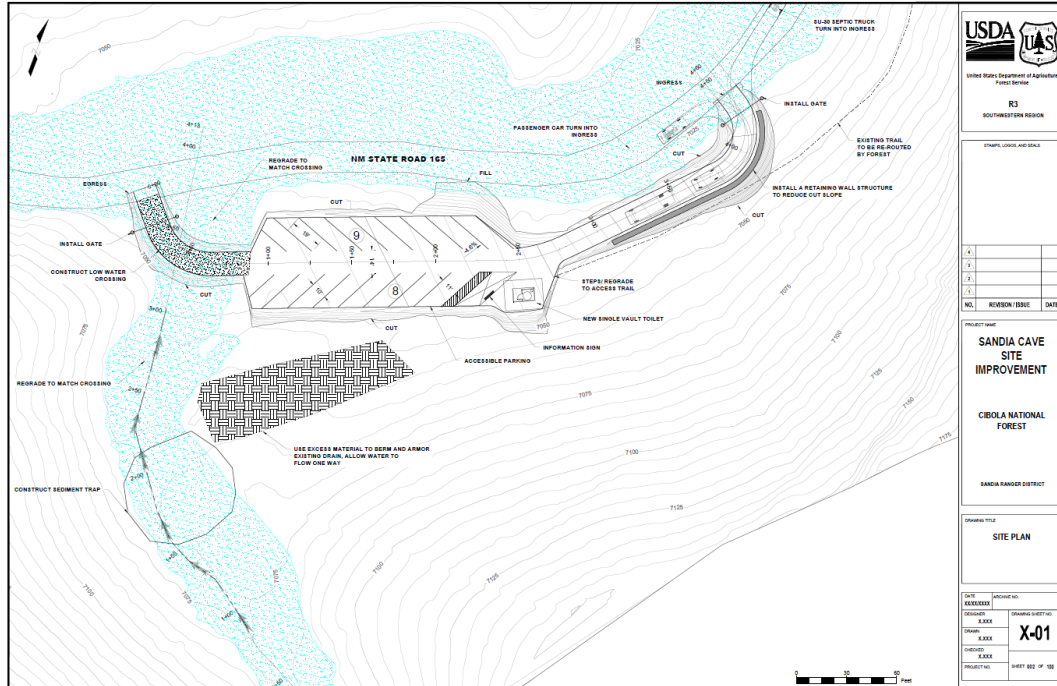


Cedro 4 Landscape Restoration Project

- Mastication and hand thinning in Pinyon/Juniper
- Ops are ongoing in Unit 6
- Approx 963 acres were prepped
- Hand thinning included 18.5 acres
- 763 acres cut to date
- Cost-Share Agreement with NM State Forestry expires on May 22

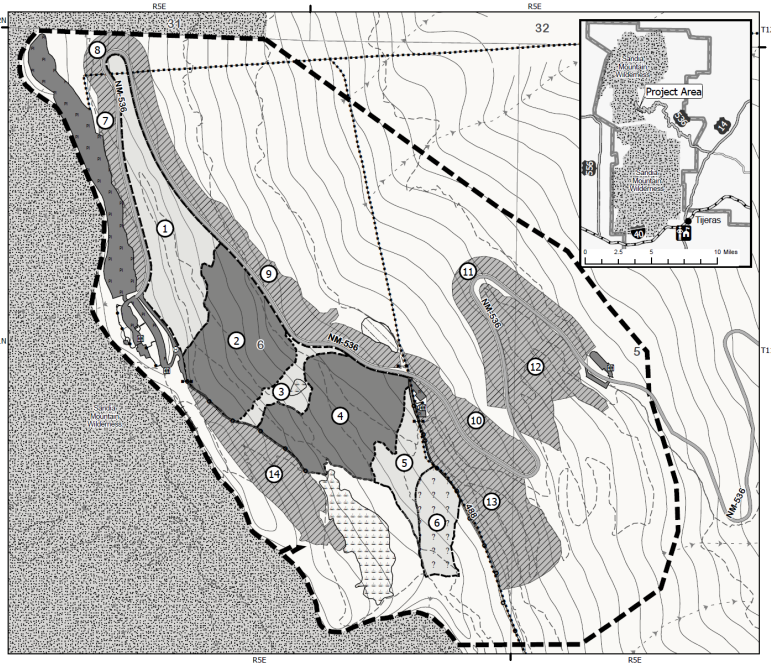
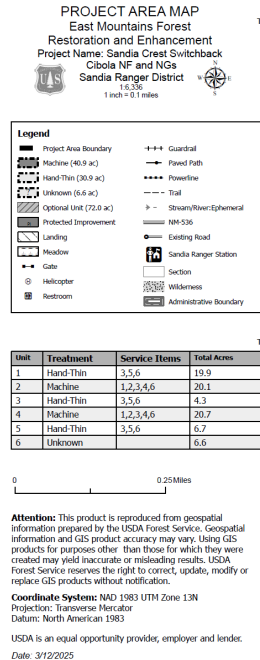


Sandia Cave Restoration Project



- NEPA process will be kicked off soon
- Project will include:
 - Parking Lot Redesign
 - Upgrades to the Spiral Staircase and Installation of Cave Gate
 - Trail and Trail Feature Upgrades
 - Site Interpretation

Sandia Crest Hazard Tree & Thinning Project



- Approximate Acres anticipated: 78-150 acres
- Complex project! Multiple service items planned (such as woody debris removal, hazard tree felling, RX implementation, etc)
- Ops potential in summer of 2025 but more likely summer of 2026.

Fire: Restrictions and Closures

- 3 or more of conditions below are met, the forest considers partial fire restrictions (Stage 1 or 2)
- Closure (Stage 3) considered after partial restrictions have been in effect and 4 or more conditions are met:
 - 1,000-hour fuel moisture content is 90th percentile or above
 - 3-day mean energy release component (ERC) is at 90th percentile or above, in the unit's representative fuel model
 - Live fuel moisture content is 75% or less
 - Wildland fires are impacting available suppression resources
 - Area is receiving a high occurrence of wildland fire
 - Adverse fire weather is predicted to continue



**Partnerships are at the very
core of how the Forest Service
does business**



Benefits of Partnering

For the Forest Service

- *Expanded Capacity*
- *Broader Range of Perspectives*
- *Increased Productivity*
- *Shared Goals*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Access to Expertise*

For the Partner

- *Opportunity for Impact*
- *Access to Resources*
- *Networking and Collaboration*
- *Enhanced Visibility*
- *Learning and Capacity Building*
- *Shared Leadership*

Forest Service Partnership Challenges

- Time and Resource Constraints
- Coordination Challenges
- Turnover and Loss of Expertise
- Lengthy Processes
- Timely Execution of Agreements
- External Factors Like Wildfires



Partnership Opportunities – Forest Health & Restoration

- Restoration Projects
- Fuel Management
- Stewardship Agreements
- Good Neighbor Authority Agreements



Partnership Opportunities – Recreation and Community Engagement

- Trail Maintenance & Development
- Outdoor Education
- Volunteer Patrol
- Interpretive Programs
- Community Events
- Volunteer Programs



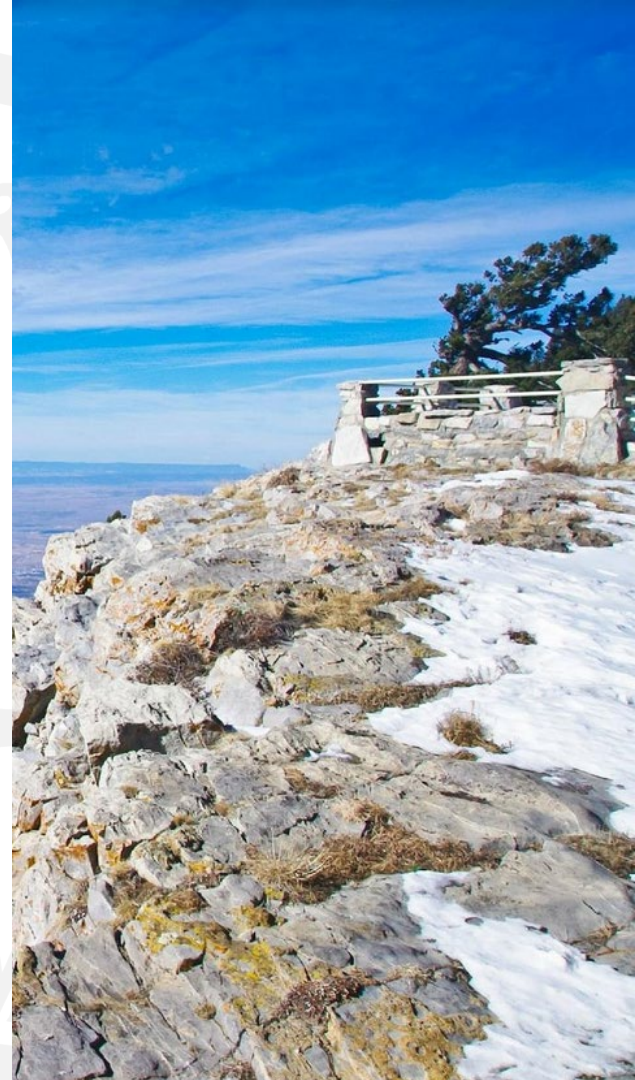
Partnership Opportunities – Research and Innovation

- Collaborative Research Projects
- Technology Transfer
- Citizen Science Programs



What might come next?

- Expand partnership opportunities through an unfunded **challenge cost-share agreement**
- Execute **supplemental project agreements (SPAs)** to accomplish specific projects





Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**THANK YOU,
FRIENDS OF SANDIA MOUNTAINS,
FOR ALL YOU DO**