



Forest Service News Release

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Sandia Ranger District to implement Sandia Crest area projects

(Albuquerque, NM – March 20, 2026) — As soon as April 2026, the Cibola National Forest & National Grasslands will begin two projects on the Sandia Ranger District that will affect visitor use and public access to the Sandia Crest area through Fall 2027.

These projects include:

- Sandia Crest “Switchback” Hazard Tree and Fuel Reduction Project
- Sandia Crest Recreation Area Renovation Project

The Sandia Ranger District’s focus on the Crest area demonstrates our commitment to protecting public safety, safeguarding critical infrastructure, and ensuring that future generations can enjoy this treasured landscape.

Sandia Crest “Switchback” Hazard Tree and Fuel Reduction Project will thin 140 acres of National Forest System lands around the Sandia Crest and New Mexico State Highway 536. The forest designed the project to protect critical infrastructure around the Sandia Crest Recreation Area and the Sandia Crest Communication Site from wildfires, as well as to remove dead trees that present a hazard to visitors and staff. During implementation, the Ellis Trailhead, Sandia Crest Recreation Site, and State Highway NM-536 will be closed beyond the 10k Trailhead Parking lot (just past mile marker 11).

“The forests around the Sandia Crest contain a significant number of dead trees, both standing and down. High fuel-loading around the Crest Communication Site in particular presents risks to critical infrastructure that could be damaged or destroyed in the event of a high-severity wildfire,” said Ken Born, Sandia District Ranger. “This project is intended to protect both public safety and critical infrastructure that serves our entire region while also providing firefighters defensible space in the event there were ever a wildfire on the mountain.”

Sandia Crest Recreation Area Renovation Project will be implemented in two phases beginning with the Crest House demolition and recreation area renovation from Spring through Fall 2027. The Crest Recreation Area was last updated in the 1990s and has deteriorated due to extreme weather conditions, high elevation, and high visitor use. Renovation work will include repaving and restriping parking areas; new walkways, stairways, gates, railings, benches, vault toilets and amenities; as well as an additional observation deck, additional picnic areas, updates to accessibility features, and improved traffic and pedestrian flow.

During the implementation of these projects, the Sandia Crest Recreation Area and nearby trails and recreation sites will be closed to the public for an extended period.

For more information on the Sandia Crest Area Projects and alternatives destinations for visitors go to: [Cibola www - Sandia Crest Area Projects](#).

About the Forest Service: The Forest Service has, for more than 100 years, brought people and communities together to answer the call of conservation. Grounded in world-class science and technology — and rooted in communities — the Forest Service connects people to nature and to each other. The Forest Service cares for shared natural resources in ways that promote lasting economic, ecological, and social vitality. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest wildland fire and forestry research organizations in the world. The Forest Service also has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 900 million forested acres within the U.S., of which over 130 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live.

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