

Carson accepting comments on Camino Real District travel

By Matthew van Buren

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Carson National Forest is soliciting public comment on a Preliminary Environmental Assessment prepared regarding off-highway travel in the Camino Real Ranger District.

The revisions are being proposed under the Forest Service's Travel Management Rule, which was approved in 2006. The rule requires national forests and ranger districts to designate roads, trails and other areas that will be open to motor vehicles. Plans are to specify vehicle and calendar restrictions, as well.

The Camino Real Ranger District comprises about 320,000 acres in the areas of Taos, Talpa, Tres Ritos, Sipapu, Pot Creek, Penasco, Angel Fire, Ojo Sarco, Rodarte and Truchas.

According to information from the Forest Service, proposed actions for the Camino Real Ranger District include:

- Eliminating off-road motorized vehicle travel on 100,672 acres;
- Adding about 1.1 miles of unauthorized route segments less than 300-feetlong for motor vehicle use off Forest Road 116, Santa Barbara, Forest Road 161, Alamitos, and Forest Road 207, Las Trampas;
- Removing 16 miles of existing 300-foot corridors along designated roads;
- Removing six miles of existing 300-foot corridors along designated trails;
- Converting about 1 mile of Forest Road near Angostura Canyon to Forest Service trail open to vehicles up to 50 inches wide;
- Restricting motor vehicle use to administrative-use-only on about 32 miles of road in the La Jara, Valle Escondido, Bear Wallow Ridge, La Presa, Maestas Ridge, Hondo Canyon, a portion of the historic Camino Real near Ojo Sarco, Entranas and upper Alamitos areas;
- Allowing motor vehicle use from May 1 through Dec. 31 on designated Forest Roads and trails on the entire Camino Real Ranger District; the district ranger may modify seasonal designations to allow vehicles on roads as much as two weeks prior to May 1 or extend seasonal closures into May, depending on conditions.

According to a Forest Service announcement, Carson National Forest has been accepting public comment since 2006.

“Many of the public comments focused on the need for motorized use for recreational activities that include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, sightseeing and pleasure riding,” the announcement states. “People also stated motor vehicles are needed for subsistence and commercial activities on the forest. For example, having motorized access for firewood gathering, viga and latilla cutting, acequia maintenance, outfitting and guiding, logging, mining, livestock grazing and administration of utilities was identified as a concern. In addition, comments identified concerns related to motorized use and wildlife habitat, watersheds and riparian areas.”

The Forest Service will be accepting public comments until Jan. 12. Only individuals and groups that comment have the right to appeal the Forest Service’s decision.

The preliminary environmental assessment, along with related maps and other information, can be viewed at the Carson National Forest Supervisor’s Office in Taos, at 208 Cruz Alta Road, or online at www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usdapop.php/?project=25677 .

Comments may be submitted to: Forest Supervisor, Travel Management Team, 208 Cruz Alta Road, Taos, NM, 87571. Comments may also be submitted by email to comments-southwestern-carson@fs.fed.us or by fax to (575) 758-6213. Carson National Forest can be reached by phone at (575) 758-6200.