



Miranda Canyon property added to National Forest

— Staff Report

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The final 1,364-acre piece of a historic 5,000-acre property near Taos will be protected by adding it to the Carson National Forest.

The property, called Miranda Canyon, is just south of Taos and includes part of the Old Spanish Trail, a federally designated national historic trail used as a trade route between New Mexico and California during the mid-1800s.

The property also includes the northwest slope of Picuris Peak and is the source of water for the nearby communities of Llano Quemado and Ranchos de Taos. The property has numerous ridges and peaks which provide great views of the Rio Grande Gorge to the west and Wheeler Peak, the highest peak in New Mexico, to the north.

In January 2011, The Trust for Public Land agreed to buy the 5,000-acre property from Weimer Properties LLC, which represented the families who owned the land.

“Miranda Canyon is a key piece of historic land in the Rio Grande watershed that has important water resources, wildlife habitat and breathtaking views, and provides opportunities for hunting, recreation, camping and historic interpretation for the public,” said Greg Hiner, project manager for The Trust for Public Land, in a prepared statement.

“We have started working with the local community members to address their concerns and needs,” said James Duran, forest supervisor for the Carson National Forest, in a prepared statement. “Together with our partners, we will develop plans for managed use including recreation, hunting, camping and wood cutting and other opportunities appropriate for the area. The property is also an important watershed that maintains quality and supply of water to the local communities and ultimately feeds into the nationally significant Rio Grande.”

The Carson National Forest purchased the \$10.8 million property in phases from The Trust for Public Land using \$8.758 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the federal government’s main source of money for protecting land, and \$2 million from other sources.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created by Congress in 1965, is funded through royalties paid by energy companies for offshore gas and oil drilling. The current program, which has delivered over \$260 million to New Mexico for land conservation and outdoor recreation, expired Sept. 30.

U.S. Sens. Tom Udall (D-NM) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM), and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-3) are leading efforts in Congress to reauthorize the fund and also supported protection of Miranda Canyon.

For information on The Trust for Public Land, visit tpl.org.