



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Jemez  
Ranger District

P.O. Box 150  
Jemez springs, New Mexico  
87025  
(575) 829-3535

---

File Code: 1950

Date: March 1, 2010

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The Jemez Ranger District, of the Santa Fe National Forest is initiating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for a proposal to restrict camping and prohibit certain camping activities within the East Fork Jemez Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Corridor on the Jemez Ranger District. Restrictions would include camping prohibitions within 200-feet of the waterline of the East Fork Jemez River and McCauley springs, camping prohibitions within ¼ mile of existing trailheads, prohibition on the use of glass containers in the WSR Corridor and prohibition on use of camp fires on the east side of the WSR corridor.

The purpose of these restrictions is to reduce resource impacts that have been documented repeatedly over the last twenty years, resulting in effects to water quality, wildlife habitat, and visual and scenic resources. This proposal would also move resource conditions toward management guidelines and desired conditions stated in the Santa Fe National Forest Plan (1987), as amended by the Jemez National Recreation Area Management Plan (2002) and the East Fork Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (2002).

Camping and camping activities to be prohibited would be implemented through Santa Fe National Forest closure orders. Information on the closure orders would be made available throughout the WSR Corridor via signs along the East Fork Trail (Forest Trail 137) and with posts at trailhead information boards.

#### **EXISTING CONDITION**

In a 1991 Report entitled "An Analysis of the Riparian Zone along the East Fork of the Jemez River," human recreation was identified as having the greatest impact on the streamside vegetation and water quality of the East Fork Jemez River. Since this report, written approximately two decades ago, conditions have not improved. A 2002 stream inventory report found, "...there were many areas where the campsites had removed all vegetation [along the river], further adding sediment to the stream... These areas have been totally 'browed out' (no vegetation in the campsites due to soil compaction)." These findings are also echoed in the East Fork Wild and Scenic River Environmental Assessment from 2002, which found, "Heavily used dispersed sites are dominated by trampled vegetation, compacted soil, user-created trails, trash and human waste."

Additionally, monitoring between 2002 to the present have found that the East Fork Jemez River is not properly functioning according to state standards for pool habitat, large woody debris, width/depth ratio, and bank stability – all of which are key elements for water quality and fish habitat. Monitoring from the summer of 2008 and 2009 has shown that ongoing recreation

impacts on the East Fork Jemez River are not decreasing. Likewise, the condition of the River is similarly not improving.

Since 2005, the Jemez Ranger District has made an effort to construct bridges at a number of stream crossings and use education as a method to decrease recreation-caused impacts to the East Fork Jemez and nearby rivers and streams. Bridge reconstruction efforts have resulted in local improvements to bank stability and river condition near the Las Conchas Trailhead. Education efforts have included posting information, collecting data on dispersed camping near streams, and contacting individuals recreating along rivers to provide information on how to minimize impacts to water quality and wildlife habitat. Though these efforts are seen as important to improving the long-term behaviors and practices of Forest visitors, there is no clear information to illustrate that using education-only efforts will be effective toward meeting resource improvement goals in the East Fork Jemez River corridor.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS**

Desired conditions for the area come from the East Fork Jemez Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Management Plan and the Jemez National Recreation Area (JNRA) Management Plan. These documents provide the following management direction:

- Manage recreation and other uses to protect soil and water resources using methods such as closures and public education (JNRA, pg. 5)
- Restore and maintain or enhance natural resource conditions (McCauley Warm Springs, JNRA pg. 8)
- Emphasize resource protection and scenic values at popular heavily used sites such as by rehabilitating denuded sites (WSR, pg. 10)
- Discourage camping in riparian areas. Where feasible within the riparian zone, close heavily impacted dispersed sites and eliminate evidence of dispersed camping including fire rings, trash, and human waste. These sites may be closed either permanently or temporarily on a rotating basis to allow sites to rest and recover (WSR, pg. 11).
- Prohibit camping in the area adjacent to Las Conchas trailhead before the first stream crossing (WSR, pg. 11).
- Enforce closures to ensure that cumulative resource impacts remain within acceptable limits (WSR, pg. 11).
- Provide designated dispersed campsites or camping zones away from streambanks and outside riparian zones (WSR, pg. 11).
- Stabilize streambanks that have been denuded and take measures to maintain long-term streambank protection (WSR, pg. 13).
- In localized areas where erosion is exceeding 'tolerance rates' and contributing sediment to the river take corrective measures to reduce erosion to acceptable levels based on agency standards (WSR, pg. 13).

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

To move the existing condition along the East Fork Jemez River toward the desired conditions as stated in the JNRA and WSR management plans, the Jemez Ranger District proposes the following:

Proposed Activity	Purpose
Camping within 200 feet of the East Fork Jemez River water line would be prohibited. This would prohibit all camping opportunities in the river corridor, but not in upland areas.	Reduce direct impacts to streambanks, streamside vegetation, and water quality.
Camping within 200 feet of McCauley Springs would be prohibited.	Reduce impacts to wetland vegetation and water quality at location of the spring.
Camping within ¼ mile of the Las Conchas, East Fork, and Jemez Falls trailheads would be prohibited.	Reduce recreation conflict and visual impacts.
Campfires between the Las Conchas Trailhead west to State Highway 4 at East Fork Picnic Area would be prohibited (campfires between Battleship Rock Picnic Area east to the intersection of the East Fork Trail with Highway 4 would still be allowed).	Minimize the burning of large downed logs and felling of trees along the river corridor. Downed logs and standing and felled trees near the river are important for fish habitat, regulation of water temperature, and water quality. Burning of downed logs or felling of trees reduces numbers of current and future trees or downed logs for fish habitat.
Possession of glass drinking containers within the WSR Corridor would be prohibited.	Reduce safety hazards to Forest visitors, Forest employees and volunteers. This would also reduce visual impacts.
Revegetation of native plants through seeding and planting along impacted streambanks and user-created trails.	Restore native vegetation along the river to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.


### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Many of the ideas and activities included in the proposed action are a result of input received during public meetings on this issue held in April and June, 2009. We appreciate the public input received to this point and would like to request additional public input on this specific proposal. We would like to receive your comments, suggestions or concerns about the proposed project. Please submit them to as soon as possible to Mike Dechter, Jemez Ranger District at the above letterhead address, phone (575) 829-3535 or by email to [comments-southwestern-santafe-jemez@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southwestern-santafe-jemez@fs.fed.us). We would appreciate receiving your comments by **April 5, 2010**, as they will help ensure a thorough and complete analysis of the proposed project.

Those who submit comments indicating any interest in this project will be kept on the mailing list for this project and similar projects. Those who do not respond to this letter in any way will be eliminated from future mailings on this project.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

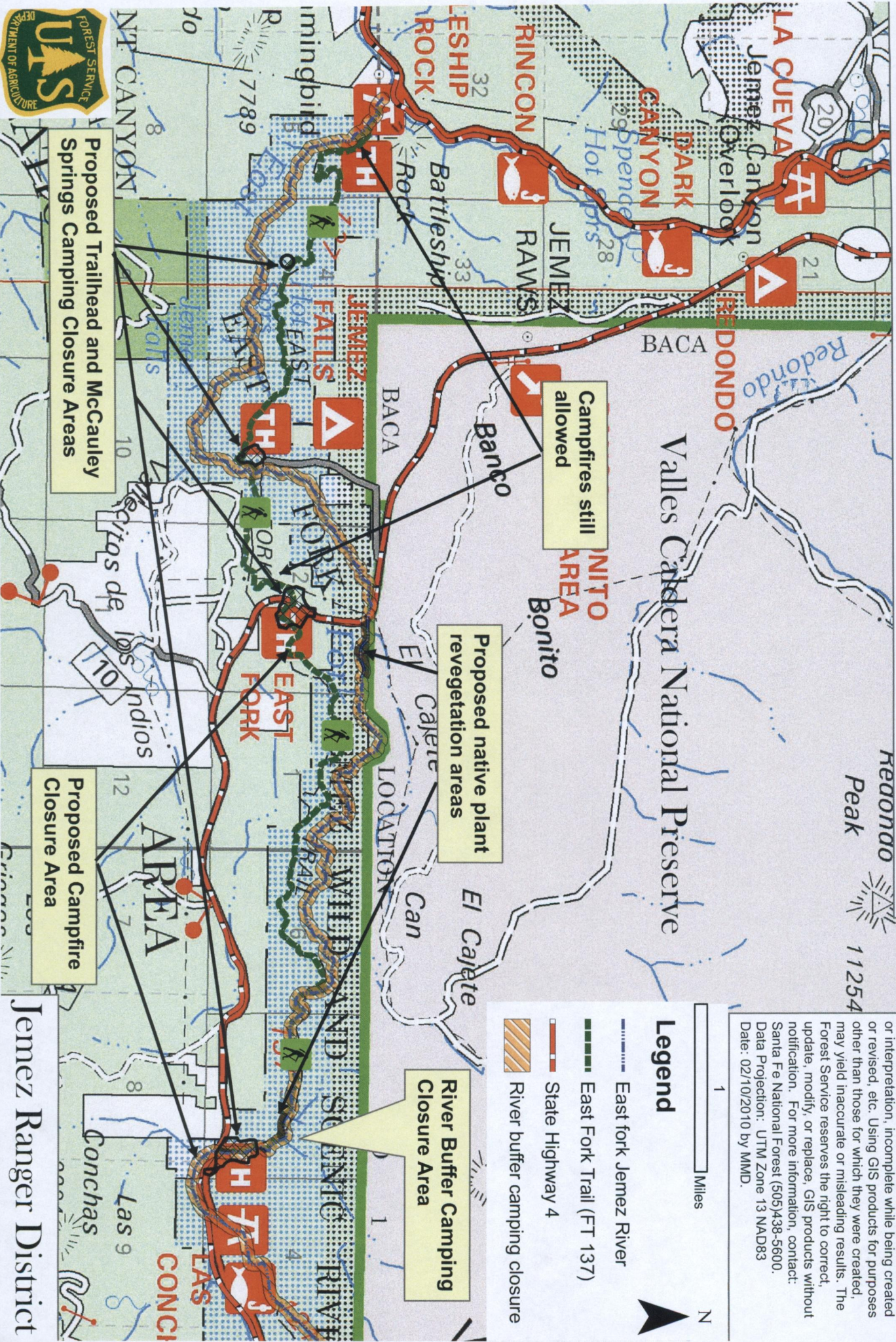
Sincerely,



LINDA RIDDLE

Jemez District Ranger

# East Fork Jemez Wild and Scenic River Recreation Management Project Proposal



**ATTENTION**

This product is reproduced from geospatial information prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created, or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created, may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace. GIS products without notification. For more information, contact: Santa Fe National Forest (505)438-5600. Data Projection: UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Date: 02/10/2010 by MMD.

**Legend**

- East fork Jemez River
- East Fork Trail (FT 137)
- State Highway 4
- River buffer camping closure

Proposed Trailhead and McCauley Springs Camping Closure Areas

River Buffer Camping Closure Area

Jemez Ranger District

