

# CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

*Because life is good.*

## SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST

*The Santa Fe National Forest occupies approximately 1.6 million acres in northern New Mexico. The forest contains four wilderness areas, covering nearly 300,000 acres, as well as two “wild and scenic” rivers prized for their hunting and fishing opportunities. New Mexico’s finest rivers, including the Pecos and Jemez, offer brown and rainbow trout fly-fishing opportunities as well as native fish. The forest is also home to Mexican spotted owls, goshawks, southwestern willow flycatchers, Jemez mountain salamanders, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and New Mexico meadow jumping mice.*

**T**he Jemez Mountains and their 1-million-year-old, collapsed volcanic crater are the crown jewel of the Santa Fe National Forest. These mountains and their waters, wildlife, and recreational opportunities are so unique that numerous protective designations have been provided to the area, including the San Pedro Parks and Dome Wilderness Areas, Bandelier National Monument, the Valles Caldera National Preserve, and the Jemez Mountains National Recreation Area. But these values are at risk from rogue motorized recreationists and the failure of the Santa Fe National Forest to crack down on illegal ORV trail-building.

The Santa Fe released its travel-management plan in July 2008. Because of persistent and informed pressure from citizens and a coalition of conservation groups, the proposal would reduce the forest’s road and motorized trail system by 53 percent. This is a



Photo © Kevin Stillman

Our forests offer respite from the modern world. To continue the traditional way of life in northern New Mexico, the Santa Fe National Forest must be protected from the ongoing damage of unmanaged off-road vehicle recreation.

good start to properly managing motorized uses in the forest, but the plan leaves thousands of acres of land vulnerable to continued destruction.

The Santa Fe National Forest’s plan by the numbers:

- **21,000**: number of acres of land open to continued destruction;
- **2,556**: number of miles of proposed motorized roads and trails;
- **9**: percentage of the current road system the Forest Service can afford to maintain;
- **less than 2**: percentage of forest visitors who use the Santa Fe National Forest primarily for off-road motorized recreation

## FOREST ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK

*“Habitat destruction and the spread of alien species have been ranked as the two greatest threats to biodiversity. Off-road vehicles contribute to both of these.”*

Wilcove D.S., D. Rothstein, J. Dubow, and A.L.E. Phillips, 1998.  
*Quantifying threats to imperiled species in the United States.* Bioscience 48:1-15.

The Forest Service's inability to maintain these routes has led to erosion, habitat destruction, and habitat loss for already threatened and endangered species. This plan puts the history, future, and culture of northern New Mexico at risk from the impacts of unnecessary roads and off-road vehicle users with little respect for the land.

The Santa Fe National Forest's off-road plan would protect more than 250,000 acres from cross-country driving and reduce open-road density in some areas, but more needs to be done to protect wildlife habitat and water quality. There is no plan for enforcement or physically closing user-created roads.



Photo © Dave Menicucci

Off-road use has destroyed this meadow near Forest Road 280 in the Santa Fe National Forest.

The Santa Fe National Forest needs to take a hard look at which roads they need and which roads they can afford and develop a plan that would responsibly manage the forest for future generations.

The time to act is now. The Forest Service must do its job: protect our forests for future generations.

## National Off-road Vehicle Management

Scientists have recognized the impacts of off-road vehicles for decades. Effects on wildlife, habitat, vegetation, soil, air, water, and other forest users are often severe, far-reaching, interconnected, and obvious to even the most casual observers. Motorized access is increasing on public lands and our national forests are being subjected to unprecedented damage. Finally, nearly 40 years after the signing of a presidential order designed to protect our forests from off-road vehicle abuse, the Forest Service is putting regulations in place to protect our public lands from further off-road vehicle damage. The Travel Management Rule forces the Forest Service to manage off-road vehicles and protect our natural heritage, air, water, and wildlife. The rule requires the formal designation of routes and areas open to off-roading — reserving other areas for the benefit of wildlife, plants, and quiet recreation.

## Off-road Vehicle Management in Southwestern National Forests

The Center for Biological Diversity has been working to protect wildlife habitat throughout the Southwest from the ravages of off-road vehicle users for more than 15 years. The Center is committed to being a key part of the implementation of this rule in Arizona and New Mexico by working with conservation groups, government agencies, and off-road vehicle riders to minimize damage and preserve natural resources.

More information on protecting public lands from off-road vehicle damage can be found on the Center for Biological Diversity's Web site at: <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/tmp/>

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