



Briefing Paper

USDA Forest Service ■ Southwestern Region

Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands



Date: March 27, 2018

Project: Forest Plan Revision

Background: The Forest Plan revision process for Cibola's mountain districts (Mt. Taylor, Magdalena, Mountainair, and Sandia) began in 2012. The draft sustainability assessment was released in 2013 for public comment and published in 2014. Public meetings on the wilderness inventory process began in 2014.

In 2015, the Cibola included tribal, federal, state, land grants, SWCD, counties, cities and other cooperating agencies (44 to date) as via Memorandums of Understanding. They organized Landscape Teams around each district and worked with the Cibola as part of the interdisciplinary team. These Landscape Teams helped to build broad support and a shared vision for a diverse range of values and uses.

They co-hosted and co-designed public meetings, improved public outreach, reviewed public comments, and provided input on the draft desired conditions, standards and guidelines, management areas, areas suitable for wilderness recommendation, and draft alternatives. The preliminary draft plan, alternatives and draft maps of potential wilderness with preliminary recommendations were released for public comment in July 2016.

In early 2016, the Landscape Teams and the Cibola jointly designed a Shared Stewardship Workshop to reach out to non-governmental interests to expand the efforts into a true collaborative approach. This resulted in the Cibola Shared Steward Collaborative Council (CSSC) as an oversight group and expanded the local collaborative teams around each landscape at the district level (5 total).

In the fall of 2016, the Landscape Teams worked with the Forest Service to review public comments and incorporate changes to the draft plan and alternatives. In 2017/2018, the Cibola completed review of public comments to finalize the wilderness inventory and evaluation, draft plan, issues and alternatives, including areas recommended for wilderness. These will be released in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).

Key Points:

- The Cibola has consistently promoted a model of working as a partner at the table including the diversity of interests to create a shared vision and find common ground. This approach has stimulated greater understanding and dialogue among the participants even on contentious issues.
- The collaboratives continue to expand their charters and relationships with each other and with the Cibola as a whole with the CSSC. The groups are currently working with the Cibola and other partners (50-75+) to work on projects for FY 2018 and identify collective priorities and projects for FY 2019.
- When the draft plan and DEIS is released, we encourage our partners to jointly review these to find common ground and resolve conflicts as much as possible prior to submitting public comments. This will result in a better outcome in the end; reduce time, costs and objections on the final decision.
- Our goal is to successfully finish and implement the plan and projects with partners, to achieve sustainable outcomes for the diversity of communities, partners, and affected and interested people that rely on and care about the Cibola and the surrounding landscapes.

Next Steps:

- In April/May, the Regional Office will review the Draft Plan and DEIS. In May/June, we will edit the Draft Plan and DEIS based on this review and develop briefing materials for the Washington Office.
- From July through September, we will conduct Washington Office and USDA briefings.
- Following these approvals, we will release the Federal Register Notice of Availability for the Draft Plan and DEIS, and work with the collaborative groups to host open houses and collaborative workshops during the 90-day public comment period.

- During the winter/spring, we will review comments, prepare the FEIS and draft Record of Decision for Regional and Washington office reviews.
- The final Plan, FEIS, and draft Record of Decision, signed by the Forest Supervisor, will be released in 2019 with a 60-day objection period. Objections will be resolved by the Regional Forester. A final decision and implementation are anticipated by the end of 2019.

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