

United States Department of Agriculture
FOREST SERVICE
Region 3
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87101

REPLY TO: 1030 Objective and Policy

March 6, 1972

SUBJECT: Region 3 Policy on Managing National Forest Land
In Northern New Mexico

TO: Forest Supervisors and District Rangers

Paragraph #

1 For several years we have followed a policy on managing the National Forests of Northern New Mexico that is different in certain respects from that applied to other National Forests. While this policy has been in writing since 1967 and was at that time used in field orientation, it has not been distributed. Consequently, many Forest Officers now in place do not have knowledge of it.

2 While the policy is philosophical in many respects, it does involve certain changes in regulations and procedures. Some of these have been made to the extent this can be done under law and in harmony with the perpetuation of the land and its resources. Its philosophical aspects are extremely important, however, and may be the most profound element of the policy statement.

3 A Southwestern Region Policy on Managing National Forest Lands in the Northern Part of New Mexico is given below. I urge you to become intimately familiar with this policy and retain it in your open file for ready reference.

**Southwestern Policy on Managing National Forest Lands
in the Northern Part of New Mexico**

4 One of the great challenges facing the Forest Service in the Southwest is to provide a means by which resources of National Forests and the Forest Service as an organization can contribute most effectively to many of the economic and social needs of the people of Northern New Mexico.

5 Inhabitants of the area, measured by standards in other portions of the Region, are below average in income.

6 Resources of the area, in terms of commercial products, are scarce and they do not provide adequately for the people.

7 Most of the inhabitants are long-time residents. Pueblo Indians, of which there are at least 19 distinct tribes, have their roots deep in antiquity. Their pueblos were in place, many in the exact spot where they now exist, when Coronado penetrated the area in 1540. Spanish American, the dominant culture, stems from the Coronado expedition and those

Paragraph #

who later followed him. These native people love the area and the rural environment it provides. They intend to stay.

8 Rural people in Northern New Mexico, both the Indians and Spanish Americans, live close to the land. It is a part of them—a part of their heritage and culture. To many inhabitants of this area, the land supplies a substantial portion of their living regardless of the economic level involved. Spanish is spoken throughout the area, and local rural people more often than not converse with each other in Spanish. Indian pueblo inhabitants have their own dialects, and these are used within the tribal community.

9 The Forest Service becomes inextricably involved because of the large land area administered by this organization in Northern New Mexico. Many local people live within and adjacent to these public lands. Their economic well being is often tied closely to resources of the National Forests and the manner in which they are utilized. The fact that 22 percent of two northern National Forests, the Carson and Santa Fe, were at one time grant lands, emphasizes the close ties local people have to the land. In the minds of many, rightful owners were unjustly deprived of these properties. To some degree or another, unrest and discontent of local native people over their lot in life have been prevalent since 1848 when the United States gained control of the area. This has manifested itself in periodic uprisings. Some have been violent in nature. Others, less spectacular but perhaps more effective, include thrusts made by local people through civil rights organizations, both National and local. Efforts by native people to gain recognition and consideration can be expected. The Spanish Americans are being encouraged to make their feelings known to the rest of America and they are doing this in many ways. Since many of their objectives are tied to landownership and use, National Forests will continue to be a prime target until the local people are convinced it is in their best interest to live in harmony with public ownership of much of the area.

10 The Forest Service can and must continue to be viable, helpful, and effective arm of Government in Northern New Mexico. To continue such a role during the years ahead when there will be pronounced economic and social changes, philosophies and policies of the organization must be adjusted as required to meet the challenge of the time.

11 First, the uniqueness and value of Spanish American and Indian cultures in the Southwest must be recognized and efforts of the Forest Service must be directed toward their preservation. These cultures should be considered “resources” in much the same sense as Wilderness is considered a resource with Forest Service programs and plans made compatible with their future well-being and continuance.

12 Second, the attitudes of people in the Forest Service, especially those who work in the Southwest, must be attuned to the land and its people and to the unique values involved. Forest Service employees at all levels of the organization must have a burning desire to perpetuate these unique values. An attitude which embodies this philosophy will become a part of every employee’s training.

13 Third, Forest Service objectives and policies must be altered to the extent possible to recognize and be responsive to the culture and peoples.

Paragraph #

14 Recently some adjustments in National Forest administration have been made in an effort to make resources of the National Forests more responsive to needs of local people. Other opportunities are recognized. Many require legislative action or major changes in Department or Service-wide policy to effect. Contracting requirements, personnel ceilings, and traditional philosophies of management and organization need adjustment. For example, Northern New Mexico contains many people who need work. The people love the forests and rangelands and enjoy working in them. Large contracts are not generally compatible with their needs. Types of jobs that provide work for local people are desirable and more of these would be helpful.

15 In livestock management, small permits are desirable. Adjustments in some traditional concepts and policies in range management need revision to best serve local people and the resource. Many of these have recently been made. More are needed.

16 Likewise, availability of dead wood: small-diameter trees for poles, posts, and vigas; and relaxation in advertisement policies will make the timber resource more valuable to the local society. Here again, progress has been made. More can be done.

17 A number of Indian ceremonial areas and religious shrines are located on National Forests. These locations will be recognized and the need of the Indians incorporated into the multiple use planning system.

18 Other opportunities have been identified. Most important is the attitude of Forest Service people toward the uniqueness of Northern New Mexico. To make National Forests contribute most effectively to people of Northern New Mexico, their culture, both Indian and Spanish American, and their traditions must be recognized and treated as special and unique resources. If these unique resources are recognized, they become an asset to the National Forest System. We are determined to make the Forest Service a viable, helpful and productive force in maintaining and improving the many positive values inherent in the Southwest and its people.

19 The Forest Service has an opportunity to become an essential and highly respected influence in Northern New Mexico if it but arises to the challenge. On the other hand, there is no middle ground. Failure to meet the challenge will mean conflict, frustrations, and a loss of prestige that will adversely affect the entire Forest Service and Department of Agriculture. Our course is clear. It should be pursued with vigor and determination.

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