

CARSON NATIONAL FOREST

The Carson National Forest occupies approximately 1.4 million acres in northern New Mexico, views of which can be seen from almost any point in Taos County. The Carson contains the headwaters of some of New Mexico's finest rivers and is home to the Mexican spotted owl, goshawk, Southwestern willow flycatcher, the state's largest elk herd, and the recently reintroduced river otter.

The Carson boasts more than 86,000 acres of wilderness areas, 400-plus miles of mountain streams, and Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico — and all of it could be in peril. The Carson National Forest released its travel-management plan in January 2009. The plan would allow camping and motorized game retrieval on over 54,000 acres of land and would designate enough miles of road to drive from Santa Fe to Vancouver, British Columbia, even though the Forest Service can only afford to adequately maintain less than a quarter of that distance — about 370 miles — each year. The Service's inability to maintain these routes will lead to erosion, habitat destruction, and habitat loss for already threatened and endangered species and compromise watersheds critical to local communities. This plan puts the



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Bull elk in Mondragon Canyon, Camino Real Ranger District, Carson National Forest

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.

Our forests offer a respite from the modern world. In order to preserve the traditional way of life in northern New Mexico, the Carson National Forest must be protected from the ongoing damage of unmanaged motorized recreation. The Carson National Forest can afford to maintain just 17 percent of the roads it plans to keep open. Our land managers must take a hard look at which roads are necessary and develop a plan that would responsibly manage the forest for future generations.

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.

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 30 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 Service to manage off-road vehicles and protect our natural heritage for future generations. 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.



Photo © Garrett Veneklasen

Aspens and wildflowers in Camino Real Ranger District, Carson National Forest

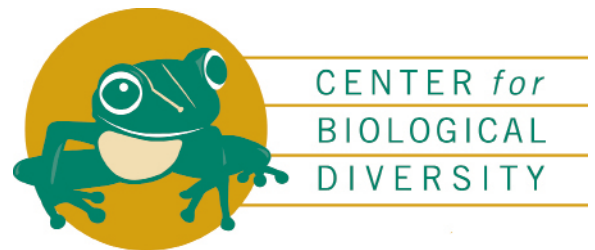


Photo © Garrett Veneklasen

Game refuge in Paradise Park, Camino Real Ranger District, Carson National Forest

Off-road Vehicle Management in Southwestern National Forests

The Center for Biological Diversity has been working to protect wildlife habitat throughout New Mexico and Arizona 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 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/programs/public_lands/off-road_vehicles/travel-management_planning/index.html

or by contacting Cyndi Tuell at ctuell@biologicaldiversity.org or (520) 444-6603.