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A-1	Designation order	R. Fletcher	9/92
A-2	Draft Fonsi	R. Fletcher	9/92
A-3	Establishment Recd	R. Fletcher	9/92
A-4	Draft EA	R. Fletcher	9/92
A-5	Comanche Mngmt Zon	R. Fletcher	9/92
A-6	Location maps	R. Fletcher	9/92
B-1	Public Scoping ltr	G. Terrazas	6/93
B-2	Mailing list	G. Fitzgerald	6/7/93
B-3	Response to letter	F. Wilson	6/9/93
B-4	Fieldtrip phne msg	B. Manzanaez	6/14/93
B-5	Phone converstions	G. Fitzgerald	6/16/93
B-6	Newspaper article	Rio Grande Sun	6/12/93
B-7	Response to letter	N. Lovato	6/22/93
B-8	Response to letter	K. I. Brownlie	6/24/93
B-9	Response to letter	Audubon Society	6/23/93
B-11	Response to letter	USFWS	6/29/93
B-12	News article	Taos News	7/01/93
B-13	Response to letter	NM Environ Dept	6/30/93
B-14	Response to letter	K. Albrecht	7/5/93
B-15	Response to letter	B. Manzanares	7/15/93
B-16	Response to letter	B. Bonneau	8/15/93
B-17	RO Range Scoping	G. Henke	4/1/93
B-18	RO Ecologist Scpng	R. Fletcher	4/1/93
B-19	Matching grnt prsl	W. Moehn	7/27/93
B-20	Commnts on Drft EA	R. Fletcher	7/27/93
B-21	RNA EA direction	W. Moehn	3/12/93
C-1	Mngmnt Area map	R. Fletcher	9/92
C-2	Special Use report	B. Lawrence	8/5/93
C-3	Issue Disposition	G. Fitzgerald	9/23/93
C-4	Monitoring/Impletn	G. Fitzgerald	9/23/93
C-5	Phne Cnvstn/minerl	G. Fitzgerald	9/23/93
C-6	Environ Assessment	G. Fitzgerald	9/24/93

DESIGNATION ORDER

Doc # 1

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Secretary of Agriculture under regulations at 7 CFR 2.42, 36 CFR 251.23, and 36 CFR Part 219, I hereby establish the Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area. It shall be comprised of lands described in the section of the Establishment Record entitled "Location."

The Regional Forester has recommended the establishment of this Research Natural Area in the Record of Decision, Amendment No. 3, for the National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan in 19\_\_\_. That recommendation was the result of an analysis of the factors listed in 36 CFR 219.25 and Forest Service Manual 4063.41. Results of the Regional Forester's analysis are documented in the Carson National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement which are available to the public.

The Regional Forester has re-examined the Comanche Canyon area to examine whether the environmental effects of establishing the area as an RNA have not changed since 19\_\_\_. This analysis is documented in the attached environmental assessment. Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment, it is my decision to adopt Alternative A, to establish Comanche Canyon as an RNA. Alternative A is selected because it provides long-term protection and recognition of pinyon-juniper woodland type. The Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area will be managed in compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and Forest Service Manual direction regarding Research Natural Areas, and in accordance with the management direction identified in the Forest Plan.

The alternative considered was Alternative B, the "No Action" alternative which would continue management of Comanche Canyon as a "proposed RNA". Alternative B was not selected because it would only provide short-term protection of the Comanche Canyon Area.

Alternative B is consistent with the Forest Plan. Although the proposed action (Alternative A) is consistent with the management direction, it is not consistent with the land allocation for the Comanche Canyon Area in the Forest Plan. The Carson Forest Plan is hereby amended to change the allocation of the Cañada Bonito area from "Proposed" to Established RNA. This is a nonsignificant amendment of the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.10(f)).

Legal notice of this decision will appear in the Federal Register. The Forest Supervisor of the Carson National Forest shall notify the public of this decision and mail a copy of the Decision Notice and Designation Order to all persons on the ~~Santa Fe~~ Carson Forest Plan mailing list.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

It has been determined through the environmental assessment that the proposed action is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors (40 CFR 1508.27):

A. Context.

Although this is an addition to the national system of RNA's, both short-term and long-term physical and biological effects are limited to the local area.

B. Intensity

1. There are no known effects on public health and safety.
2. There are no known effects on historic or cultural resources, actual or eligible National Register of Historic Places sites, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers. Effects on ecologically critical areas are minimal.
3. Effects on the human environment are not uncertain, do not involve unique or unknown risks, and are not likely to be highly controversial.
4. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.
5. There are no known cumulative effects.
6. The proposed action would not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.
7. The proposed action is consistent with Federal, State, and local laws and requirements for the protection of the environment.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217. Two (2) copies of the Notice of Appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

The Secretary of Agriculture  
14th & Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Notice of Appeal prepared pursuant to 36 CFR 217.9(b) must be submitted within 45 days from the date of legal notice of this decision. Review by the Secretary is wholly discretionary. If the Secretary has not decided within 15 days of receiving the Notice of Appeal to review the Chief's decision, appellants will be notified that the Chief's decision is the final administrative decision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (36 CFR 217.17(d)).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Doc # 3

ESTABLISHMENT RECORD

COMANCHE CANYON RESEARCH NATURAL AREA

USDA FOREST SERVICE  
SOUTHWESTERN REGION  
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST  
EL RITO RANGER DISTRICT  
RIO ARRIBA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

The undersigned certify that all applicable land management planning and environmental analysis requirements have been met and that boundaries are clearly identified in accordance with FSM 4063.21, Mapping and Recordation and FSM 4063.41 5.e(3) in arriving at this recommendation.

Prepared by: Michele Merola Date 8-31-92  
Michele Merola  
Department of Biology, University of New Mexico

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Graciela Terrazas, District Ranger  
El Rito Ranger District

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
~~Bill Moehn, Acting Forest Supervisor~~  
Carson National Forest

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
John W. Russell, Chairman  
Southwestern Research Natural Area Committee

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
~~Sotero Muniz, Regional Forester~~  
Southwestern Region

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Charles M. Loveless, Station Director  
Rocky Mountain Forest and Range  
Experiment Station

ESTABLISHMENT RECORD

for

COMANCHE CANYON RESEARCH NATURAL AREA

within

Carson National Forest

Rio Arriba County, New Mexico

## JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AREA

The Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area was originally identified as an outstanding example of pinyon-juniper woodland. In addition to its magnificent stands of old-growth pinyon-juniper, the proposed RNA also encompasses some fine stands of sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata). Both of these vegetative communities are of great ecological importance and are extremely widespread in the Southwest.

The long history of intensive use of pinyon-juniper woodlands for firewood, post cutting, grazing, and other uses has made pinyon-juniper "one of the most significant and difficult ecosystems to represent", according to the Regional Guide for the Southwestern Region (USDA Forest Service 1983). Comanche Canyon presents a rare opportunity to preserve a representative example of this biotic community in its natural state in an advanced stage of succession. For example, the average size class for pinyons in disturbed areas is only 5 to 7 inches (7.6 - 12.7 cm) in diameter at ground level (USDA Forest Service 1986a). By contrast, at Comanche Canyon pinyons have an average ground level diameter of 1.2 feet (37 cm) and mature trees attain a height of from 10 to 50 feet (3 - 15.2 m).

The pinyon-juniper woodland at Comanche Canyon is unusual in that it is so remote as to have escaped either cutting for firewood or posts or the gathering of dead and down wood for fuel. Additionally, the last large fires in this area occurred more than 100 years ago (USDA Forest Service, 1986a). These factors, combined with the inaccessibility of the area to domestic livestock, have resulted in the undisturbed nature of the Comanche Canyon ecosystem. This woodland is a unique example of pinyon-juniper in an advanced successional stage with its full complement of dead and down wood, leaf litter, and understory shrubs, forbs and grasses. These characteristics offer the rare opportunity to preserve and utilize Comanche Canyon as a baseline reference for research on old-growth pinyon-juniper and the ecology of succession in these woodlands. Additionally, research opportunities exist in such areas as nutrient cycling, wildlife diversity, and fire ecology.

The uniquely pristine nature of this pinyon-juniper woodland and the importance of preserving and studying this abundant and economically valuable biotic community clearly support the establishment of Comanche Canyon as a Research Natural Area.

## PRINCIPAL DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The most outstanding natural feature of the Comanche Canyon RNA is the stature of the unusually old and large pinyons and junipers. Three species of juniper are found here: Utah juniper Juniperus osteosperma is most common; one-seed juniper Juniperus monosperma and Rocky Mountain juniper Juniperus scopulorum occur less frequently. Both the mature pinyon Pinus edulis and the junipers range from 10 feet (3 m) in height to up to 50 feet (15.2 m) tall. The quantity of dead and down wood in this area is also quite remarkable and unusual.

The area of the RNA encompasses a distinctive ridge or mesa of land covered by old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands, sloping down to a gentle grade on the north side of the RNA where thick pinyon-juniper forest is periodically interspersed with large flats of big sage (Artemisia tridentata). Sagebrush is the second biotic community of interest within the boundaries of the RNA, having been identified in the Regional Guide (USDA Forest Service 1983) as a target vegetative community for protection within the RNA system. The two large sagebrush flats on the west side of the RNA define the westerly boundary of the RNA.

## LOCATION

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located approximately 10 miles (16km) directly west of the village of El Rito, New Mexico (Map 2). The RNA can be found on the Canjilon SE and Ghost Ranch Quadrangles (USGS 7.5') within Township 24N, Range 5E, Sections 1 and 2, and Township 25 North, Range 5 E, Sections 35 and 36. The center of the RNA is located at latitude 36° 21' N, longitude 106°21' W. The proposed RNA comprises approximately 526 acres (210 hectares). Elevation ranges from 7200 feet (2181.8 m) to 7737 feet (2344.5 m).

The Comanche Canyon RNA encompasses a distinctive ridge/mesa approximately 3/4 of a mile (1.2 km) long which rises 337 feet (102 m) above the surrounding area. The site is most easily distinguished by the presence of three distinct knolls, two in the southwestern section of the RNA (at elevations of 7497 ft (2271.8 m) and 7569 ft (2293.6 m)) and one at the end of the ridge in the northeastern section at 7737 ft (2344.5 m) (Map 3). Identification of these landmarks is crucial to finding the RNA. Access to the site is from an unpaved Forest Service road, and requires a hike of approximately 3 miles (4.8 km). A good topographical map and a compass are required to get to the site. A four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended at all times, and is mandatory in rainy weather.



To reach the site from Espanola, follow NM Highway 64 north 18 miles to state road 554 (96 on some maps) to El Rito. Turn right, traveling north on 554 (96) for 10 miles (16 km). Turn left on unpaved Forest Service Road 137, heading west. Follow 137 for 8.9 miles (14.24 km) to the intersection with Forest Service Road 23 on your left. Turn on to Road 23 and follow it uphill 1/2 mile (0.8 km). At the top of the hill, there is a sign for Road 23E straight ahead, and several other Forest Service Roads branch off to your left. Park just beyond the sign for Road 23E, where a large earthen berm cuts off the road from vehicle traffic. From this point, hike in along Road 23E (heading southwest) for approximately 1.75 miles (2.8 km). You will pass Road 23E1 branching off to your left and a couple of other unmarked dirt roads to your right; stay on the main road. From 1.75 miles in, a compass bearing of 285 degrees northwest will take you to the knoll on the northeastern end of the RNA.

As these distances are hard to estimate when walking, it is best to check after walking approximately 30 minutes by walking off Road 23E to the north to a clearing and looking for the distinct knolls of the RNA described above. Road 23E runs along a ridge top, so if you can clear the trees you should get a view of the RNA and take a compass reading on the site. From Road 23E, it is approximately a one mile (1.6 km) hike through the forest and over several small ridges in to the RNA.

The exact location of the RNA is described as follows:

A certain tract or parcel of land situated within the Juan Jose Lovato Grant, in Sections 1 and 2, Township 24 North, Range 5 East and Sections 31 and 36, Township 25 North, Range 5 East, New Mexico Principal Meridian, County of Rio Arriba, El Rito Ranger District in Comanche Canyon and being more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at a point where the line between Sections 1 and 36 along the Sixth Standard Parallel, Township 24 and 25, North, Range 5 East intersects Comanche Canyon, whence the Standard Corner between Sections 31 and 36 on said parallel line bears East 3860.00 feet; THENCE from said point of beginning in a northeasterly direction along said canyon to the junction of the first drainage which drains into Comanche Canyon; THENCE in a northeasterly direction along said drainage 600.00 feet; THENCE leaving said drainage and ascend in a northwesterly direction to the southwesterly end of a clearing at the bottom of a small drainage which drains southwesterly; THENCE along said drainage in a southwesterly direction to a point where said draw intersects the third main drainage which drains southerly; THENCE in a southwesterly direction along same drainage 2380 feet; THENCE leaving said drainage and ascend in a southeasterly direction

A

along a small drainage to a point on the southwesterly end of a clearing;

THENCE in a southeasterly direction over a small knob at the southwesterly end of same clearing to the bottom of Comanche Canyon;

THENCE in a northeasterly direction along said canyon to the intersection of the Sixth Standard Parallel, the POINT AND PLACE OF BEGINNING.

Said tract or parcel of land contains 526.00 acres.

NOTE: Area determined by a LASICO GRAPHIC DIGITIZER, SERIES 1280.

#### AREA BY COVER TYPES

The distribution of cover types was determined by field surveys conducted in July and August, 1992, and from interpretation of 1990 aerial photography. Table 1 outlines the estimated total area of vegetation types based on the Society of American Foresters (SAF) forest type system (Eyre 1980) and the Kuchler Potential Natural Vegetation system (Kuchler 1966). Map 4 depicts the distribution of vegetation types on the candidate Research Natural Area.

Table 1. Estimated Areas of Vegetation Types in the Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area

<u>Type</u>	<u>SAF Cover Type</u>	<u>Kuchler PNV Type</u>	<u>Surface Area</u>	
			<u>Acres</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
Pinyon-Juniper	239	21	436.0	174.0
Great Basin Sagebrush	none	32	76.5	30.6
Grama-Galleta Steppe	none	47	13.5	5.4
		TOTAL:	526.0	210.0

## PHYSICAL AND CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

The RNA encompasses a distinctive ridge which rises 337 feet (102 m) above the surrounding area to a maximum elevation of 7737 feet (2344.5 m). The south side of the ridge drops off fairly steeply to a series of sandstone cliffs which lead down to an intermittent stream in the canyon bottom. The north side of the ridge slopes gently downward into some plains at an elevation of approximately 7400 feet (2242.4 m) to another drainage which forms the northern boundary of the RNA. The RNA is distinguished by three distinctive knobs of land, as described in detail under "Location" above. The slope downward from the two westerly knobs leads to the drainage which defines the west boundary of the RNA at the minimum elevation of 7200 feet (2181.8 m).

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located within the subhumid climate of New Mexico's north central mountains. Summers are relatively cool, snows are moderate, and annual insolation is high. The closest long range weather station is located at Abiquiu Dam, located approximately 8 miles (12.8 km) southwest of the site; data reported was collected over the period 1957 - 1981.

Annual precipitation is highly variable, ranging from 12.7 to 21.9 inches (32.3 - 55.6 cm), and is divided between summer rains and winter snows. Frost-free days average about 160 - 180 per year, and annual insolation is at 80% (Tuan et al. 1973). Average temperature ranges from 28 - 72°F (-2 - 22.2°C), with a low of -25°F (-31.6°C) and a high of 95° (35°C). Annual snowfall ranges from 14 to 40 inches (35.6 - 101.6 cm) (Morris & Haggard 1985).

## DESCRIPTION OF VALUES

### Flora

Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) is the dominant tree throughout the area of the proposed Comanche Canyon RNA, with the exception of a few open stands of sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and some small grassland meadows. Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) is often codominant; one-seed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*) and Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) are present as well, but are far less common. The vegetation of the proposed RNA has remained undisturbed by either the activities of people, livestock, or fire for more than a century. Consequently, the RNA is thickly forested with old-growth pinyons and junipers. Pinyons here may attain a height of up to 50 feet (15.2 m) and a diameter at breast height (DBH) of one foot (.3 m).

Luxurious pinyon-juniper woodland covers the ridge/mesa top within the proposed RNA as well as the slope and plain of the northwest bajada coming off the ridge. Shrubs are poorly represented within this forest type, but forbs and graminoids are plentiful. Hymenoxys richardsonii, Bahia dissecta and Erysimum capitatum are some of the principal species of forbs; Bouteloua gracilis is the most common of the many grasses. Yucca baccata and various species of cacti (Opuntia, Echinocereus, Coryphanthus, and Mammillaria spp.) are also found here. Most of the pinyon-juniper woodland at Comanche Canyon is most closely associated with the Pinus edulis/Bouteloua gracilis habitat type (PIED/BOGR HT) (all HT-habitat types referenced are from USDA Forest Service 1987). Ponderosa pine forest surrounds the RNA, stopping at the drainage which bounds the site.

Mountain mahogany (Cercocarpus montanus) becomes codominant with pinyon in the southwestern portion of the RNA. This is the Pinus edulis/Cercocarpus montanus (PIED/CEMO) habitat type. The trees are far more widely spaced here, and ground cover is sparse. Aside from the mountain mahogany, no other shrubs are found here. A few widely scattered individuals of Eriogonum jamesii or Astragalus lentiginosus may be found, but otherwise the ground is barren between the trees, with either bare soil or large rocks of red shale. On the south-facing slope of the north-western most knob, Solidago rigida becomes fairly common.

Big sage (Artemisia tridentata) is a common shrub within the proposed RNA, occurring in both pinyon/sage woodland (PIED/ARTR HT) and nearly pure stands of sagebrush, especially in the south-westerly portion of the area.

Pinyon and juniper are also found on the sandstone cliffs on the southeast side of the ridge; this is an example of a Scarp Woodland HT. Atriplex canescens and Chrysothamnus nauseosus are found sporadically on these rocky slopes, which support only a few forbs and grasses. The bluffs graduate into a rich vegetative community at the base of Comanche Canyon along the intermittent drainage which forms the southeasterly boundary of the RNA. It is here that the pinyons and junipers reach their maximum height; also found here are Pinus ponderosa, Pseudotsuga menziesii, and Quercus gambelii. Shrubs, forbs, and grasses are luxuriant, including Rhus trilobata, Ipomopsis aggregata, Penstemon barbatus, Sisymbrium linearifolium, and Bromus ciliatus. Quercus gambelii is also found in association with pinyons and junipers along the very top of the northwestern slope of the ridge; this is the PIED/QUGA habitat type.

The vegetative communities of the proposed Comanche Canyon RNA are mapped out in detail in Map 4; representative vegetative community surveys are contained in the Appendix.

The following plant list was compiled from a series of site visits to Comanche Canyon during July and August, 1992:

Abbreviated Plant List for Comanche Canyon RNA \*

Common Name

Latin Name

GRASSES AND GRASS-LIKE PLANTS:

Slender wheatgrass	Agropyron trachycaulum
Rough bent	Agrostis scabra
Red three-awn	Aristida longiseta
Side-oats grama	Bouteloua curtipendula
Blue grama	Bouteloua gracilis
Fringed brome	Bromus ciliatus
Deer sedge	Carex rossii
Galleta	Hilaria jamesii
Junegrass	Koeleria cristata
Ring muhly	Muhlenbergia torreyi
Indian rice grass	Oryzopsis hymenoides
Mutton grass	Poa fendleriana
Bottlebrush squirreltail	Sitanion hystrix

FORBS:

Rock jasmine	Androsace septentrionalis
Plains milkweed	Asclepias brachystephana
Beakpod milkvetch	Astragalus lentigenosus
Yellow ragweed	Bahia dissecta
Paintbrush	Castilleja sp.
New Mexico thistle	Cirsium neomexicanum
Pincushion cactus	Coryphantha sp.
Claret cup cactus	Echinocereus triglochidiatus
Fleabane	Erigeron sp.
Sulfur flower	Eriogonum jamesii var. jamesii
Winged buckwheat	Eriogonum alatum
Western wallflower	Erysimum capitatum
Spurge	Euphorbia prostrata
Mountain white ragweed	Hymenopappus newberryi
Pingue bitterweed	Hymenoxys richardsonii
Many-flowered gilia	Ipomopsis multiflora
Skyrocket	Ipomopsis aggregata
Peppergrass	Lepidium montanum
Bladderpod	Lesquerella sp.
Puccoon	Lithospermum multiflorum
Nipple cactus	Mammillaria sp.
Yellow sweet clover	Melilotus albus
Four o'clock	Mirabilis multiflora
Scarlet penstemon	Penstemon barbatus
Linaria penstemon	Penstemon linarioides

Desert mountain phlox  
Paper daisy  
Purple mustard  
Rigid goldenrod  
Globemallow  
Easter daisy

Phlox austromontana  
Psilotrophe tagetina  
Sisymbrium linearifolium  
Solidago rigida  
Sphaeralcea sp.  
Townsendia excapa

HALF-SHRUBS, SHRUBS AND TREES:

Big sage  
Fringed sage  
Four-wing saltbush  
Mountain mahogany  
Rabbitbrush/Chamisa  
One-seed juniper  
Rocky Mountain juniper  
Utah juniper  
Pale wolfberry  
New Mexican prickly pear  
Cane cholla  
Pinyon pine  
Ponderosa pine  
Douglas fir  
Gambel's oak  
Wavyleaf oak  
Squawbush  
Banana yucca  
Soaptree yucca

Artemisia tridentata  
Artemisia frigida  
Atriplex canescens  
Cercocarpus montanus  
Chrysothamnus nauseosus  
Juniperus monosperma  
Juniperus scopulorum  
Juniperus osteosperma  
Lycium pallidum  
Opuntia phaeacantha  
Opuntia imbricata  
Pinus edulis  
Pinus ponderosa  
Pseudotsuga menziesii  
Quercus gambelii  
Quercus undulatus  
Rhus trilobata  
Yucca baccata  
Yucca glauca

\*observed by Michele Merola, University of New Mexico

Fauna

The following animal list is derived from personal observations made upon visits to the site in July and August, 1992 (marked with an asterisk) and a species list generated by the MBISON data base for pinyon-juniper and sagebrush habitat types, for Rio Arriba County, New Mexico (Braun 1992). The database lists species typically inhabiting these habitat types, and is not a list of species observed in the proposed RNA.

Potential Animal List for Comanche Canyon RNA

BIRDS:

Bluebird, Western\*  
Bluebird, Mountain  
Bushtit\*  
Chat, Yellow-breasted  
Chickadee, Black-capped  
Chickadee, Mountain\*

Sialia mexicana  
Sialia currucoides  
Psaltriparus minimus  
Icteria virens  
Parus atricapillus  
Parus gambeli

Creeper, Brown  
Crossbill, Red  
Crow, American  
Dove, Mourning\*  
Eagle, Bald  
Eagle, Golden  
Falcon, Prairie  
Flicker, Northern\*  
Flycatcher, Ash-throated  
Flycatcher, Gray  
Flycatcher, Dusky  
Flycatcher, Pacific-slope  
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray  
Goshawk, Northern  
Grouse, Blue  
Hawk, Swainson's  
Hawk, Red-tailed  
Hawk, Rough-legged  
Hawk, Ferruginous  
Hummingbird, Rufous  
Hummingbird, Black-chinned  
Hummingbird, Broad-tailed  
Jay, Pinyon\*  
Jay, Steller's\*  
Jay, Scrub\*  
Kestrel, American  
Kingbird, Eastern  
Kingbird, Cassin's  
Kingbird, Western  
Kinglet, Ruby-crowned  
Magpie, Black-billed  
Nighthawk, Common  
Nutcracker, Clark's\*  
Nuthatch, White-breasted\*  
Nuthatch, Red-breasted\*  
Nuthatch, Pygmy\*  
Owl, Saw-whet, Northern  
Owl, Flammulated  
Owl, Great-horned  
Owl, Long-eared  
Owl, Spotted, Mexican  
Owl, Pygmy, Northern  
Phoebe, Say's  
Quail, Gambel's  
Raven, Common\*  
Redstart, American  
Robin, American  
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied  
Shrike, Loggerhead  
Siskin, Pine\*  
Sparrow, Chipping\*  
Swallow, Violet-Green\*

*Certhia americana*  
*Loxia curvirostra*  
*Corvus brachyrhynchos*  
*Zenaidura macroura*  
*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*  
*Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*  
*Falco mexicanus*  
*Colaptes auratus*  
*Myiarchus cinerascens*  
*Empidonax wrightii*  
*Empidonax oberholseri*  
*Empidonax difficilis difficilis*  
*Polioptila caerulea*  
*Accipiter gentilis*  
*Dendragapus obscurus*  
*Buteo swainsoni*  
*Buteo jamaicensis*  
*Buteo lagopus*  
*Buteo regalis*  
*Selasphorus rufus*  
*Archilochus alexandri*  
*Selasphorus platycercus*  
*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*  
*Cyanocitta stelleri*  
*Aphelocoma coerulescens*  
*Falco sparverius sparverius*  
*Tyrannus tyrannus*  
*Tyrannus vociferans*  
*Tyrannus verticalis*  
*Regulus calendula*  
*Pica pica*  
*Chordeiles minor*  
*Nucifraga columbiana*  
*Sitta carolinensis*  
*Sitta canadensis*  
*Sitta pygmaea*  
*Aegolius acadicus*  
*Otus flammeolus*  
*Bubo virginianus*  
*Asio otus*  
*Strix occidentalis lucida*  
*Glaucidium gnoma*  
*Sayornis saya*  
*Callipepla gambelii*  
*Corvus corax*  
*Setophaga ruticilla*  
*Turdus migratorius*  
*Sphyrapicus varius varius*  
*Lanius ludovicianus*  
*Carduelis pinus*  
*Spizella passerina*  
*Tachycineta thalassina*

Swift, White-throated\*  
 Tanager, Western\*  
 Thrush, Hermit\*  
 Thrush, Varied  
 Thrush, Swainson's  
 Titmouse, Plain\*  
 Towhee, Rufous-sided\*  
 Turkey, Wild  
 Vireo, Solitary\*  
 Vulture, Turkey  
 Warbler, Townsend's\*  
 Warbler, Black-throated Gray\*  
 Warbler, Grace's  
 Warbler, Virginia's\*  
 Warbler, Wilson's\*  
 Warbler, Orange-crowned  
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped\*  
 Warbler, Nashville\*  
 Waxwing, Bohemian  
 Wood-Pewee, Western\*  
 Woodpecker, Downy  
 Woodpecker, Hairy\*  
 Wren, Canyon  
 Wren, Bewick's  
 Yellowthroat, Common

Aeronautes saxatalis  
 Piranga ludoviciana  
 Catharus guttatus  
 Ixoreus naevius  
 Catharus ustulatus  
 Parus inornatus  
 Pipilo erythrophthalmus  
 Meleagris gallapavo  
 Vireo solitarius  
 Cathartes aura  
 Dendroica townsendi  
 Dendroica nigrescens  
 Dendroica graciae graciae  
 Vermivora virginiae  
 Wilsonia pusilla  
 Vermivora celata  
 Dendroica coronata  
 Vermivora ruficapilla  
 Bombycilla garrulus pallidiceps  
 Contopus sordidulus  
 Picoides pubescens  
 Picoides villosus  
 Catherpes mexicanus conspersus  
 Thryomanes bewickii  
 Geothlypis trichas

MAMMALS:

Bat, Hoary  
 Bat, Brown, Big  
 Bat, Silver-haired  
 Bat, Myotis, Brown, Little  
 Bear, Black\*  
 Chipmunk, Least\*  
 Cottontail, Nuttall's  
 Cottontail, Desert\*  
 Coyote  
 Deer, Mule\*  
 Elk\*  
 Ermine  
 Fox, Gray  
 Fox, Red  
 Gopher, Pocket, Northern  
 Jackrabbit, Black-tailed\*  
 Lion, Mountain  
 Mouse, Pinyon  
 Mouse, Western Harvest  
 Mouse, Rock  
 Mouse, Northern Grasshopper  
 Mouse, White-Footed  
 Mouse, Deer  
 Porcupine

Lasiurus cinerea  
 Eptesicus fuscus  
 Lasionycteris noctivagans  
 Myotis lucifugus  
 Ursus americanus  
 Eutamias minimum  
 Snyiagus nuttallii  
 Snyiagus audubonii  
 Canis latrans  
 Odocoileus hemionus  
 Cervus elaphus  
 Mustela erminea muricus  
 Urocyon cinereoargenteus  
 Vulpes vulpes  
 Thomomys talpoides  
 Lepus californicus  
 Felis concolor  
 Peromyscus truei  
 Reithrodontomys megalotis  
 Peromyscus difficilis  
 Onychomys leucogaster  
 Peromyscus leucopus  
 Peromyscus maniculatus  
 Erethizon dorsatum



Pronghorn  
Raccoon  
Ringtail  
Shrew, Dusky  
Skunk, Striped  
Squirrel, Ground, Golden-mantled  
Squirrel, Rock  
Weasel, Long-tailed  
Woodrat, White-throated  
Woodrat, Bushy-tailed

*Antilocapra americana*  
*Procyon lotor*  
*Bassariscus astutus*  
*Sorex monticolus*  
*Mephitis mephitis*  
*Spermophilus lateralis*  
*Spermophilus variegatus*  
*Mustela frenata*  
*Neotoma algigula*  
*Neotoma cinerea*

REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS:

Frog, Tree, Canyon  
Lizard, Eastern Fence\*  
Lizard, Side-blotched  
Lizard, Short-horned\*  
Lizard, Tree  
Rattlesnake, Western\*  
Snake, Night  
Snake, Blind, New Mexico  
Whiptail, Colorado checkered\*

*Hyla arenicolor*  
*Sceloporus undulatus*  
*Uta stansburiana*  
*Phrynosoma douglassi*  
*Urosaurus ornatus*  
*Crotalus viridis*  
*Hypsiglena torquata*  
*Leptotyphlops dulcis*  
*Chemidophorus tessellatus*

\*observed by Michele Merola, University of New Mexico

Geology

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located in the Southern Rocky Mountain physiographic province and sits on the Chinle Formation of the Triassic period, which is underlain by layers of rock from the Permian period, the Yeso and Abo Formations. The area was formed by a massive uplifting of a precambrian complex of gneiss underlying the formations, which lifted these layers upward and resulted in the eroding of the Mississippian complex to expose the Chinle Formation at the surface (Hunt 1978).

Soils

Soils at the site are formed from sandstone and shale, primarily from the Triassic period. Soils are classified as Eutroboralfs, mesic, sandy-mixed or sandy loam residuum (Hunt 1978) and are highly variable. The soil on the mesa/ridge top is very fine and is covered with a layer of small stones. The soils on the slopes off the mesa and the knolls are also fine, but these areas are very cobbly. The southern edge of the mesa is mostly steep sandstone cliffs and rocky outcroppings with very little soil, and the western edge of the mesa is almost entirely red shale, also with little soil. Soils in the pinyon-juniper woodland and in the sagebrush areas is very fine and has a moderate organic material content. Erosion potential is high in disturbed or exposed areas.

## Lands

All the land in the proposed RNA was originally part of the North half of the Juan Jose Lobato Land Grant, which was acquired by the U.S. Rural Rehabilitation Corporation (Farm Security Administration) in 1942. The land was transferred into National Forest Service administration and custody in 1946, then quitclaimed to the United States and designated as part of the Carson National Forest in 1952 under Public Law 419. This land is subject to the Act of March 1, 1911 ("Weeks Law") and is therefore closed to mineral entry under the 1872 Mining Law, but open to mineral leasing.

## Cultural Resources

The El Rito Ranger District is rich in cultural resources. As of 1986, 81 cultural sites had been identified, estimated to be only 2% of the total sites in the area (USDA Forest Service 1986a). In the Comanche Canyon area, lithic scatter and signs of early campsites predominate, as this was apparently a bountiful hunting area. Points found in the area date the remains to the Archaic (pre-Pueblo) Period, from 1800 B.C. to A.D. 900. There is one known site of lithic scatter in the vicinity of the RNA, but it does not occur within the RNA boundaries (Garcia 1992).

## IMPACTS AND POSSIBLE CONFLICTS

### Mineral Resources

Mineral surveys in Rio Arriba County have shown a moderate to high potential for copper with associated uranium and silver in the Cutler and Chinle formations. Even if such minerals are present, however, it is predicted that they would be insubstantial (Ridgley and Light 1986). If the Comanche Canyon site is designated as an RNA, a recommendation will be made to withdraw the RNA from Mineral Location and Leasing.

### Grazing

The area of the proposed RNA is not currently closed to grazing, although historically use by domestic livestock has been extremely low due to the inaccessibility of the area and the ephemeral nature of the water supply. There are signs of very light cattle usage in the drainage forming the southern boundary of the RNA. The area should be monitored over time to ensure that grazing does not become a problem on the RNA, in which case some fencing may be required in the future. There is no need for a fence at the present time.

## Timber

The area is primarily forested by pinyon-juniper and other pinyon associations; ponderosa forest surrounds, but is not included in, the boundary of the RNA.

Total forested:	436 acres (174 ha)
Commercial forest:	none

## Watershed Values

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located within the Rio Grande hydrologic unit (USDI Geological Survey 1974). Ephemeral streams bordering the RNA flow eventually into the Chama River, about 7 miles (11.2 km) to the southwest. The Chama River is a major tributary of the Rio Grande.

## Recreation Values

Due to the relative isolation and inaccessibility of the site, this area is used only occasionally for hunting. There should be no conflicts between this use and potential research.

## Wildlife and Plant Values

The RNA is considered potential habitat for the endangered Mexican spotted owl Strix occidentalis lucida; however, there are no reports of actual observations of this species within the boundaries or in the area of the RNA.

## Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, National Recreation Area Values

None of the above congressionally designated areas have been proposed for the Comanche Canyon Area. The boundary of the Chama River Canyon Wilderness and Contiguous Roadless Area is just several miles west of the site.

## Transportation Plans

This RNA must be accessed by hiking in off of a Forest Service system road more than one mile away. There are no roads within the RNA, and none will be permitted. There are no transportation plans which would adversely affect the RNA.

## Utility Corridor Plans

No existing or potential utility corridor plans exist in the vicinity of this RNA. No corridors will be permitted within the RNA.

### MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Carson National Forest Plan prescribes that there will be no harvest of timber or firewood and no grazing of livestock on Research Natural Areas. The prescription also prohibits off-road vehicle travel, open campfires, the introduction of non-native plant or animal species, road or trail construction, and recreational use such that degradation would result. Low intensity, non-motorized dispersed recreation activities are permitted provided they do not significantly modify the area, or threaten or impair the research or educational value of the area. No flora, fauna, or other materials may be collected other than for research approved by the Station Director.

#### 1. Vegetation Management

The Forest Plan provides that prescribed natural fires will be allowed within the study area unless they threaten persons or property outside the area or the uniqueness of the RNA. Fire suppression action will be limited to the use of hand tools; fire retardant chemicals are prohibited unless necessary to protect life and property outside the study area. A fire management plan specific to the Comanche Canyon RNA will be developed at a later time as research objectives are established.

### ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS AND PROTECTION

Administration and protection of the Comanche Canyon RNA will be the responsibility of the Carson National Forest. The District Ranger, El Rito Ranger District, El Rito, New Mexico, has direct responsibility.

The Director of the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, or his designee, will be responsible for any studies or research conducted in the area, and requests to conduct research in the area will be referred to him. He, or his designee, will evaluate research proposals and coordinate all studies and research in the area with the District Ranger.

All plant and animal specimens collected in the course of research conducted in the area will be properly preserved and maintained within university or federal agency herbaria and museums, approved by the Rocky Mountain Station Director. All data

and reports from research conducted on the RNA shall be maintained and archived in such a manner as to facilitate the exchange and transfer of information among Stations and scientists.

Records for the Comanche Canyon RNA will be maintained in the following offices:

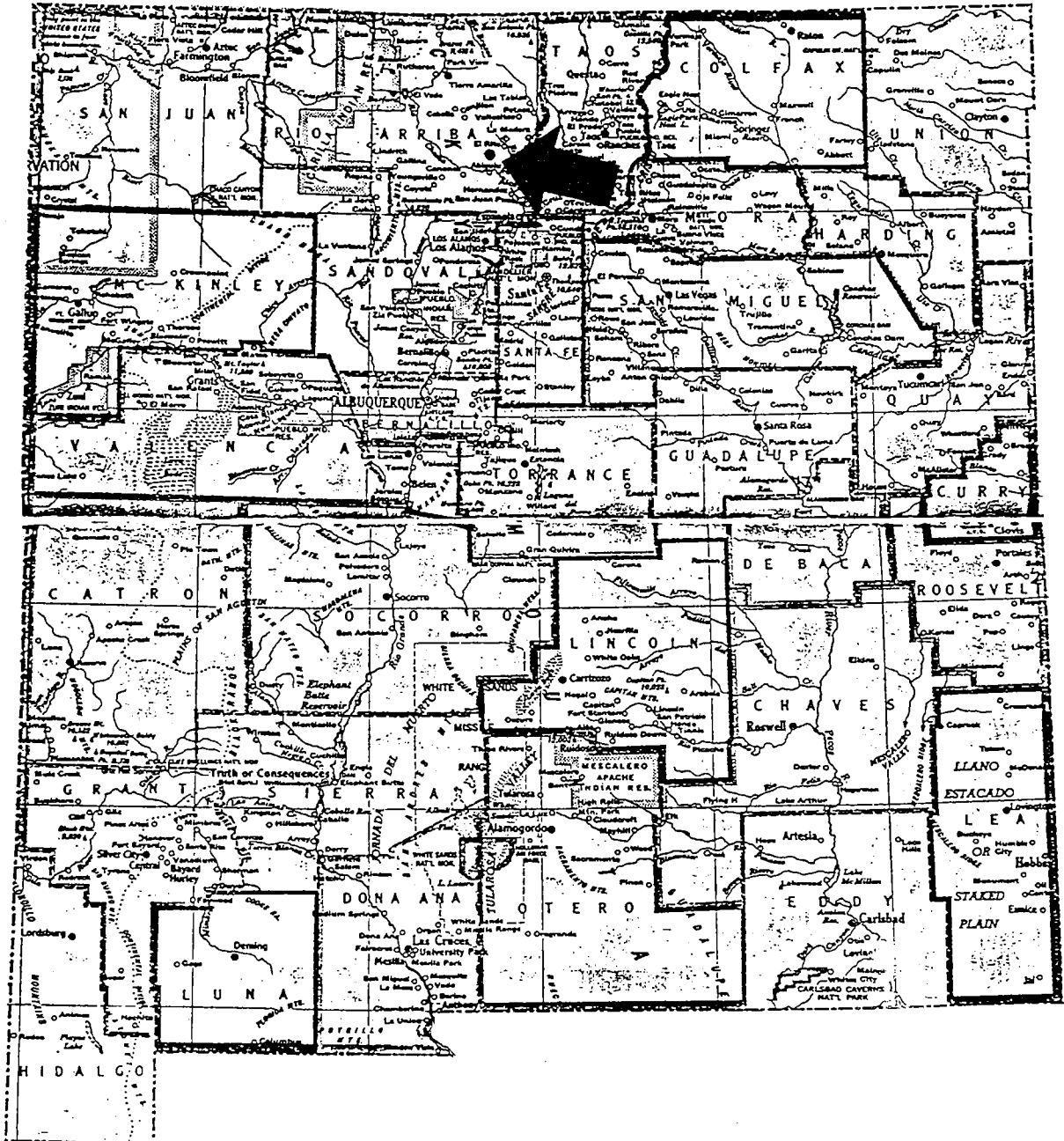
Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, NM  
Rocky Mountain Station, Fort Collins, CO  
Carson National Forest, Taos, NM  
District Ranger, El Rito Ranger District, El Rito, NM

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- Ridgley, Jennie L., and Thomas D. Light. 1986. Mineral Resource Potential Map of the Chama River Canyon Wilderness and Contiguous Roadless Area, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. U.S. Geologic Survey, Map MF-1523-B.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu, Cyril E. Everard, Jerold G. Widdison, and Iven Bennett. 1973. The Climate of New Mexico, revised edition. New Mexico State Planning Office, Santa Fe, NM. 197 pp.
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- USDA Forest Service. 1986a. Environmental Impact Statement, Carson National Forest Plan. USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, NM.

- USDA Forest Service. 1986b. Carson National Forest Plan. USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, NM.
- USDA Forest Service. 1987. Forest and Woodland Habitat Types (Plant Associations) of Northern New Mexico and Northern Arizona. Edition 2. USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque. U.S. Government Printing Office: 1992-675-321.
- USDA Forest Service. 1989. Decision Memo: Carson Forest Plan Amendment #3, October 1989. USDA Forest Service, Carson National Forest, Rio Arriba County, NM.
- USDI Geological Survey. 1974. Hydrologic Unit Map of New Mexico.
- Weber, William A. 1976. Rocky Mountain Flora. Colorado Associated University Press, Boulder, Colorado. 479 pp.

Map 1. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in North Central New Mexico



**NEW MEXICO**

SCALE  
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 Miles  
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 Kilometers

State Capitals: ●  
County Seats: ○

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- Slide 1 Old-growth pinyon-juniper woodland on the mesa top; note quantity of dead and down wood.
- Slide 2 Steep bluffs dotted with pinyon pine and juniper on the southerly edge of the mesa; note large Rocky Mountain juniper in the foreground.
- Slide 3 Ponderosa pine, Gambel's oak and Rocky Mountain juniper are all common along the intermittent streams.
- Slide 4 View looking toward most southerly knoll on RNA; Cerro Pedernal and Abiquiu Reservoir are in the background.
- Slide 5 Great Basin Sagebrush at edge of pinyon-juniper woodland.
- Slide 6 Meadow (grama-galleta steppe) along southerly intermittent drainage; Psilotrophe tagetina is in bloom.
- Slide 7 View from southerly tip of mesa/ridge top looking toward northwesterly knoll.

Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area

September 1992

Doc # 4

Alternatives and Environmental Consequences

Alternative A, Proposed Action

Alternative A would designate a 526 acre (210 hectares) north-central New Mexico as the "Comanche Canyon" Research Natural Area. Management of the area limits recreation use to non-motorized use of existing trails, no timber harvest, etc. (summarize Forest Plan direction, cite pages in FP)

The environmental consequences of Alternative A are described in the EIS for Carson National Forest Plan (pages xxx). These consequences include short-term losses of opportunities to change vegetation conditions through management, etc. (summarize from Forest Plan EIS). There are no significant cumulative effects of the establishing of the RNA. [what about positive effects, there is apparently no difference between A and B]

The direction in the Forest Plan for established RNA's also includes reasonably foreseeable actions such as withdrawal of the area from mineral entry. The general consequences of withdrawal are discussed in the Forest Plan EIS (pages xxx). Site-specific consequences will be disclosed in more detail if or when mineral entry is proposed for withdrawal.

Alternative B, No Action

This alternative continues management according to direction in the Forest Plan (pages xxx) for a "proposed" RNA. This management would include limiting recreation to non-motorized uses of existing trails, no timber harvest, etc. (summarize Forest Plan direction, cite pages in Forest Plan). There are no significant cumulative effects of this alternative. [this may not be the case, what about loss of biological and research values. As it is now they are suggesting that there is no difference between A and B.]

The environmental consequences of Alternative B, the "No Action" alternative, are as described in the EIS for the Carson Forest Plan (pages xxx). These consequences include short-term losses of opportunities to change the vegetation conditions through management, etc. (summarize from Forest Plan EIS).

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In the process of updating information to determine whether or not conditions had changed since adoption of the Forest Plan (or as part of the Forest Plan monitoring process), the New Mexico Natural

Private  
Comanche Canyon  
Cultural  
Agency

Heritage Program, The Nature Conservancy, Livestockman's Association, range permittees, mineral exploration companies, etc. were contacted. The following comments were received and addressed as indicated (or no comments were received):

[Insert parties contacted such as:

Natural Heritage Program -- supported establishment of the RNA.

Livestockman's Association -- no problem with establishment of the RNA because boundary changes were made at the time the Forest Plan was adopted by the Regional Forester.]

## Comanche Canyon RNA Management Zone

The RNA management zone is designated as that area subject to special management guidelines intended to maintain or enhance the landscape level ecosystem processes to ensure long term viability of the targeted communities within the RNA. This includes ecosystem management strategies which address the maintenance of natural fire regimes; watershed properties including sediment transport, water quality, and in-stream flow requirements; faunal distributions, movement and use; and floristic spatial-temporal distributions. Such RNA Management Zones are often necessary because RNA's are generally small in size relative to their surrounding landscapes. Therefore, landscape scale processes can have significant impact on RNA condition. The RNA Management Zone is not intended to preclude multiple-use, but only to ensure that such uses are compatible with, and do not degrade RNA values.

At Comanche Canyon, the RNA Management Zone encompasses the Comanche Creek watershed, with U.S. Highway 84 forming the lower boundary of the watershed, and the rim of the canyon forming the upper boundary (Figure X). The zone boundary was designed to encompass an area where the management of fires can be effectively addressed. Fires begun within this boundary, particularly those in the lower watershed, are expected to have an impact on the RNA. Ones begun to the outside of the Management Zone are expected to have a much lower probability of impact. The RNA Management zone is approximately 24,173 acres (9,786 ha) and currently includes livestock grazing, timber harvest, and fuel wood gathering uses.



Photo 11. View looking directly north  
from the RNA from southern tip of  
ridge/mesa.

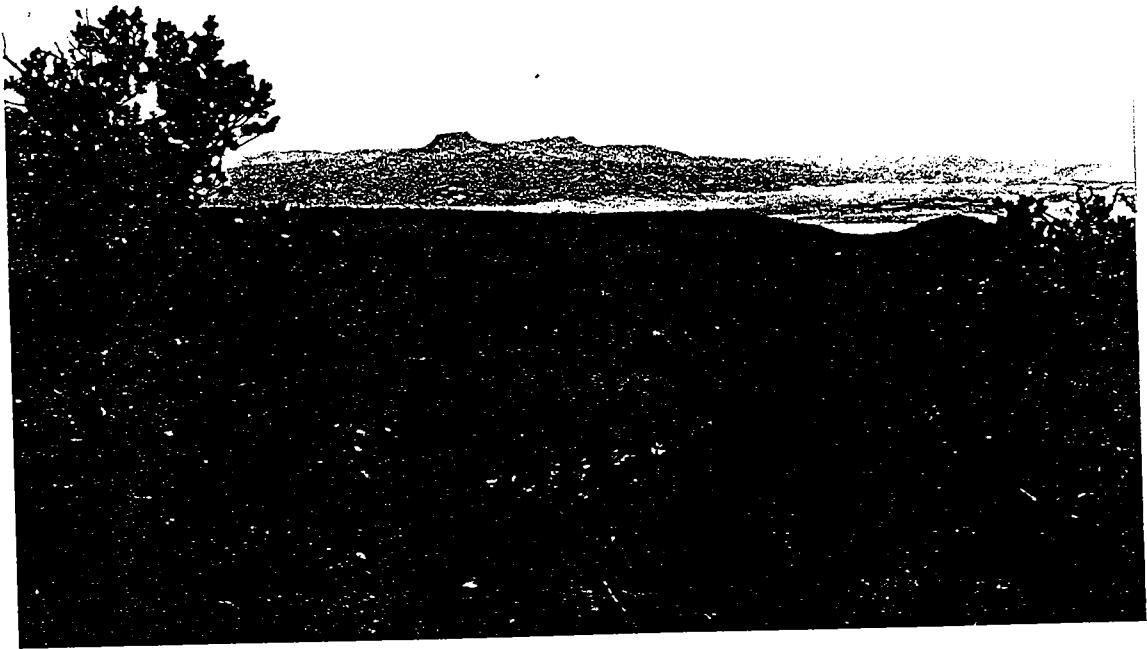


Photo 9. View looking toward most southerly knoll on RNA; Cerro Pedernal and Abiquiu Reservoir are in the background.

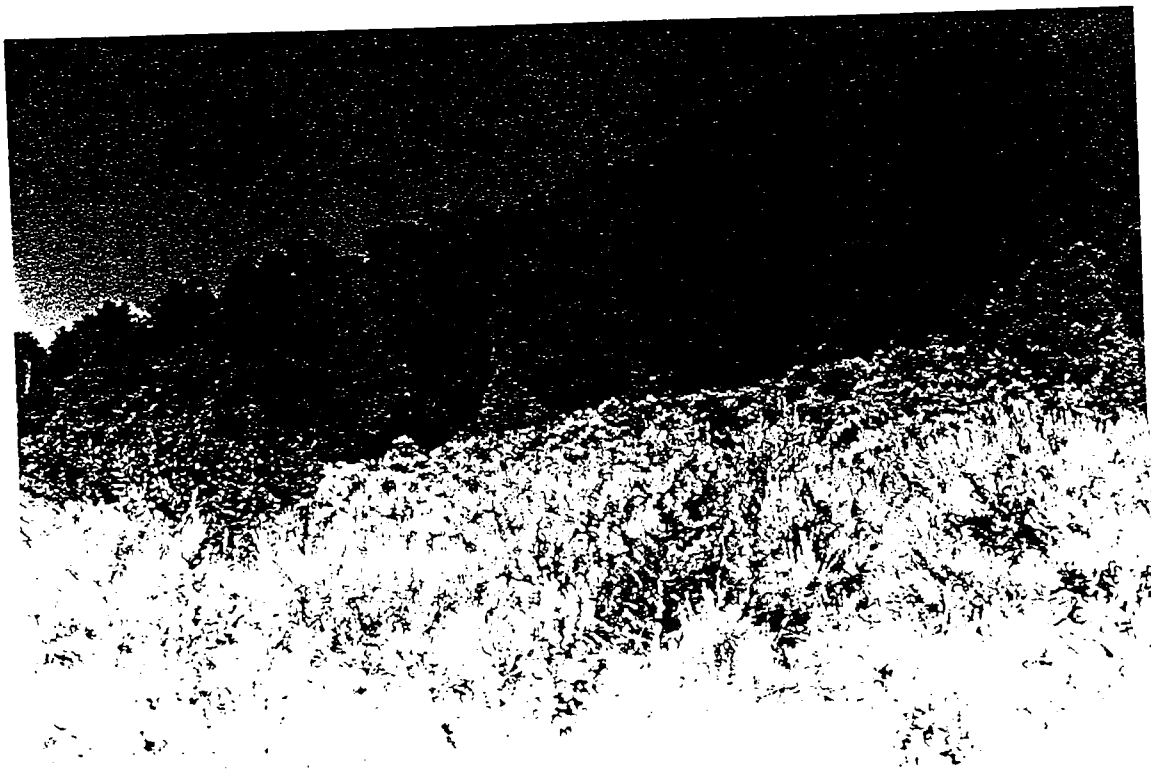


Photo 10. Great Basin Sagebrush at edge of pinyon-juniper woodland.



Photo 7 (above). Steep bluffs dotted with pinyon pine and juniper on the southerly edge of the mesa; note large Rocky Mountain juniper in foreground.

Photo 8 (at right). Massive old juniper on red shale soils in the pinyon pine/mountain mahogany association at the southern point of the mesa.



Photo 5. Scarp woodland along drainage  
on southerly boundary of RNA.

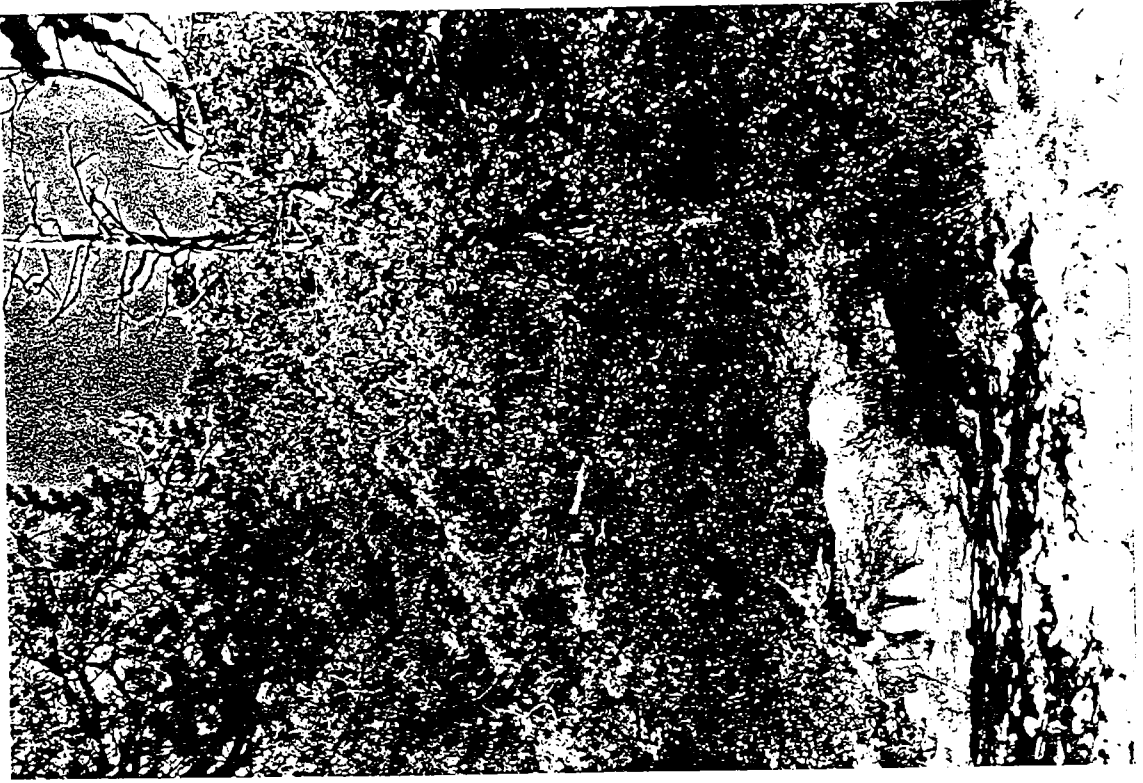


Photo 6. Ponderosa pine, Gambel's oak  
and Rocky Mountain juniper are all  
common along the intermittent streams.





Photo 4. Intermittent drainage forming southerly boundary of RNA; ponderosa pines line the RNA boundary.



Photo 3. Pinyon pine approximately 45 feet (13.7 m) tall; for scale, person in photo is 6'3" (1.9 m) tall.

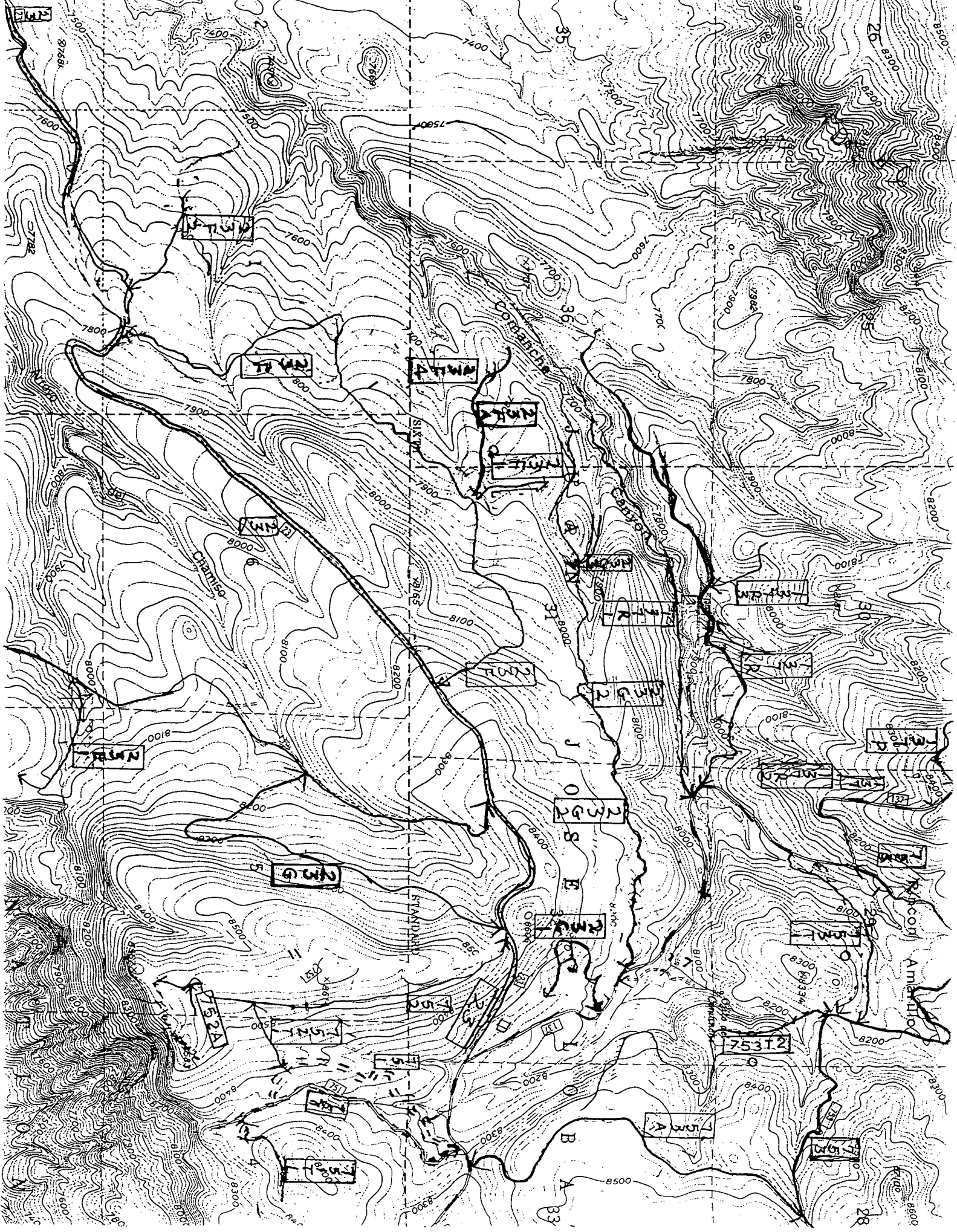


Photos 1 (above) and 2 (at right).  
Old-growth pinyon-juniper woodland  
on the mesa top; note quantity of  
dead and down wood.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area (RNA) comprises approximately 526 acres (210 hectares) of old-growth pinyon-juniper forest (Pinus edulis and Juniperus sp.) in the north-central mountains of New Mexico. The proposed RNA is located in the El Rito Ranger District of the Carson National Forest, in Rio Arriba County, and is all acquired National Forest land.

Due to the economic value of this important and geographically widespread forest type, usage by both people and domestic animals has historically been very heavy; consequently, examples of undisturbed old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands are extremely rare in the Southwest. The relative isolation of Comanche Canyon has protected this area and left an excellent ecological example of pinyon-juniper woodland in an advanced stage of succession, making this site an outstanding candidate for designation as a Research Natural Area.

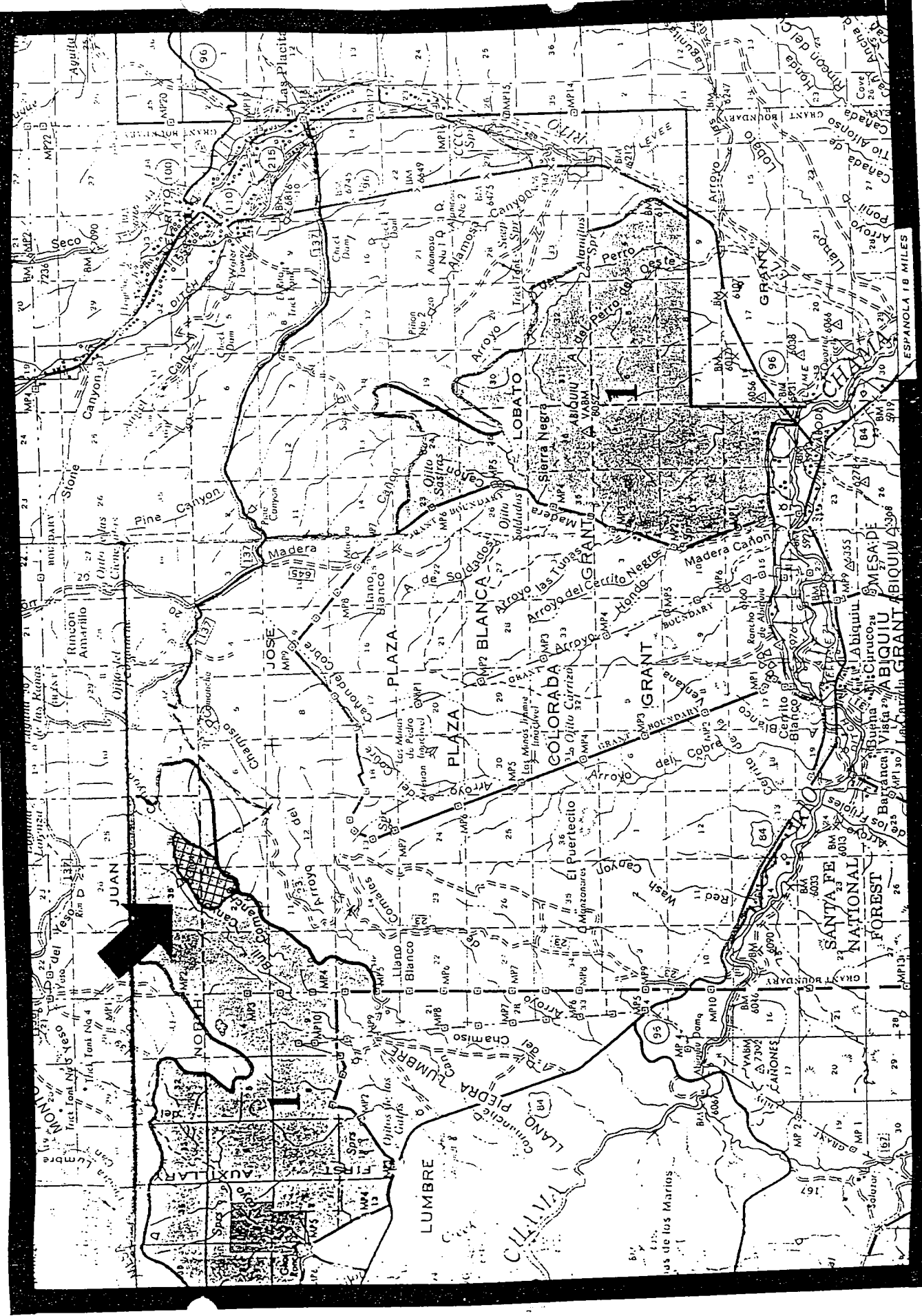
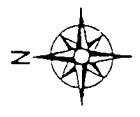
## LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Regional Guide for the Southwestern Region (USDA Forest Service 1983) identified the need for an increased representation of ecological communities in the New Mexico National Forest system through the establishment of Special Management Areas. Specifically, two of the biotic communities which occur within the boundaries of the proposed Comanche Canyon RNA, pinyon-juniper woodland and sagebrush, are recommended for protection and representation through the RNA system.

The Environmental Impact Statement for the Carson National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 1986a) and the Carson National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 1986b) both prescribe management direction for potential Research Natural Areas within the Carson National Forest. The Comanche Canyon site was recommended for designation as an RNA in Amendment No. 3 to the Carson National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 1989). The environmental analysis conducted as part of the planning process for the Carson National Forest supports the recommendation to establish this Research Natural Area.

Doc 28

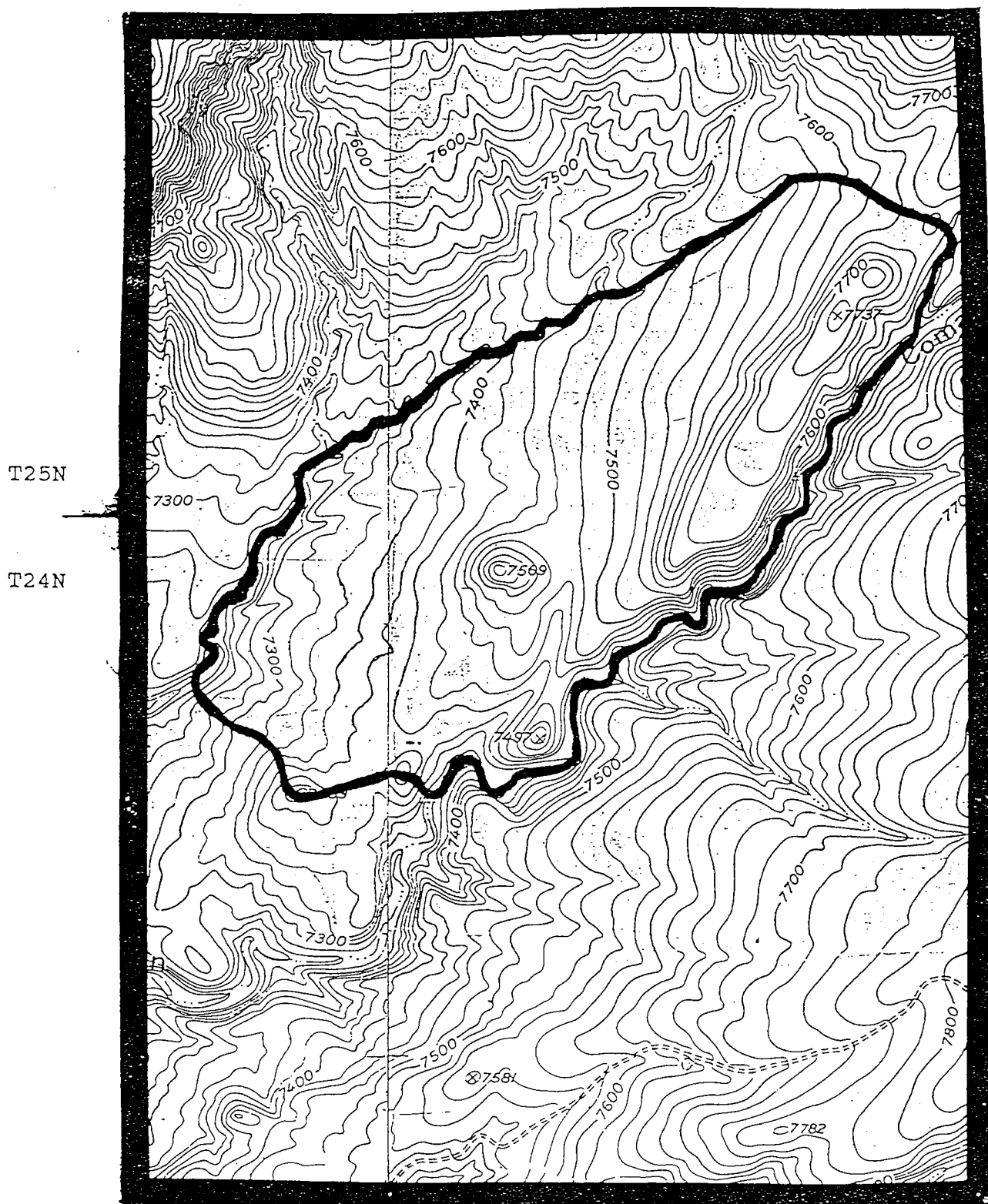
Map 2. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in Carson National Forest in Carson National Forest (showing access route)



ESPAÑOLA 18 MILES

Map 3. Boundary of the Comanche Canyon RNA (450 acres)  
Ghost Ranch and Canjilon SE Quadrangles (USGS 7.5')

Doc 119

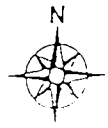


T25N

T24N

R5E Ghost Ranch Canjilon SE

1 mile





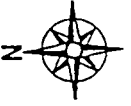
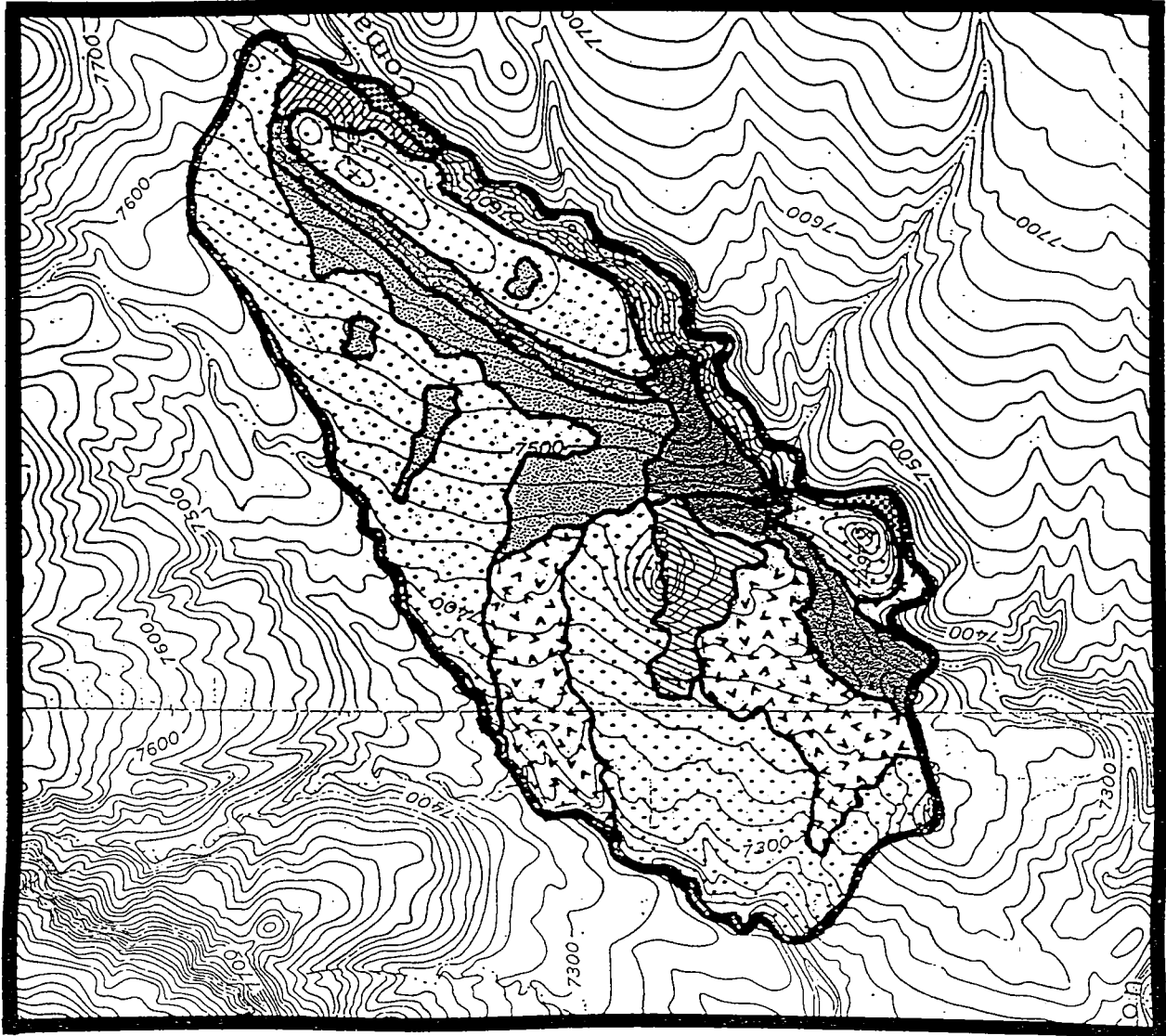
Map 4. Comanche Canyon RNA  
Distribution of Vegetation Types

Map Symbol	Vegetation Type
.....	PINYON/JUNIPER SAF <sup>1</sup> 239, K <sup>2</sup> -21
.....	PIED/BOGR HT <sup>3</sup> Pinyon pine/ blue grama
.....	PIED/QUGA HT Pinyon pine/ Gambel's oak
.....	PIED/CEMO HT Pinyon pine/ Mountain mahogany
.....	PIED/SPARSE HT Pinyon pine/sparse
.....	PIED/ARTR HT Pinyon pine/ big sage
.....	SCARP WOODLAND H.
.....	GT. BASIN SAGEBRUSH K-32
.....	GRAMA-GALLETTA STEPPE K-47

<sup>1</sup>Eyre 1980

<sup>2</sup>Kuchler 1966

<sup>3</sup>USDA Forest Service 1987



1 mile



Doc 110

## DESIGNATION ORDER

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Secretary of Agriculture under regulations at 7 CFR 2.42, 36 CFR 251.23, and 36 CFR Part 219, I hereby establish the Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area. It shall be comprised of lands described in the section of the Establishment Record entitled "Location."

1) The Regional Forester has recommended the establishment of this Research Natural Area in the Record of Decision, Amendment No. 3, for the National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. That recommendation was the result of an analysis of the factors listed in 367 CFR 219.25 and Forest Service Manual 4063.41. Results of the Regional Forester's analysis are documented in the Carson National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement which are available to the public.

2) The Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area will be managed in compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and Forest Service Manual direction regarding Research Natural Areas. It will be administered in accordance with the management direction/prescription identified in the Establishment Record.

3) I have reviewed the Carson Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) direction for this RNA and find that the management direction cited in the previous paragraph is consistent with the LRMP and that a Plan amendment is not required.

The Forest Supervisor of the Carson National Forest shall notify the public of this decision and mail a copy of the Decision Notice/Designation Order and amended direction to all persons on the Carson National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan mailing list.

Based on the Environmental Analysis, I find that the designation of the Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27).

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217. A Notice of Appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

The Secretary of Agriculture  
14th and Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

and simultaneously to the Deciding Officer:

Chief (1570)  
USDA, Forest Service  
P.O. Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

The Notice of Appeal prepared pursuant to 36 CFR 217.9(b) must be submitted within 45 days from the date of legal notice of this decision. Review by the Secretary is wholly discretionary. If the Secretary has not decided within 15 days of receiving this Notice of Appeal to review the Chief's decision, appellants will be notified that the Chief's decision is the final administrative decision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (36 CFR 217.17(d)).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

ESTABLISHMENT RECORD

COMANCHE CANYON RESEARCH NATURAL AREA

USDA FOREST SERVICE  
SOUTHWESTERN REGION  
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST  
EL RITO RANGER DISTRICT  
RIO ARRIBA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

The undersigned certify that all applicable land management planning and environmental analysis requirements have been met and that boundaries are clearly identified in accordance with FSM 4063.21, Mapping and Recordation and FSM 4063.41 5.e(3) in arriving at this recommendation.

Prepared by: Michele Merola Date 8-31-92  
Michele Merola  
Department of Biology, University of New Mexico

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Graciela Terrazas, District Ranger  
El Rito Ranger District

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Moehn, Acting Forest Supervisor  
Carson National Forest

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
John W. Russell, Chairman  
Southwestern Research Natural Area Committee

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Sotero Muniz, Regional Forester  
Southwestern Region

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Charles M. Loveless, Station Director  
Rocky Mountain Forest and Range  
Experiment Station

ESTABLISHMENT RECORD

for

COMANCHE CANYON RESEARCH NATURAL AREA

within

Carson National Forest

Rio Arriba County, New Mexico

## INTRODUCTION

The Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area (RNA) comprises approximately 526 acres (210 hectares) of old-growth pinyon-juniper forest (Pinus edulis and Juniperus sp.) in the north-central mountains of New Mexico. The proposed RNA is located in the El Rito Ranger District of the Carson National Forest, in Rio Arriba County, and is all acquired National Forest land.

Due to the economic value of this important and geographically widespread forest type, usage by both people and domestic animals has historically been very heavy; consequently, examples of undisturbed old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands are extremely rare in the Southwest. The relative isolation of Comanche Canyon has protected this area and left an excellent ecological example of pinyon-juniper woodland in an advanced stage of succession, making this site an outstanding candidate for designation as a Research Natural Area.

## LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Regional Guide for the Southwestern Region (USDA Forest Service 1983) identified the need for an increased representation of ecological communities in the New Mexico National Forest system through the establishment of Special Management Areas. Specifically, two of the biotic communities which occur within the boundaries of the proposed Comanche Canyon RNA, pinyon-juniper woodland and sagebrush, are recommended for protection and representation through the RNA system.

The Environmental Impact Statement for the Carson National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 1986a) and the Carson National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 1986b) both prescribe management direction for potential Research Natural Areas within the Carson National Forest. The Comanche Canyon site was recommended for designation as an RNA in Amendment No. 3 to the Carson National Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service, 1989). The environmental analysis conducted as part of the planning process for the Carson National Forest supports the recommendation to establish this Research Natural Area.

## JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AREA

The Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area was originally identified as an outstanding example of pinyon-juniper woodland. In addition to its magnificent stands of old-growth pinyon-juniper, the proposed RNA also encompasses some fine stands of sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata). Both of these vegetative communities are of great ecological importance and are extremely widespread in the Southwest.

The long history of intensive use of pinyon-juniper woodlands for firewood, post cutting, grazing, and other uses has made pinyon-juniper "one of the most significant and difficult ecosystems to represent", according to the Regional Guide for the Southwestern Region (USDA Forest Service 1983). Comanche Canyon presents a rare opportunity to preserve a representative example of this biotic community in its natural state in an advanced stage of succession. For example, the average size class for pinyons in disturbed areas is only 5 to 7 inches (7.6 - 12.7 cm) in diameter at ground level (USDA Forest Service 1986a). By contrast, at Comanche Canyon pinyons have an average ground level diameter of 1.2 feet (37 cm) and mature trees attain a height of from 10 to 50 feet (3 - 15.2 m).

The pinyon-juniper woodland at Comanche Canyon is unusual in that it is so remote as to have escaped either cutting for firewood or posts or the gathering of dead and down wood for fuel. Additionally, the last large fires in this area occurred more than 100 years ago (USDA Forest Service, 1986a). These factors, combined with the inaccessibility of the area to domestic livestock, have resulted in the undisturbed nature of the Comanche Canyon ecosystem. This woodland is a unique example of pinyon-juniper in an advanced successional stage with its full complement of dead and down wood, leaf litter, and understory shrubs, forbs and grasses. These characteristics offer the rare opportunity to preserve and utilize Comanche Canyon as a baseline reference for research on old-growth pinyon-juniper and the ecology of succession in these woodlands. Additionally, research opportunities exist in such areas as nutrient cycling, wildlife diversity, and fire ecology.

The uniquely pristine nature of this pinyon-juniper woodland and the importance of preserving and studying this abundant and economically valuable biotic community clearly support the establishment of Comanche Canyon as a Research Natural Area.

## PRINCIPAL DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The most outstanding natural feature of the Comanche Canyon RNA is the stature of the unusually old and large pinyons and junipers. Three species of juniper are found here: Utah juniper Juniperus osteosperma is most common; one-seed juniper Juniperus monosperma and Rocky Mountain juniper Juniperus scopulorum occur less frequently. Both the mature pinyon Pinus edulis and the junipers range from 10 feet (3 m) in height to up to 50 feet (15.2 m) tall. The quantity of dead and down wood in this area is also quite remarkable and unusual.

The area of the RNA encompasses a distinctive ridge or mesa of land covered by old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands, sloping down to a gentle grade on the north side of the RNA where thick pinyon-juniper forest is periodically interspersed with large flats of big sage (Artemisia tridentata). Sagebrush is the second biotic community of interest within the boundaries of the RNA, having been identified in the Regional Guide (USDA Forest Service 1983) as a target vegetative community for protection within the RNA system. The two large sagebrush flats on the west side of the RNA define the westerly boundary of the RNA.

## LOCATION

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located approximately 10 miles (16km) directly west of the village of El Rito, New Mexico (Map 2). The RNA can be found on the Canjilon SE and Ghost Ranch Quadrangles (USGS 7.5') within Township 24N, Range 5E, Sections 1 and 2, and Township 25 North, Range 5 E, Sections 35 and 36. The center of the RNA is located at latitude 36° 21' N, longitude 106°21' W. The proposed RNA comprises approximately 526 acres (210 hectares). Elevation ranges from 7200 feet (2181.8 m) to 7737 feet (2344.5 m).

The Comanche Canyon RNA encompasses a distinctive ridge/mesa approximately 3/4 of a mile (1.2 km) long which rises 337 feet (102 m) above the surrounding area. The site is most easily distinguished by the presence of three distinct knolls, two in the southwestern section of the RNA (at elevations of 7497 ft (2271.8 m) and 7569 ft (2293.6 m)) and one at the end of the ridge in the northeastern section at 7737 ft (2344.5 m) (Map 3). Identification of these landmarks is crucial to finding the RNA. Access to the site is from an unpaved Forest Service road, and requires a hike of approximately 3 miles (4.8 km). A good topographical map and a compass are required to get to the site. A four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended at all times, and is mandatory in rainy weather.



To reach the site from Espanola, follow NM Highway 64 north 18 miles to state road 554 (96 on some maps) to El Rito. Turn right, traveling north on 554 (96) for 10 miles (16 km). Turn left on unpaved Forest Service Road 137, heading west. Follow 137 for 8.9 miles (14.24 km) to the intersection with Forest Service Road 23 on your left. Turn on to Road 23 and follow it uphill 1/2 mile (0.8 km). At the top of the hill, there is a sign for Road 23E straight ahead, and several other Forest Service Roads branch off to your left. Park just beyond the sign for Road 23E, where a large earthen berm cuts off the road from vehicle traffic. From this point, hike in along Road 23E (heading southwest) for approximately 1.75 miles (2.8 km). You will pass Road 23E1 branching off to your left, and a couple of other unmarked dirt roads to your right; stay on the main road. From 1.75 miles in, a compass bearing of 285 degrees northwest will take you to the knoll on the northeastern end of the RNA.

As these distances are hard to estimate when walking, it is best to check after walking approximately 30 minutes by walking off Road 23E to the north to a clearing and looking for the distinct knolls of the RNA described above. Road 23E runs along a ridge top, so if you can clear the trees you should get a view of the RNA and take a compass reading on the site. From Road 23E, it is approximately a one mile (1.6 km) hike through the forest and over several small ridges in to the RNA.

The exact location of the RNA is described as follows:

A certain tract or parcel of land situated within the Juan Jose Lovato Grant, in Sections 1 and 2, Township 24 North, Range 5 East and Sections 31 and 36, Township 25 North, Range 5 East, New Mexico Principal Meridian, County of Rio Arriba, El Rito Ranger District in Comanche Canyon and being more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at a point where the line between Sections 1 and 36 along the Sixth Standard Parallel, Township 24 and 25, North, Range 5 East intersects Comanche Canyon, whence the Standard Corner between Sections 31 and 36 on said parallel line bears East 3860.00 feet; THENCE from said point of beginning in a northeasterly direction along said canyon to the junction of a drainage which drains into Comanche Canyon; THENCE in a northeasterly direction along said drainage 600.00 feet; THENCE leaving said drainage and ascend in a northwesterly direction to the southwesterly end of a clearing at the bottom of a small drainage which drains southwesterly; THENCE along said drainage in a southwesterly direction to a point where said draw intersects the third main drainage which drains southerly; THENCE in a southwesterly direction along same drainage 2380 feet; THENCE leaving said drainage and ascend in southeasterly direction

along a small drainage to a point on the southwesterly end of a clearing;

THENCE in a southeasterly direction over a small knob at the southwesterly end of same clearing to the bottom of Comanche Canyon;

THENCE in a northeasterly direction along said canyon to the intersection of the Sixth Standard Parallel, the POINT AND PLACE OF BEGINNING.

Said tract or parcel of land contains 526.00 acres.

NOTE: Area determined by a LASICO GRAPHIC DIGITIZER, SERIES 1280.

#### AREA BY COVER TYPES

The distribution of cover types was determined by field surveys conducted in July and August, 1992, and from interpretation of 1990 aerial photography. Table 1 outlines the estimated total area of vegetation types based on the Society of American Foresters (SAF) forest type system (Eyre 1980) and the Kuchler Potential Natural Vegetation system (Kuchler 1966). Map 4 depicts the distribution of vegetation types on the candidate Research Natural Area.

Table 1. Estimated Areas of Vegetation Types in the Comanche Canyon Research Natural Area

<u>Type</u>	<u>SAF Cover Type</u>	<u>Kuchler PNV Type</u>	<u>Surface Area</u>	
			<u>Acres</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
Pinyon-Juniper	239	21	436.0	174.0
Great Basin Sagebrush	none	32	76.5	30.6
Grama-Galleta Steppe	none	47	13.5	5.4
		TOTAL:	526.0	210.0

## PHYSICAL AND CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

The RNA encompasses a distinctive ridge which rises 337 feet (102 m) above the surrounding area to a maximum elevation of 7737 feet (2344.5 m). The south side of the ridge drops off fairly steeply to a series of sandstone cliffs which lead down to an intermittent stream in the canyon bottom. The north side of the ridge slopes gently downward into some plains at an elevation of approximately 7400 feet (2242.4 m) to another drainage which forms the northern boundary of the RNA. The RNA is distinguished by three distinctive knobs of land, as described in detail under "Location" above. The slope downward from the two westerly knobs leads to the drainage which defines the west boundary of the RNA at the minimum elevation of 7200 feet (2181.8 m).

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located within the subhumid climate of New Mexico's north central mountains. Summers are relatively cool, snows are moderate, and annual insolation is high. The closest long range weather station is located at Abiquiu Dam, located approximately 8 miles (12.8 km) southwest of the site; data reported was collected over the period 1957 - 1981.

Annual precipitation is highly variable, ranging from 12.7 to 21.9 inches (32.3 - 55.6 cm), and is divided between summer rains and winter snows. Frost-free days average about 160 - 180 per year, and annual insolation is at 80% (Tuan et al. 1973). Average temperature ranges from 28 - 72°F (-2 - 22.2°C), with a low of -25°F (-31.6°C) and a high of 95° (35°C). Annual snowfall ranges from 14 to 40 inches (35.6 - 101.6 cm) (Morris & Haggard 1985).

## DESCRIPTION OF VALUES

### Flora

Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) is the dominant tree throughout the area of the proposed Comanche Canyon RNA, with the exception of a few open stands of sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and some small grassland meadows. Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) is often codominant; one-seed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*) and Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) are present as well, but are far less common. The vegetation of the proposed RNA has remained undisturbed by either the activities of people, livestock, or fire for more than a century. Consequently, the RNA is thickly forested with old-growth pinyons and junipers. Pinyons here may attain a height of up to 50 feet (15.2 m) and a diameter at breast height (DBH) of one foot (.3 m).

Luxurious pinyon-juniper woodland covers the ridge/mesa top within the proposed RNA as well as the slope and plain of the northwest bajada coming off the ridge. Shrubs are poorly represented within this forest type, but forbs and graminoids are plentiful. Hymenoxys richardsonii, Bahia dissecta and Erysimum capitatum are some of the principal species of forbs; Bouteloua gracilis is the most common of the many grasses. Yucca baccata and various species of cacti (Opuntia, Echinocereus, Coryphanthus, and Mammillaria spp.) are also found here. Most of the pinyon-juniper woodland at Comanche Canyon is most closely associated with the Pinus edulis/Bouteloua gracilis habitat type (PIED/BOGR HT) (all HT-habitat types referenced are from USDA Forest Service 1987). Ponderosa pine forest surrounds the RNA, stopping at the drainage which bounds the site.

Mountain mahogany (Cercocarpus montanus) becomes codominant with pinyon in the southwestern portion of the RNA. This is the Pinus edulis/Cercocarpus montanus (PIED/CEMO) habitat type. The trees are far more widely spaced here, and ground cover is sparse. Aside from the mountain mahogany, no other shrubs are found here. A few widely scattered individuals of Eriogonum jamesii or Astragalus lentiginosus may be found, but otherwise the ground is barren between the trees, with either bare soil or large rocks of red shale. On the south-facing slope of the north-western most knob, Solidago rigida becomes fairly common.

Big sage (Artemisia tridentata) is a common shrub within the proposed RNA, occurring in both pinyon/sage woodland (PIED/ARTR HT) and nearly pure stands of sagebrush, especially in the south-westerly portion of the area.

Pinyon and juniper are also found on the sandstone cliffs on the southeast side of the ridge; this is an example of a Scarp Woodland HT. Atriplex canescens and Chrysothamnus nauseosus are found sporadically on these rocky slopes, which support only a few forbs and grasses. The bluffs graduate into a rich vegetative community at the base of Comanche Canyon along the intermittent drainage which forms the southeasterly boundary of the RNA. It is here that the pinyons and junipers reach their maximum height; also found here are Pinus ponderosa, Pseudotsuga menziesii, and Quercus gambelii. Shrubs, forbs, and grasses are luxuriant, including Rhus trilobata, Ipomopsis aggregata, Penstemon barbatus, Sisymbrium linearifolium, and Bromus ciliatus. Quercus gambelii is also found in association with pinyons and junipers along the very top of the northwestern slope of the ridge; this is the PIED/QUGA habitat type.

The vegetative communities of the proposed Comanche Canyon RNA are mapped out in detail in Map 4; representative vegetative community surveys are contained in the Appendix.

The following plant list was compiled from a series of site visits to Comanche Canyon during July and August, 1992:

Abbreviated Plant List for Comanche Canyon RNA \*

Common Name

Latin Name

GRASSES AND GRASS-LIKE PLANTS:

Slender wheatgrass	Agropyron trachycaulum
Rough bent	Agrostis scabra
Red three-awn	Aristida longiseta
Side-oats grama	Bouteloua curtipendula
Blue grama	Bouteloua gracilis
Fringed brome	Bromus ciliatus
Deer sedge	Carex rossii
Galleta	Hilaria jamesii
Junegrass	Koeleria cristata
Ring muhly	Muhlenbergia torreyi
Indian rice grass	Oryzopsis hymenoides
Mutton grass	Poa fendleriana
Bottlebrush squirreltail	Sitanion hystrix

FORBS:

Rock jasmine	Androsace septentrionalis
Plains milkweed	Asclepias brachystephana
Beakpod milkvetch	Astragalus lentigenosus
Yellow ragweed	Bahia dissecta
Paintbrush	Castilleja sp.
New Mexico thistle	Cirsium neomexicanum
Pincushion cactus	Coryphantha sp.
Claret cup cactus	Echinocereus triglochidiatus
Fleabane	Erigeron sp.
Sulfur flower	Eriogonum jamesii var. jamesii
Winged buckwheat	Eriogonum alatum
Western wallflower	Erysimum capitatum
Spurge	Euphorbia prostrata
Mountain white ragweed	Hymenopappus newberryi
Pingue bitterweed	Hymenoxys richardsonii
Many-flowered gilia	Ipomopsis multiflora
Skyrocket	Ipomopsis aggregata
Peppergrass	Lepidium montanum
Bladderpod	Lesquerella sp.
Puccoon	Lithospermum multiflorum
Nipple cactus	Mammillaria sp.
Yellow sweet clover	Melilotus albus
Four o'clock	Mirabilis multiflora
Scarlet penstemon	Penstemon barbatus
Linaria penstemon	Penstemon linarioides

Desert mountain phlox  
Paper daisy  
Purple mustard  
Rigid goldenrod  
Globemallow  
Easter daisy

Phlox austromontana  
Psilotrophe tagetina  
Sisymbrium linearifolium  
Solidago rigida  
Sphaeralcea sp.  
Townsendia excapa

HALF-SHRUBS, SHRUBS AND TREES:

Big sage  
Fringed sage  
Four-wing saltbush  
Mountain mahogany  
Rabbitbrush/Chamisa  
One-seed juniper  
Rocky Mountain juniper  
Utah juniper  
Pale wolfberry  
New Mexican prickly pear  
Cane cholla  
Pinyon pine  
Ponderosa pine  
Douglas fir  
Gambel's oak  
Wavyleaf oak  
Squawbush  
Banana yucca  
Soaptree yucca

Artemisia tridentata  
Artemisia frigida  
Atriplex canescens  
Cercocarpus montanus  
Chrysothamnus nauseosus  
Juniperus monosperma  
Juniperus scopulorum  
Juniperus osteosperma  
Lycium pallidum  
Opuntia phaeacantha  
Opuntia imbricata  
Pinus edulis  
Pinus ponderosa  
Pseudotsuga menziesii  
Quercus gambelii  
Quercus undulatus  
Rhus trilobata  
Yucca baccata  
Yucca glauca

\*observed by Michele Merola, University of New Mexico

Fauna

The following animal list is derived from personal observations made upon visits to the site in July and August, 1992 (marked with an asterisk) and a species list generated by the MBISON data base for pinyon-juniper and sagebrush habitat types, for Rio Arriba County, New Mexico (Braun 1992). The database lists species typically inhabiting these habitat types, and is not a list of species observed in the proposed RNA.

Potential Animal List for Comanche Canyon RNA

BIRDS:

Bluebird, Western\*  
Bluebird, Mountain  
Bushtit\*  
Chat, Yellow-breasted  
Chickadee, Black-capped  
Chickadee, Mountain\*

Sialia mexicana  
Sialia currucoides  
Psaltriparus minimus  
Icteria virens  
Parus atricapillus  
Parus gambeli

Creeper, Brown  
Crossbill, Red  
Crow, American  
Dove, Mourning\*  
Eagle, Bald  
Eagle, Golden  
Falcon, Prairie  
Flicker, Northern\*  
Flycatcher, Ash-throated  
Flycatcher, Gray  
Flycatcher, Dusky  
Flycatcher, Pacific-slope  
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray  
Goshawk, Northern  
Grouse, Blue  
Hawk, Swainson's  
Hawk, Red-tailed  
Hawk, Rough-legged  
Hawk, Ferruginous  
Hummingbird, Rufous  
Hummingbird, Black-chinned  
Hummingbird, Broad-tailed  
Jay, Pinyon\*  
Jay, Steller's\*  
Jay, Scrub\*  
Kestrel, American  
Kingbird, Eastern  
Kingbird, Cassin's  
Kingbird, Western  
Kinglet, Ruby-crowned  
Magpie, Black-billed  
Nighthawk, Common  
Nutcracker, Clark's\*  
Nuthatch, White-breasted\*  
Nuthatch, Red-breasted\*  
Nuthatch, Pygmy\*  
Owl, Saw-whet, Northern  
Owl, Flammulated  
Owl, Great-horned  
Owl, Long-eared  
Owl, Spotted, Mexican  
Owl, Pygmy, Northern  
Phoebe, Say's  
Quail, Gambel's  
Raven, Common\*  
Redstart, American  
Robin, American  
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied  
Shrike, Loggerhead  
Siskin, Pine\*  
Sparrow, Chipping\*  
Swallow, Violet-Green\*

*Certhia americana*  
*Loxia curvirostra*  
*Corvus brachyrhynchos*  
*Zenaidura macroura*  
*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*  
*Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*  
*Falco mexicanus*  
*Colaptes auratus*  
*Myiarchus cinerascens*  
*Empidonax wrightii*  
*Empidonax oberholseri*  
*Empidonax difficilis difficilis*  
*Polioptila caerulea*  
*Accipiter gentilis*  
*Dendragapus obscurus*  
*Buteo swainsoni*  
*Buteo jamaicensis*  
*Buteo lagopus*  
*Buteo regalis*  
*Selasphorus rufus*  
*Archilochus alexandri*  
*Selasphorus platycercus*  
*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*  
*Cyanocitta stelleri*  
*Aphelocoma coerulescens*  
*Falco sparverius sparverius*  
*Tyrannus tyrannus*  
*Tyrannus vociferans*  
*Tyrannus verticalis*  
*Regulus calendula*  
*Pica pica*  
*Chordeiles minor*  
*Nucifraga columbiana*  
*Sitta carolinensis*  
*Sitta canadensis*  
*Sitta pygmaea*  
*Aegolius acadicus*  
*Otus flammeolus*  
*Bubo virginianus*  
*Asio otus*  
*Strix occidentalis lucida*  
*Glaucidium gnoma*  
*Sayornis saya*  
*Callipepla gambelii*  
*Corvus corax*  
*Setophaga ruticilla*  
*Turdus migratorius*  
*Sphyrapicus varius varius*  
*Lanius ludovicianus*  
*Carduelis pinus*  
*Spizella passerina*  
*Tachycineta thalassina*

Swift, White-throated\*  
 Tanager, Western\*  
 Thrush, Hermit\*  
 Thrush, Varied  
 Thrush, Swainson's  
 Titmouse, Plain\*  
 Towhee, Rufous-sided\*  
 Turkey, Wild  
 Vireo, Solitary\*  
 Vulture, Turkey  
 Warbler, Townsend's\*  
 Warbler, Black-throated Gray\*  
 Warbler, Grace's  
 Warbler, Virginia's\*  
 Warbler, Wilson's\*  
 Warbler, Orange-crowned  
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped\*  
 Warbler, Nashville\*  
 Waxwing, Bohemian  
 Wood-Pewee, Western\*  
 Woodpecker, Downy  
 Woodpecker, Hairy\*  
 Wren, Canyon  
 Wren, Bewick's  
 Yellowthroat, Common

Aeronautes saxatalis  
 Piranga ludoviciana  
 Catharus guttatus  
 Ixoreus naevius  
 Catharus ustulatus  
 Parus inornatus  
 Pipilo erythrophthalmus  
 Meleagris gallapavo  
 Vireo solitarius  
 Cathartes aura  
 Dendroica townsendi  
 Dendroica nigrescens  
 Dendroica graciae graciae  
 Vermivora virginiae  
 Wilsonia pusilla  
 Vermivora celata  
 Dendroica coronata  
 Vermivora ruficapilla  
 Bombycilla garrulus pallidiceps  
 Contopus sordidulus  
 Picoides pubescens  
 Picoides villosus  
 Catherpes mexicanus conspersus  
 Thryomanes bewickii  
 Geothlypis trichas

MAMMALS:

Bat, Hoary  
 Bat, Brown, Big  
 Bat, Silver-haired  
 Bat, Myotis, Brown, Little  
 Bear, Black\*  
 Chipmunk, Least\*  
 Cottontail, Nuttall's  
 Cottontail, Desert\*  
 Coyote  
 Deer, Mule\*  
 Elk\*  
 Ermine  
 Fox, Gray  
 Fox, Red  
 Gopher, Pocket, Northern  
 Jackrabbit, Black-tailed\*  
 Lion, Mountain  
 Mouse, Pinyon  
 Mouse, Western Harvest  
 Mouse, Rock  
 Mouse, Northern Grasshopper  
 Mouse, White-Footed  
 Mouse, Deer  
 Porcupine

Lasiurus cinerea  
 Eptesicus fuscus  
 Lasionycteris noctivagans  
 Myotis lucifugus  
 Ursus americanus  
 Eutamias minimum  
 Sylviagus nuttallii  
 Sylviagus audubonii  
 Canis latrans  
 Odocoileus hemionus  
 Cervus elaphus  
 Mustela erminea muricus  
 Urocyon cinereoargenteus  
 Vulpes vulpes  
 Thomomys talpoides  
 Lepus californicus  
 Felis concolor  
 Peromyscus truei  
 Reithrodontomys megalotis  
 Peromyscus difficilis  
 Onychomys leucogaster  
 Peromyscus leucopus  
 Peromyscus maniculatus  
 Erethizon dorsatum



Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>
Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>
Ringtail	<i>Bassariscus astutus</i>
Shrew, Dusky	<i>Sorex monticolus</i>
Skunk, Striped	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>
Squirrel, Ground, Golden-mantled	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>
Squirrel, Rock	<i>Spermophilus variegatus</i>
Weasel, Long-tailed	<i>Mustela frenata</i>
Woodrat, White-throated	<i>Neotoma algigula</i>
Woodrat, Bushy-tailed	<i>Neotoma cinerea</i>

REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS:

Frog, Tree, Canyon	<i>Hyla arenicolor</i>
Lizard, Eastern Fence*	<i>Sceloporous undulatus</i>
Lizard, Side-blotched	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>
Lizard, Short-horned*	<i>Phrynosoma douglassi</i>
Lizard, Tree	<i>Urosaurus ornatus</i>
Rattlesnake, Western*	<i>Crotalus viridis</i>
Snake, Night	<i>Hypsiglena torquata</i>
Snake, Blind, New Mexico	<i>Leptotyphlops dulcis</i>
Whiptail, Colorado checkered*	<i>Chemidophorus tessellatus</i>

\*observed by Michele Merola, University of New Mexico

Geology

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located in the Southern Rocky Mountain physiographic province and sits on the Chinle Formation of the Triassic period, which is underlain by layers of rock from the Permian period, the Yeso and Abo Formations. The area was formed by a massive uplifting of a precambrian complex of gneiss underlying the formations, which lifted these layers upward and resulted in the eroding of the Mississippian complex to expose the Chinle Formation at the surface (Hunt 1978).

Soils

Soils at the site are formed from sandstone and shale, primarily from the Triassic period. Soils are classified as Eutroboralfs, mesic, sandy-mixed or sandy loam residuum (Hunt 1978) and are highly variable. The soil on the mesa/ridge top is very fine and is covered with a layer of small stones. The soils on the slopes off the mesa and the knolls are also fine, but these areas are very cobbly. The southern edge of the mesa is mostly steep sandstone cliffs and rocky outcroppings with very little soil, and the western edge of the mesa is almost entirely red shale, also with little soil. Soils in the pinyon-juniper woodland and in the sagebrush areas is very fine and has a moderate organic material content. Erosion potential is high in disturbed or exposed areas.

## Lands

All the land in the proposed RNA was originally part of the North half of the Juan Jose Lobato Land Grant, which was acquired by the U.S. Rural Rehabilitation Corporation (Farm Security Administration) in 1942. The land was transferred into National Forest Service administration and custody in 1946, then quitclaimed to the United States and designated as part of the Carson National Forest in 1952 under Public Law 419. This land is subject to the Act of March 1, 1911 ("Weeks Law") and is therefore closed to mineral entry under the 1872 Mining Law, but open to mineral leasing.

## Cultural Resources

The El Rito Ranger District is rich in cultural resources. As of 1986, 81 cultural sites had been identified, estimated to be only 2% of the total sites in the area (USDA Forest Service 1986a). In the Comanche Canyon area, lithic scatter and signs of early campsites predominate, as this was apparently a bountiful hunting area. Points found in the area date the remains to the Archaic (pre-Pueblo) Period, from 1800 B.C. to A.D. 900. There is one known site of lithic scatter in the vicinity of the RNA, but it does not occur within the RNA boundaries (Garcia 1992).

## **IMPACTS AND POSSIBLE CONFLICTS**

### Mineral Resources

Mineral surveys in Rio Arriba County have shown a moderate to high potential for copper with associated uranium and silver in the Cutler and Chinle formations. Even if such minerals are present, however, it is predicted that they would be insubstantial (Ridgley and Light 1986). If the Comanche Canyon site is designated as an RNA, a recommendation will be made to withdraw the RNA from Mineral Location and Leasing.

### Grazing

The area of the proposed RNA is not currently closed to grazing, although historically use by domestic livestock has been extremely low due to the inaccessibility of the area and the ephemeral nature of the water supply. There are signs of very light cattle usage in the drainage forming the southern boundary of the RNA. The area should be monitored over time to ensure that grazing does not become a problem on the RNA, in which case some fencing may be required in the future. There is no need for a fence at the present time.

## Timber

The area is primarily forested by pinyon-juniper and other pinyon associations; ponderosa forest surrounds, but is not included in, the boundary of the RNA.

Total forested:	436 acres (174 ha)
Commercial forest:	none

## Watershed Values

The Comanche Canyon RNA is located within the Rio Grande hydrologic unit (USDI Geological Survey 1974). Ephemeral streams bordering the RNA flow eventually into the Chama River, about 7 miles (11.2 km) to the southwest. The Chama River is a major tributary of the Rio Grande.

## Recreation Values

Due to the relative isolation and inaccessibility of the site, this area is used only occasionally for hunting. There should be no conflicts between this use and potential research.

## Wildlife and Plant Values

The RNA is considered potential habitat for the endangered Mexican spotted owl Strix occidentalis lucida; however, there are no reports of actual observations of this species within the boundaries or in the area of the RNA.

## Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, National Recreation Area Values

None of the above congressionally designated areas have been proposed for the Comanche Canyon Area. The boundary of the Chama River Canyon Wilderness and Contiguous Roadless Area is just several miles west of the site.

## Transportation Plans

This RNA must be accessed by hiking in off of a Forest Service system road more than one mile away. There are no roads within the RNA, and none will be permitted. There are no transportation plans which would adversely affect the RNA.

and reports from research conducted on the RNA shall be maintained and archived in such a manner as to facilitate the exchange and transfer of information among Stations and scientists.

Records for the Comanche Canyon RNA will be maintained in the following offices:

Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque, NM  
Rocky Mountain Station, Fort Collins, CO  
Carson National Forest, Taos, NM  
District Ranger, El Rito Ranger District, El Rito, NM

## Utility Corridor Plans

No existing or potential utility corridor plans exist in the vicinity of this RNA. No corridors will be permitted within the RNA.

### **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Carson National Forest Plan prescribes that there will be no harvest of timber or firewood and no grazing of livestock on Research Natural Areas. The prescription also prohibits off-road vehicle travel, open campfires, the introduction of non-native plant or animal species, road or trail construction, and recreational use such that degradation would result. Low intensity, non-motorized dispersed recreation activities are permitted provided they do not significantly modify the area, or threaten or impair the research or educational value of the area. No flora, fauna, or other materials may be collected other than for research approved by the Station Director.

#### 1. Vegetation Management

The Forest Plan provides that prescribed natural fires will be allowed within the study area unless they threaten persons or property outside the area or the uniqueness of the RNA. Fire suppression action will be limited to the use of hand tools; fire retardant chemicals are prohibited unless necessary to protect life and property outside the study area. A fire management plan specific to the Comanche Canyon RNA will be developed at a later time as research objectives are established.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS AND PROTECTION**

Administration and protection of the Comanche Canyon RNA will be the responsibility of the Carson National Forest. The District Ranger, El Rito Ranger District, El Rito, New Mexico, has direct responsibility.

The Director of the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, or his designee, will be responsible for any studies or research conducted in the area, and requests to conduct research in the area will be referred to him. He, or his designee, will evaluate research proposals and coordinate all studies and research in the area with the District Ranger.

All plant and animal specimens collected in the course of research conducted in the area will be properly preserved and maintained within university or federal agency herbaria and museums, approved by the Rocky Mountain Station Director. All data

## REFERENCES

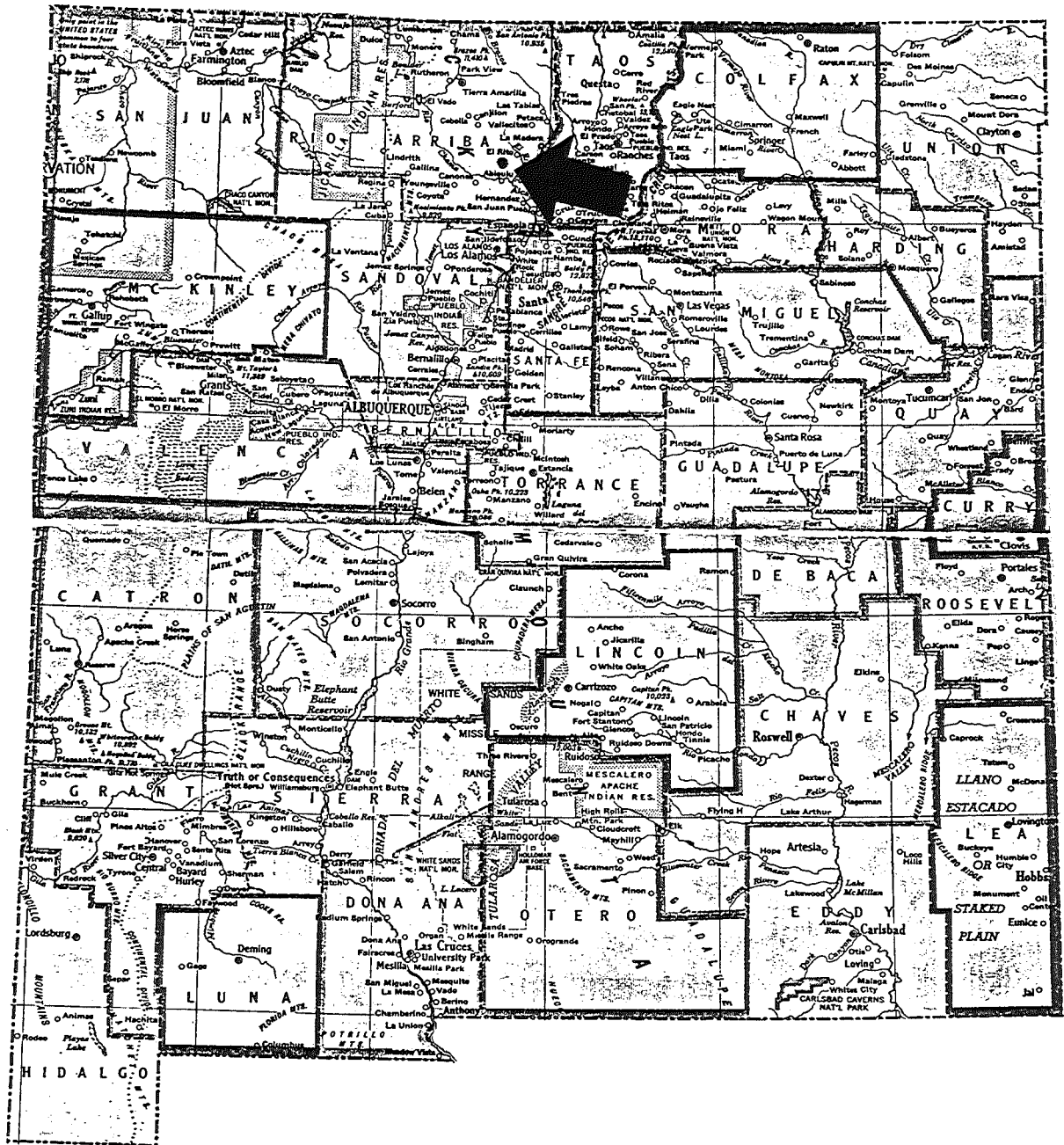
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- Slide 1 Old-growth pinyon-juniper woodland on the mesa top; note quantity of dead and down wood.
- Slide 2 Steep bluffs dotted with pinyon pine and juniper on the southerly edge of the mesa; note large Rocky Mountain juniper in the foreground.
- Slide 3 Ponderosa pine, Gambel's oak and Rocky Mountain juniper are all common along the intermittent streams.
- Slide 4 View looking toward most southerly knoll on RNA; Cerro Pedernal and Abiquiu Reservoir are in the background.
- Slide 5 Great Basin Sagebrush at edge of pinyon-juniper woodland.
- Slide 6 Meadow (grama-galleta steppe) along southerly intermittent drainage; Psilotrophe tagetina is in bloom.
- Slide 7 View from southerly tip of mesa/ridge top looking toward northwesterly knoll.



Map 1. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in North Central New Mexico



**NEW MEXICO**

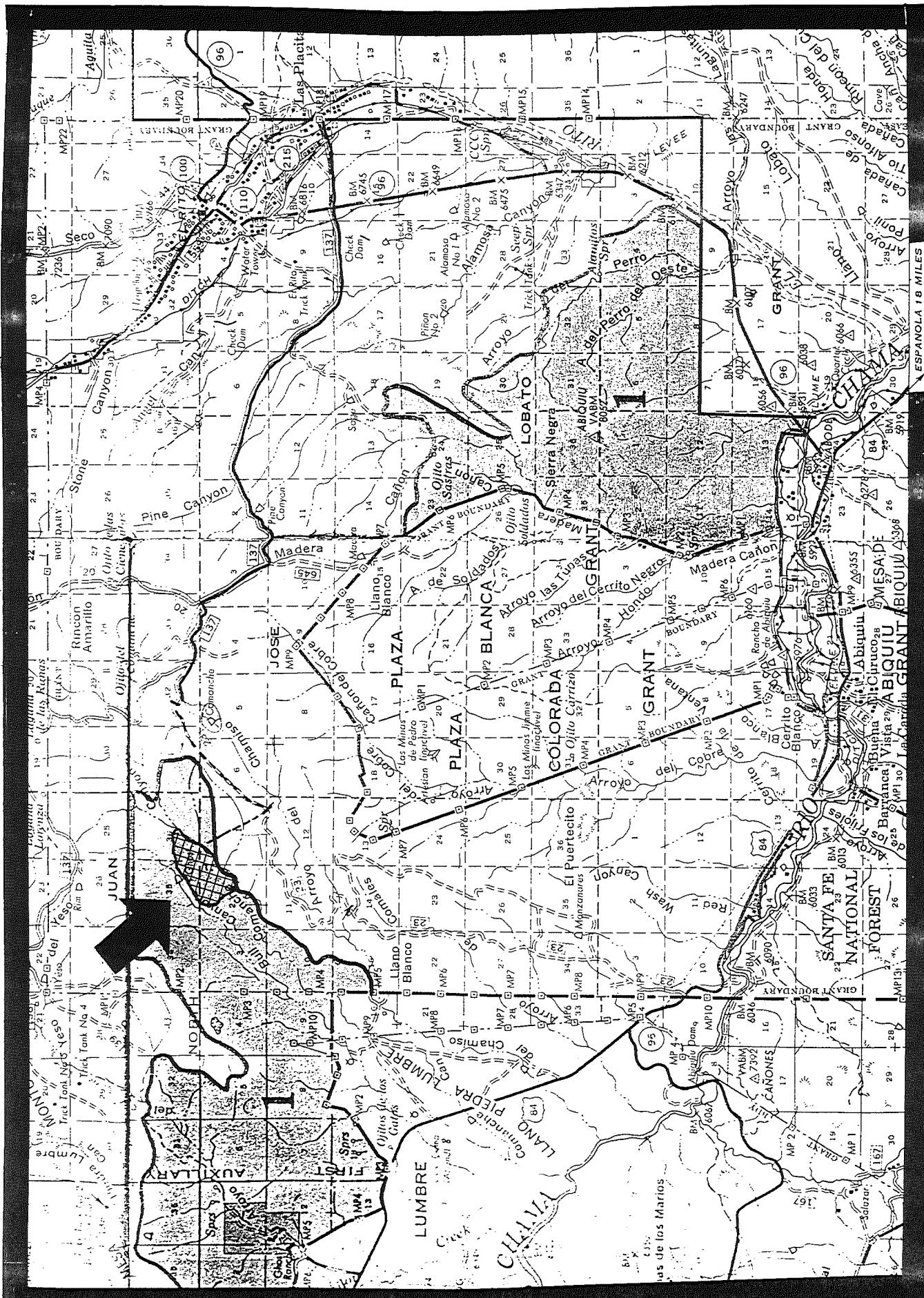
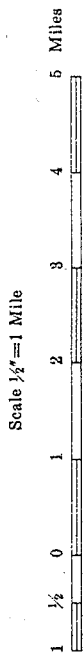
SCALE  
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 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 KM.

State Capitals ○  
 County Seats ●

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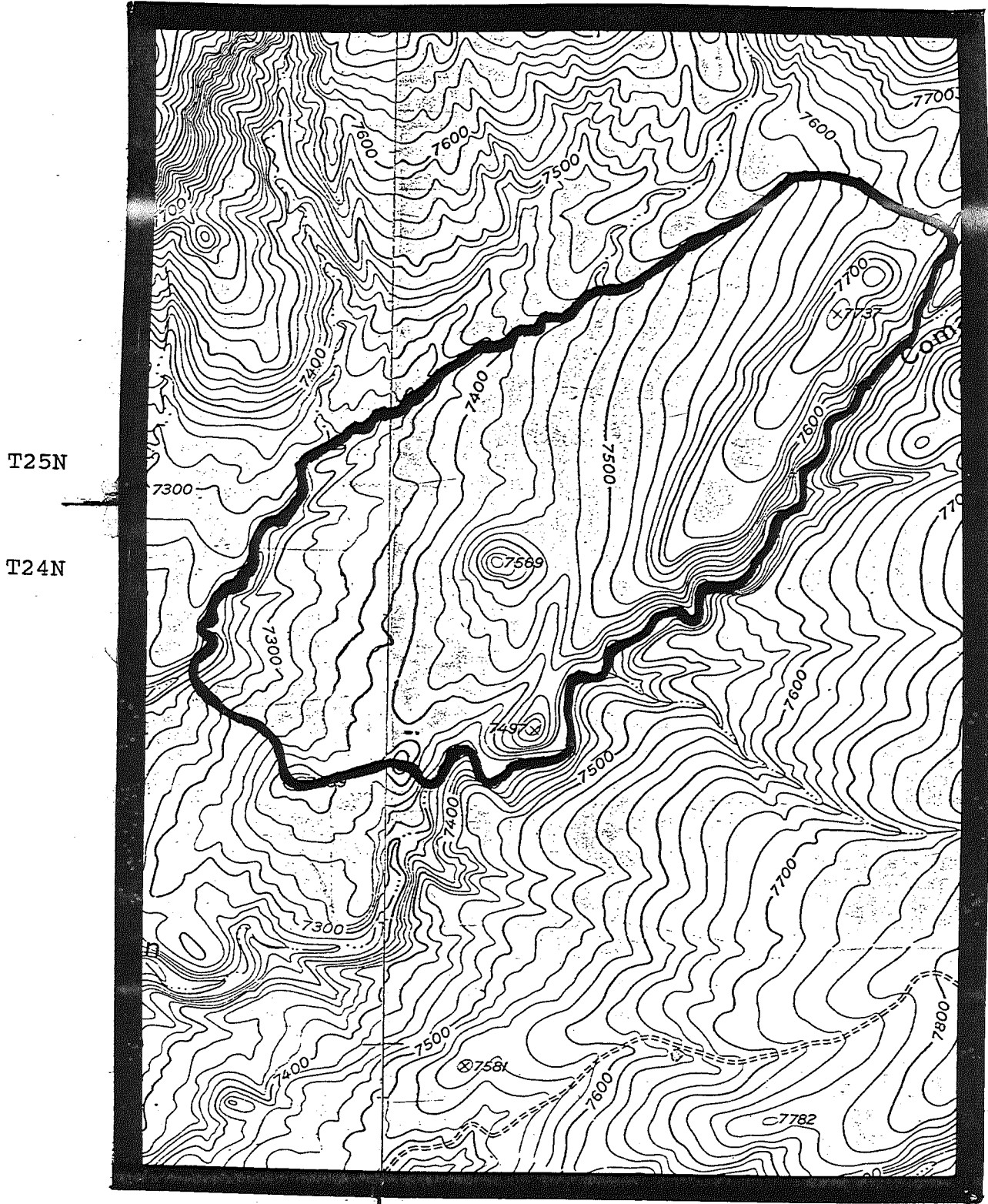


Map 2. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in Carson National Forest (showing access route)



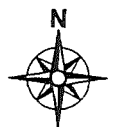
ESPAÑOLA 18 MILES

Map 3. Boundary of the Comanche Canyon RNA (450 acres)  
Ghost Ranch and Canjilon SE Quadrangles (USGS 7.5')

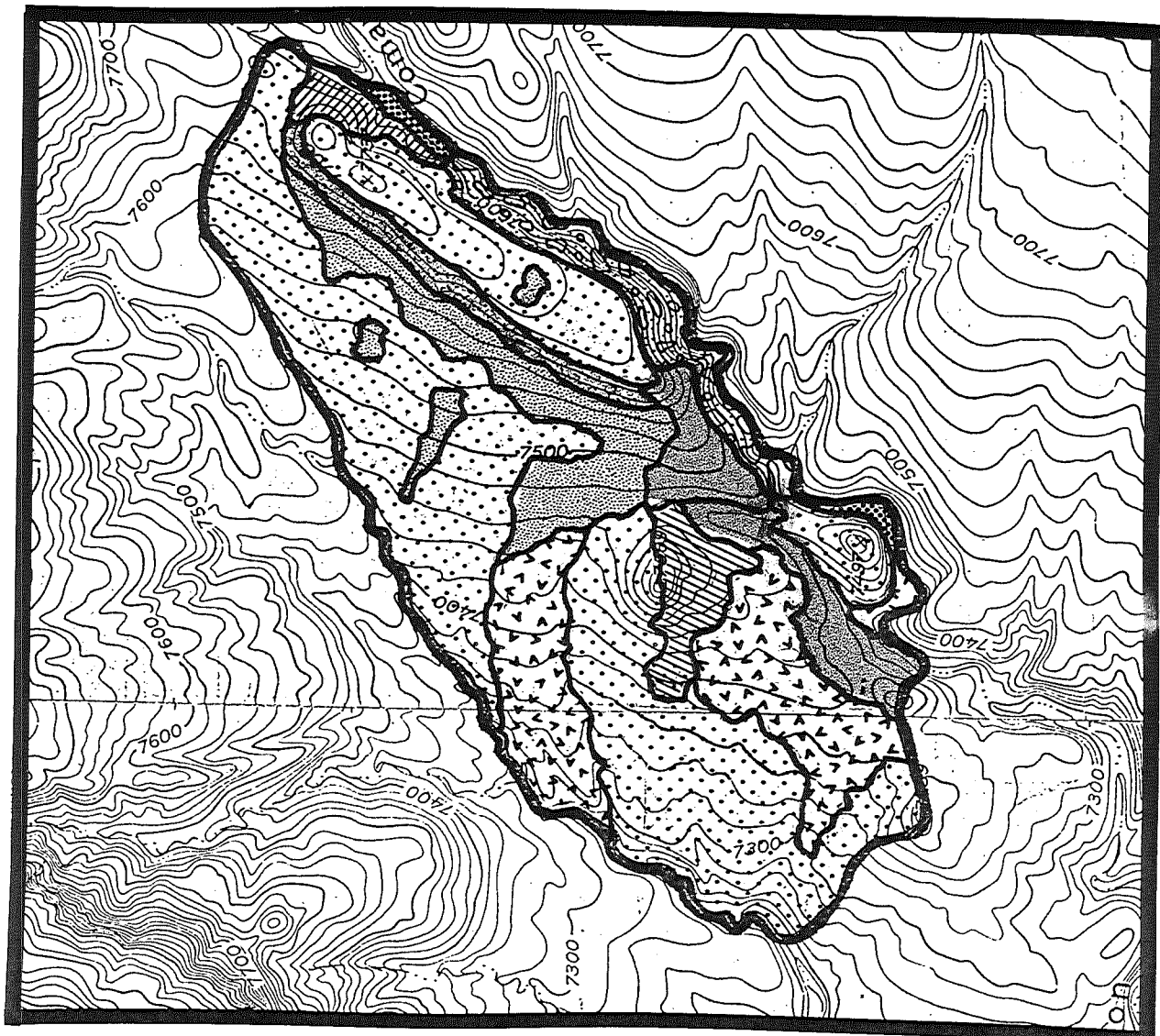


R5E Ghost Ranch Canjilon SE

1 mile



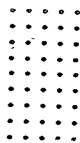
Map 4. Comanche Canyon RNA  
Distribution of Vegetation Types



Map Symbol

Vegetation Type

PINYON/JUNIPER  
SAF<sup>1</sup> 239, K<sup>2</sup>-21



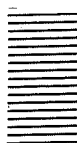
PIED/BOGR HT<sup>3</sup>  
Pinyon pine/  
blue grama



PIED/QUGA HT  
Pinyon pine/  
Gambel's oak



PIED/CEMO HT  
Pinyon pine/  
Mountain mahogany



PIED/SPARSE HT  
Pinyon pine/sparse

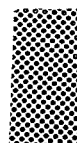


PIED/ARTR HT  
Pinyon pine/  
big sage



SCARP WOODLAND HT

GT. BASIN SAGEBRUSH  
K-32

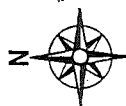


GRAMA-GALLET A STEPPE  
K-47

<sup>1</sup>Eyre 1980

<sup>2</sup>Kuchler 1966

<sup>3</sup>USDA Forest Service 1987



1 mile



*Final Comanche ea*

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMANCHE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA

EL RITO RANGER DISTRICT  
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST

**Proposed Action:**

The proposed action is to establish a Research Natural Area (RNA) of 526 acres in old growth piñon and juniper for research and education of this vegetation type. The area is located approximately 10 miles directly west of El Rito, Township 24N, Range 5E, Sections 1 and 2, and Township 25N, Range 5E, Sections 35 and 36. The area has been identified in the Carson Forest Management Plan as a potential Research Natural Area. The establishment of the RNA would limit the use of this area to non-motorized recreation use, education and research. Any research or educational activities to be conducted in the area must be accompanied by a special use permit. The Forest Plan standards and guidelines will apply to this area. These prescribe that there would be no harvest of wood products and no grazing of livestock. Off-road vehicle travel, open campfires and recreational activities that would result in degradation and the introduction of non-native species would also be prohibited. No special use permits will be issued in the area that would significantly change the nature of the area. No trails will be built in the area.

Actions that would be taken include effective road closures, signing the area and the development of a prescribed natural fire burn plan for the sub-watershed around the RNA. The burn plan will be designed to allow fire to burn in the area at natural intensities and frequencies. Some fuels reductions made need to occur to ensure a natural intensity of fire in the area. Fences to restrict movement of livestock will be constructed if needed.

**Purpose and Need:**

Currently there are no mineral claims in the area and it is not subject to the 1872 mining law. There has been no interest in the area for mineral exploration and no special use permits exist in the area. A four-wheel drive road leads to the area. The area is an excellent example of old growth and has had little disturbance from livestock grazing or firewood cutters. Snags and down wood are abundant. Fire has not occurred in this area in over 100 years.

Piñon and juniper forest types are extremely important to northern New Mexico. Traditional uses of piñon include the gathering of the nuts and the use of the tree for firewood. This vegetation type is also used for livestock grazing during spring and fall months. This habitat type also provides habitat for wintering deer and elk herds, turkey and neotropical migratory birds. Because of the traditional uses of this vegetation type it is rare to find relatively intact old growth stands. (See the Establishment Report for a more complete description of the current condition).

The desired future condition for the area is to maintain the pristine qualities of the area for research and education. Natural processes emphasized and the

area is preserved as an example of a naturally occurring piñon/juniper and sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Fire has returned as a natural element in the ecosystem, burning at natural intervals and frequencies.

**Issues:**

Public scoping was conducted on June 7, 1993 with a follow-up field trip on June 29th (Doc. # B-1, 2, & 4). Fourteen responses were recieved. Eleven responses favored the establishment of the RNA and three did not. Additional scoping was conducted by the Region 3 office. Scoping was conducted with the New Mexico Range Improvement Task Force on March 30, 1993, the New Mexico chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the New Mexico Natural Heritage Program on August 13, 1992 (Doc. # 17 & 18). The former had no concerns with the establishment of the RNA and the latter favored it.

Issues were identified, clarified and grouped. Insignifcant issues were then identified (Doc. # C-3). Significant (issues relating to this decision) issues that developed from public scoping are the following:

- 1) Designation of the area as a "special area" will draw attention to the area and which could cause degradation of its pristine qualities. (Doc. # 5) - Alt B.
- 2) Enforcement of proposed restrictions will not be feasible. (Doc. # 3, 5, 7)  
- See effects Alt A
- 3) Establishment of the RNA will affect grazing rights of the area and impose further restrictions on the public who have traditionally use the public land in Northern New Mexico (Doc. # 7, 15).- Alt C
- 4) The area should be larger to maintain the biological integrity of the system. (Doc. # 16). - Alt D.
- 5) Since fire has not occured in the area for the last 100 years, fuel build up may not be natural and therefore a wildfire may not result in a disturbance of natural intensity. - Alt A - Prescribed Natural Fire Burn Plan will take into account.
- 6) The preservation of our natural heritage is needed especially in this vegetation type to maintain an ecological balance (Doc. # 3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18). - Alt. A
- 7) Need surveys and baseline data in the area. (Doc # 5, 16) - Included in monitoring plan.
- 8) The obliteration of the road could result in increased sedimentation. (Doc # 13) - Seeding added to Alt A.

**Alternatives:**

**Alternative A - Agency Proposed Action**

This alternative will establish a RNA in Comanche Canyon with a management area around it. The RNA will be managed to maintain its pristine condition. (Issue # 6) The management area around the RNA will be managed for multiple use. The prescribed natural fire burn plan will be for the entire management area. (Issue # 5) The obliteration of the road will be seeded with native grass and legume species to prevent accelerated erosion. (Issue # 8) (See Proposed Action).

**Alternative B - No Action**

This alternative will be no change from the current condition. The area will remain in the Forest Plan as a potential RNA but it will not be established at this time. (Issue # 1)

**Alternative C - Remove special area consideration from Comanche Canyon**

This alternative will remove the Comanche Canyon Area from consideration for the establishment of a Research Natural Area. (Issue # 3) This area would be managed following the management guidelines in the Mangement Area 8 of the Carson Forest Plan. This alternative would require an amendment to the Forest Plan and is not currently consistent with the Plan.

**Alternative D - Expand the RNA to the sub-watershed level**

This alternative would increase the size of the RNA to the entire management area defined under Alternative A. (Issue # 4) All restrictions and actions would apply. There would be no additional management area around the RNA. This alternative is not consistent with the Forest Plan and would require an amendment in order to implement it.

**Alternatives eliminated from detailed study:**

Alternatives C and D have been eliminated from detailed study because they are not consistent with the Carson Forest Plan.

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects:**

**Alternative A:**

The establishment of the RNA will result in the maintenance of the area as a pristine old growth area. There will be no direct effects of this action.

Indirect and cumulative effects will include the return of a natural fire frequency and intensity of the area and the protection of the area from firewood collectors. Wildlife will be allowed to maintain natural populations and species. Water yield and sedimentation will be maintained at natural levels.

The socio-economic effects will be further restrictions on use of the area which will result in the removal of the area for traditional uses. This area

is 2% of the area on the district, and 6% of the piñon juniper on the district. There has not been any intensive use of this area nor are there any pending actions or requests to use this area. Therefore the results of removing this area from traditional uses is not significant. The area is not currently under any mining or other special use permits. No mining claims exist in the area. It is not anticipated that there will be a loss of mineral opportunities under this alternative. Currently there is no developed recreational use of the area and virtually no undeveloped recreational use, due to the inaccessability of the area and the lack of water. Recreational use is not expected to increase. Therefore the effects of this alternative are not expected to change current levels of recreational use. It will restrict opportunities for developed recreation, fuelwood sales, livestock grazing and mining in the future.

The inaccessability of this area has maintained its pristine conditions. The effective closure of the road will limit access to this area. This should result in minimal law enforcement problems. The area will be monitored for violations of the restrictions. (Issue # 2).

Alternative B:

The maintenance of this area as a potential RNA would result in the trend of this area away from pristine conditions. As pressure for firewood increases this area will eventually be "discovered." Currently a 4-wheel drive road exists near the area and there are no restrictions to driving off road in this area. This would result in the loss of snags and down woody debris and may result in the poaching of green firewood. Maintaining the area as a potential RNA does not mean that other activities in the management area would not be conducted. Livestock grazing in the area could be increased by the development of waters, piñon/juniper fuelwood sales may be conducted and wildfires would not be allowed to burn. The development of any of the above mentioned activities would be accompanied by an appropriate environmental analysis. There would be no guarantee, however, that dispersed use would maintain the current conditions of the area.

Currently the existing road is lending some accelerated erosion in the area. As snags and down logs are removed from the area by firewood gatherers, there would be a loss of habitat for cavity nesters and small mammals. The removal of the organic matter may result in a slightly decreased soil productivity. The decision to not establish a RNA now would also result in the loss of potential research of a highly important and impacted vegetative type in Northern New Mexico. It may also result in the loss of an opportunity to collect some baseline data and have an area as a control for future management actions in this ecosystem.



8/31/92

TO: Esteban Muldavin  
NM Natural Heritage Program

FROM: Michele Merola

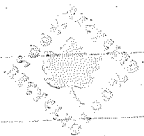
Here are the completed establishment report and community surveys - the report is included on disk. Slides will be dropped off tomorrow, but I wanted you to be able to see the report before you leave.

The potential animal list from the Forest Service was pretty slim, and somewhat questionable in my mind (e.g. I left off "American river otter" as fairly unlikely to show up in Comanche Canyon)

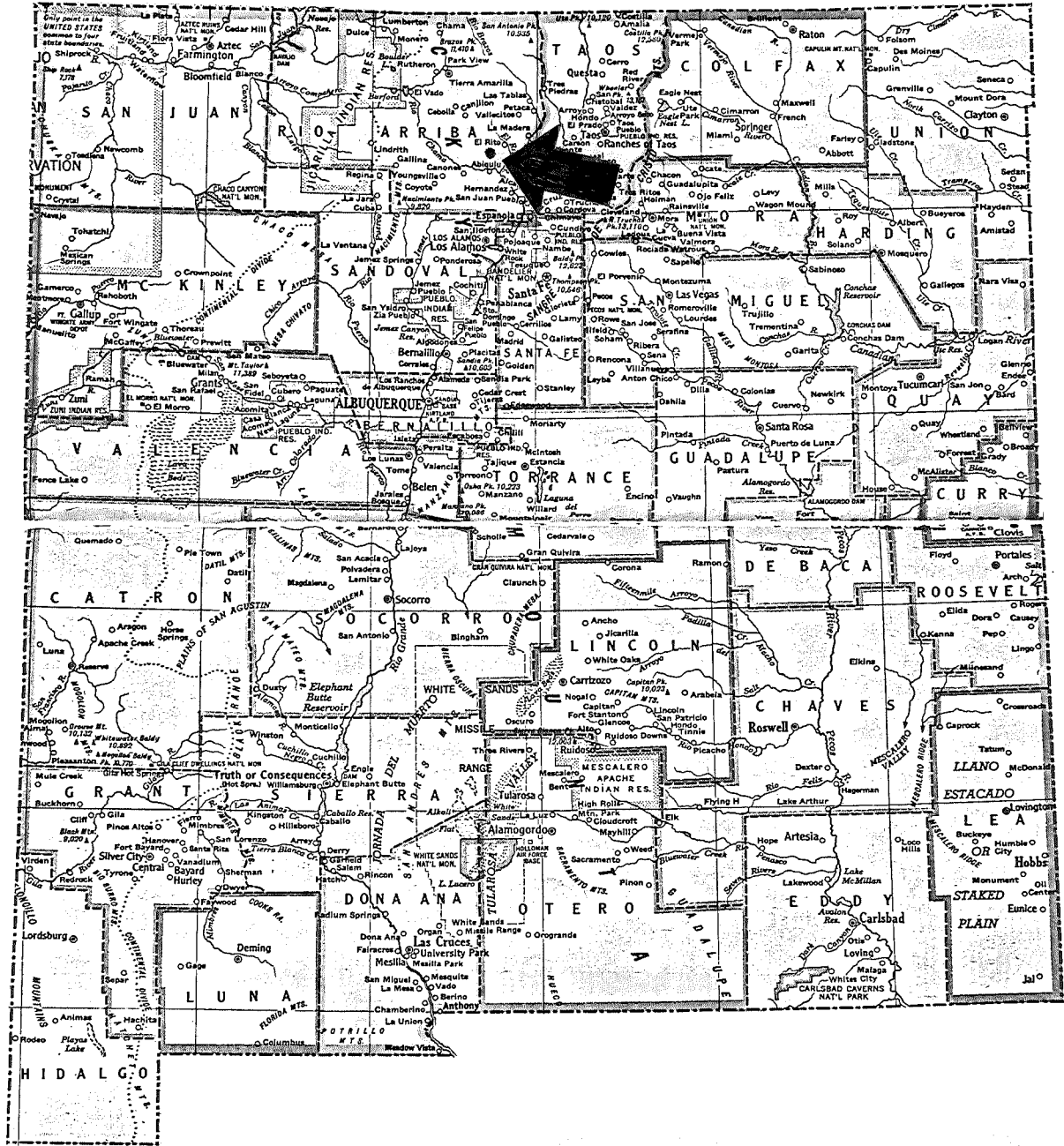
Please let me know if there are any changes you would like to have made or if there is anything that I have not done.

Thanks for all your help. Michele

265-81210 (home) 277-3315 or 277-0871 (office)



Map 1. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in North Central New Mexico



**NEW MEXICO**

SCALE  
0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 MI.  
0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 KM.

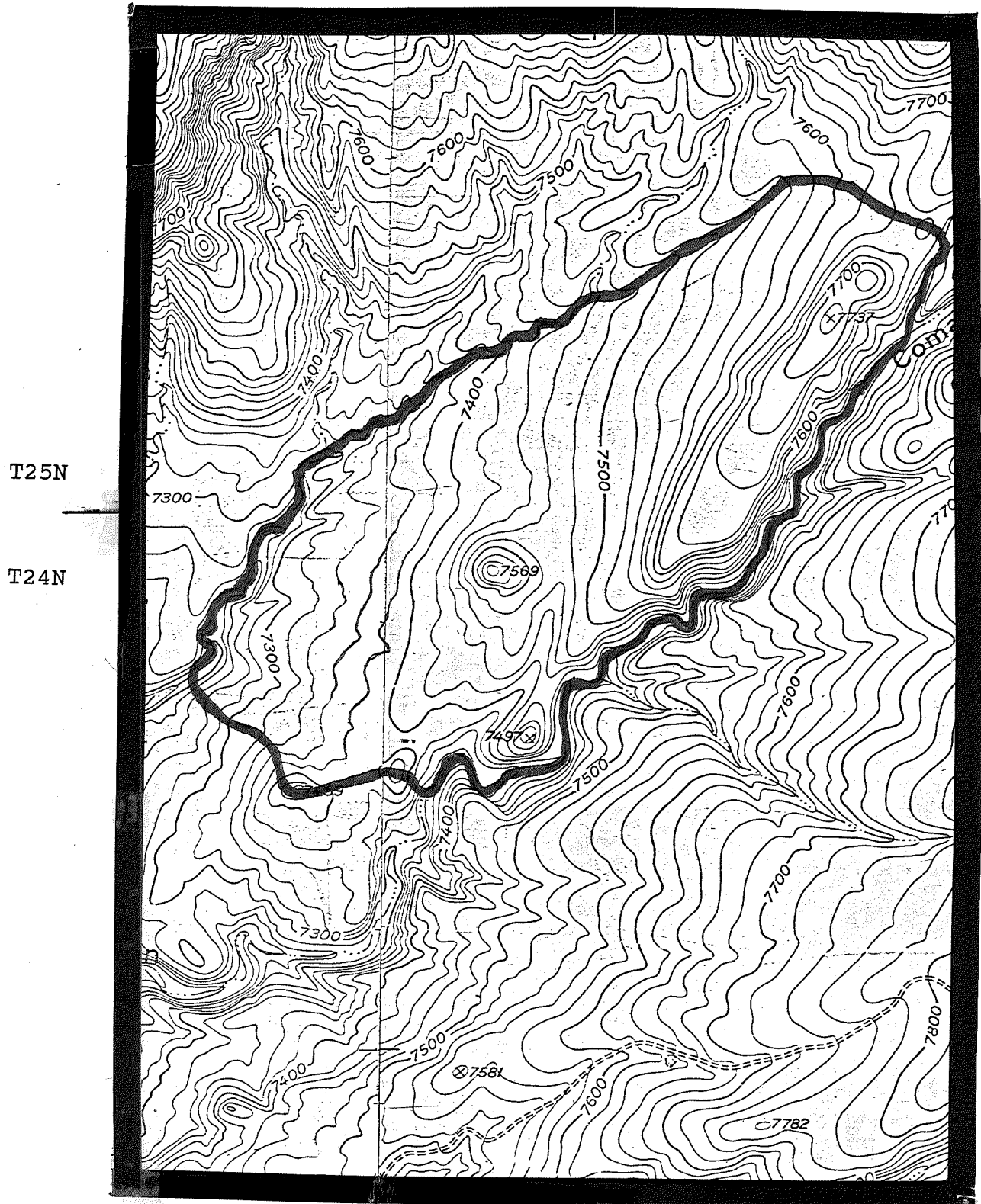
State Capitals: ●

County Seats: ○

© C. S. HAMMOND & Co., N. Y.

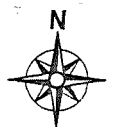


Map 3. Boundary of the Comanche Canyon RNA (450 acres)  
Ghost Ranch and Canjilon SE Quadrangles (USGS 7.5')



R5E Ghost Ranch Canjilon SE

1 mile



Esteban —

9/14

Here is the remainder of the info for the Comanche Canyon RNA, including:

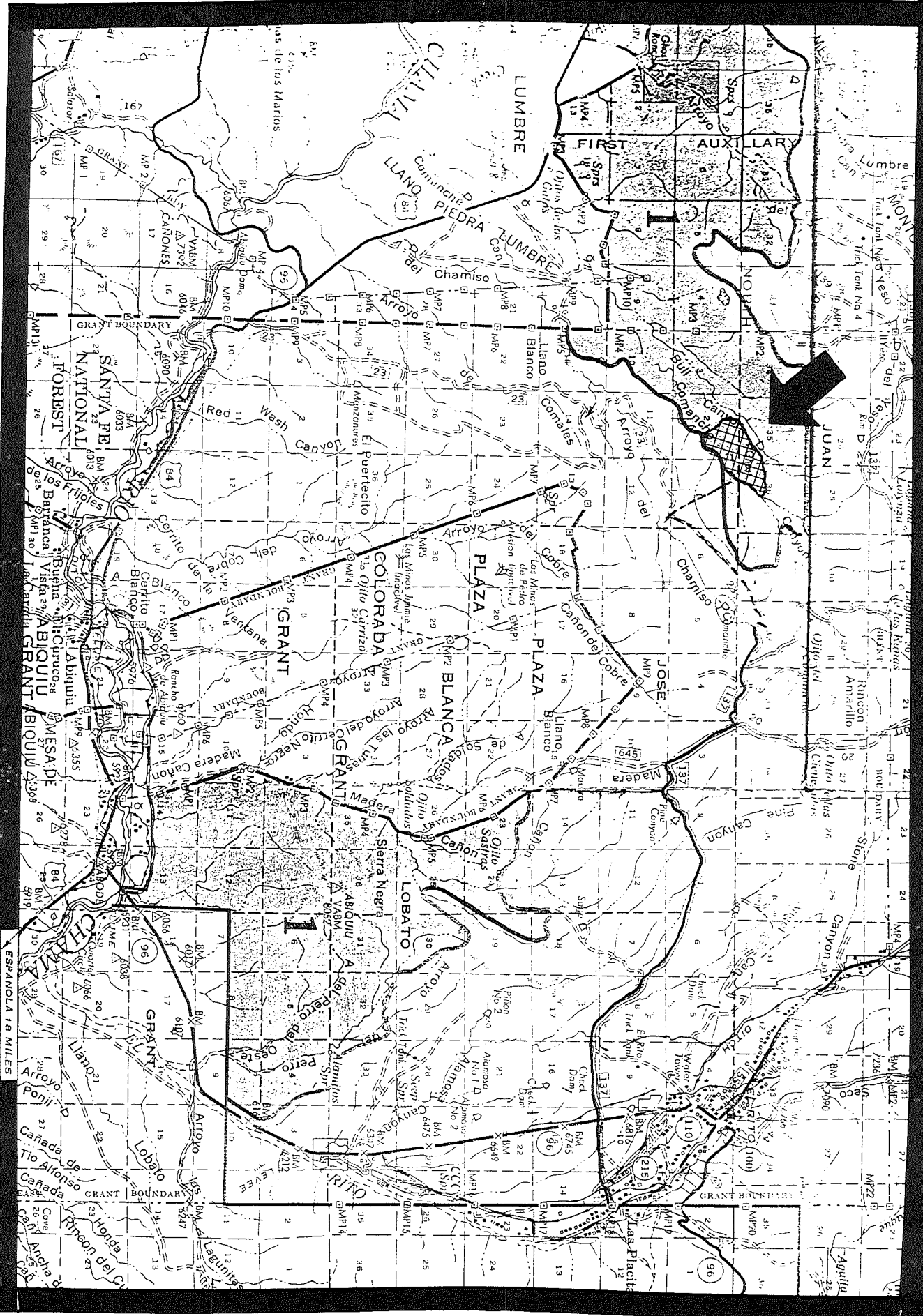
- slides, with description
- original maps
- specimens of plants ID'd to genus but not species
- map of census sites
- \* - fauna list from Taos FS office

\* I received the enclosed animal list from the Carson NF biologist after the report was already turned in. I'm still not completely confident in its accuracy (e.g., no rattlesnake listed). Would you like me to revise the report and incorporate this new list? If so, I'll need to pick up the diskette from you.

Michele

P.S. As you may have already discovered, that diskette will only work on a 386 or higher.

Map 2. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in Carson National Forest (showing access route)



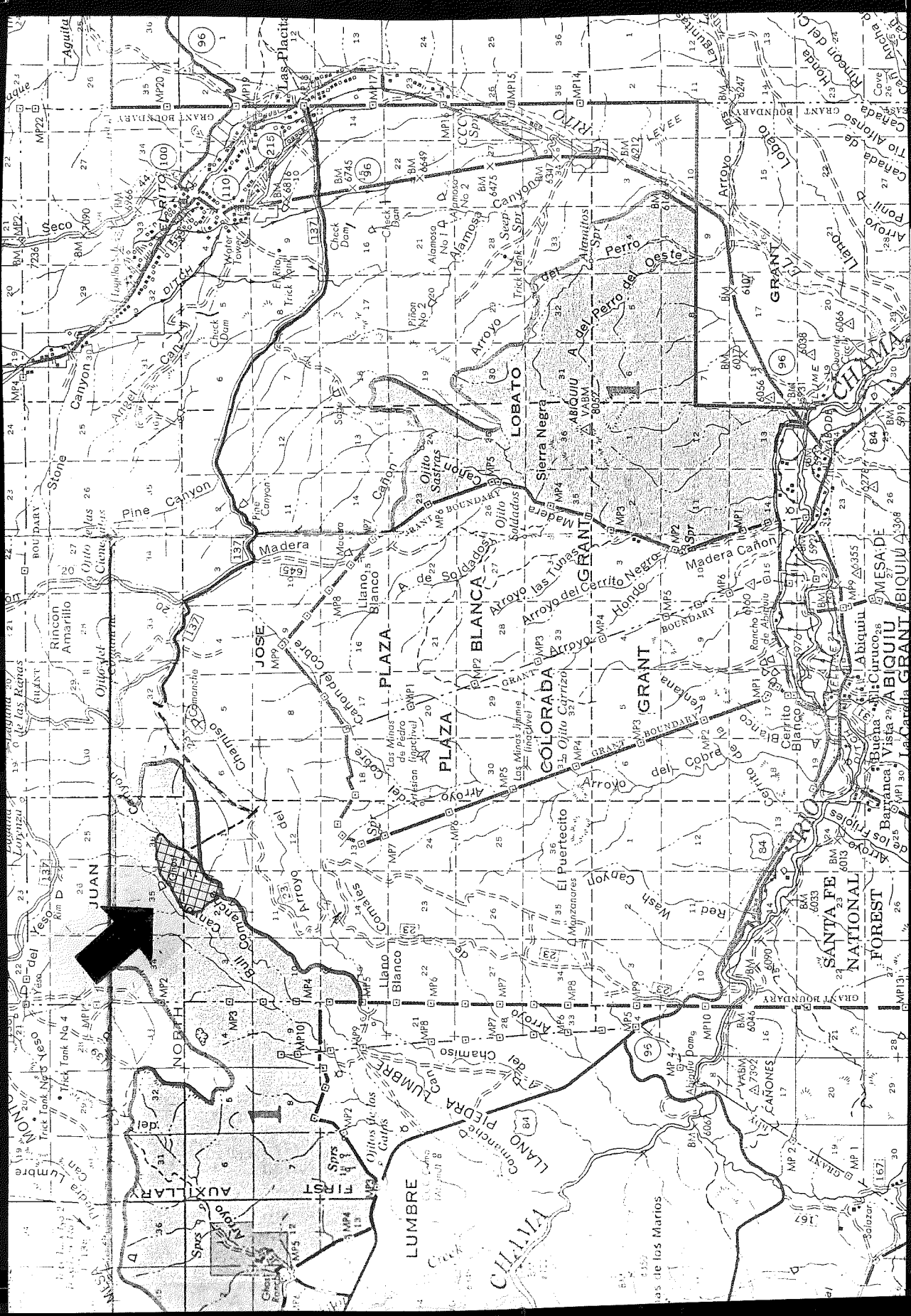
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Map 2. Location of Comanche Canyon RNA in Carson National Forest (showing access route)

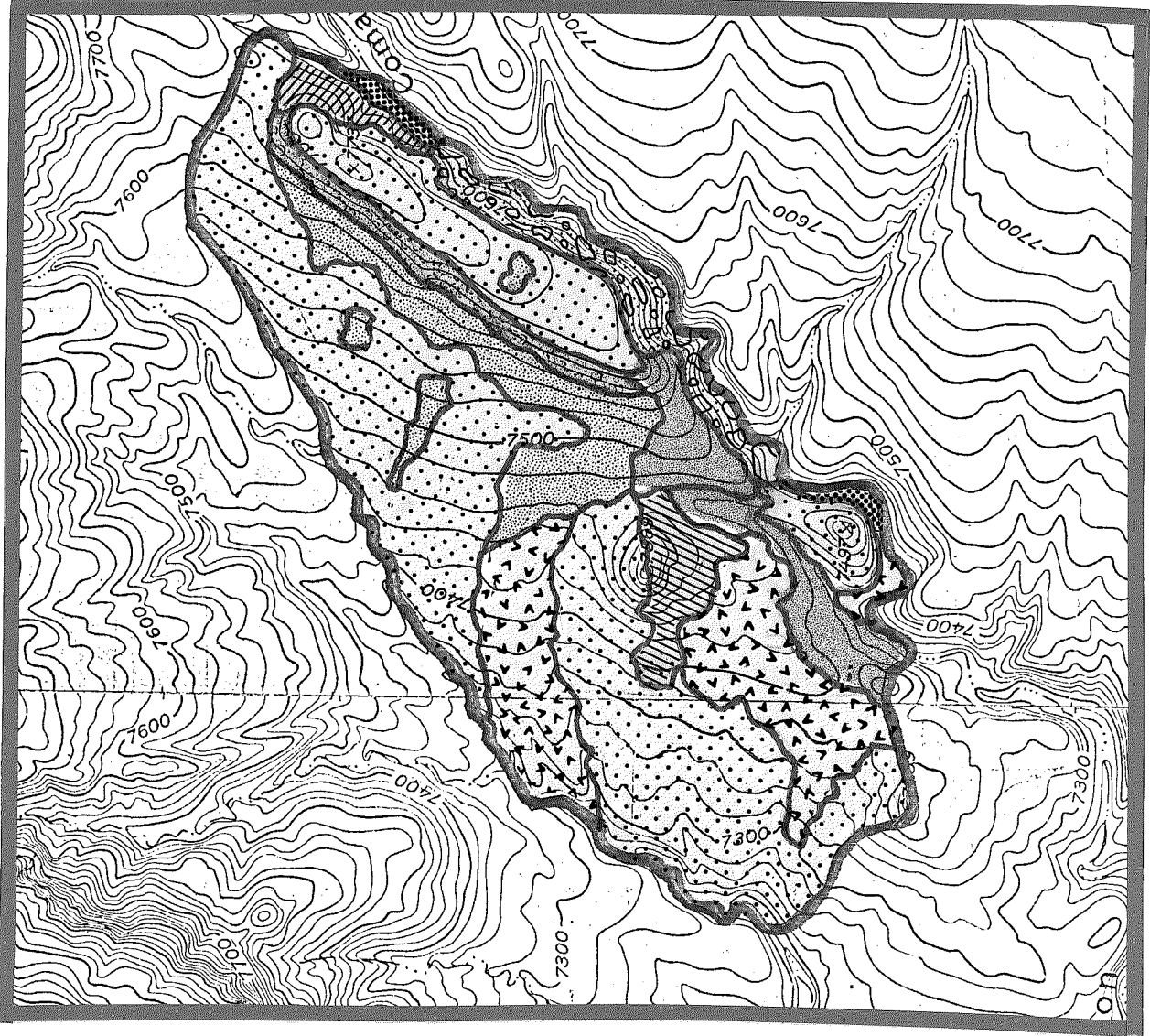


Scale 1/2" = 1 Mile



ESPAÑOLA 18 MILES

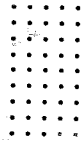
Map 4. Comanche Canyon RNA  
Distribution of Vegetation Types



Map Symbol

Vegetation Type

PINYON/JUNIPER  
SAF<sup>1</sup> 239, K<sup>2</sup>-21



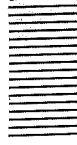
PIED/BOGR HT<sup>3</sup>  
Pinon pine/  
blue grama



PIED/QUGA HT  
Pinon pine/  
Gambel's oak



PIED/CEMO HT  
Pinon pine/  
Mountain mahogany



PIED/SPARSE HT  
Pinon pine/sparse



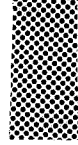
PIED/ARTR HT  
Pinon pine/  
big sage



SCARP WOODLAND HT



GT. BASIN SAGEBRUSH  
K-32



GRAMA-GALLET A STEPPE  
K-47

<sup>1</sup>Eyre 1980

<sup>2</sup>Kuchler 1966

<sup>3</sup>USDA Forest Service 1987

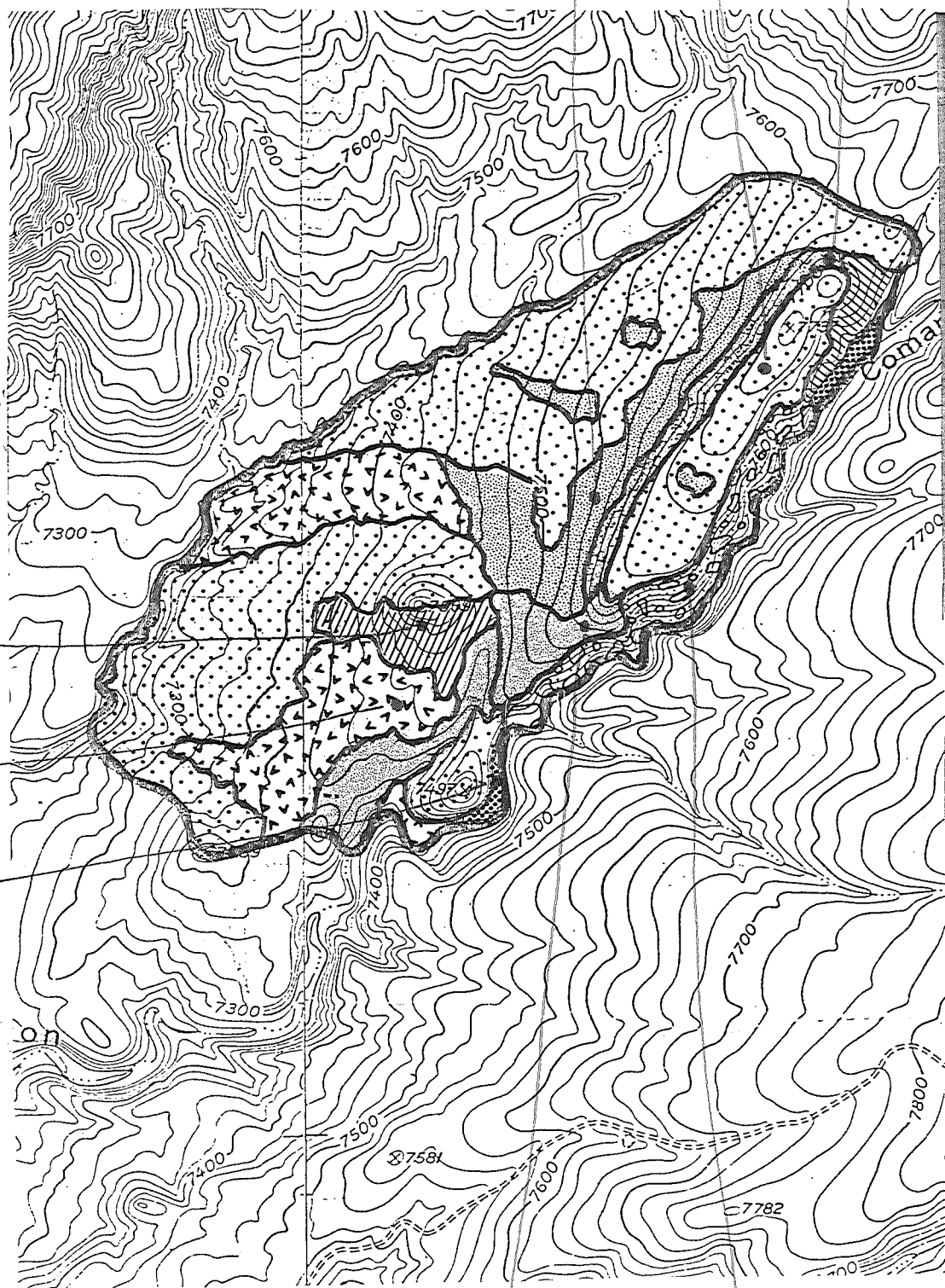


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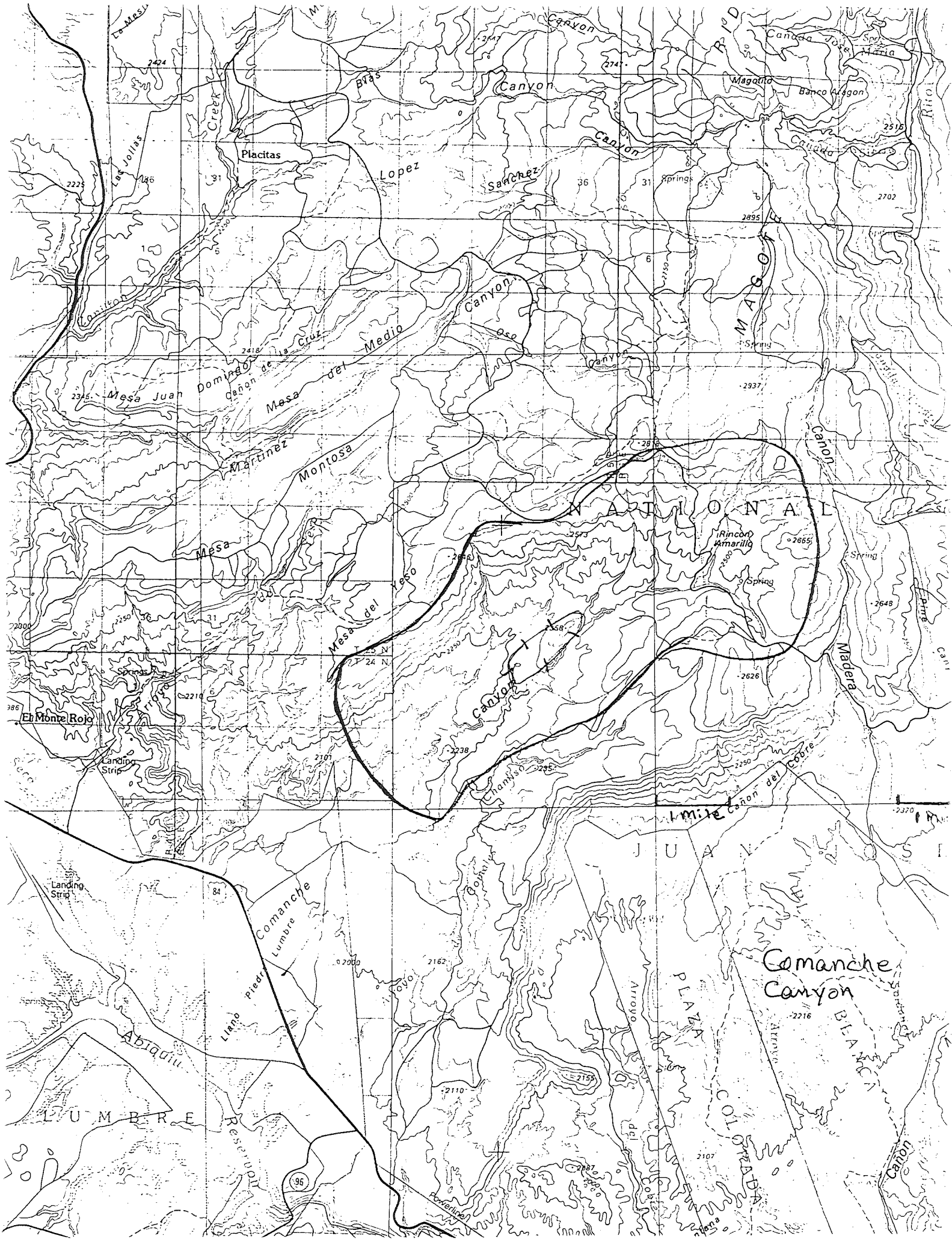
I don't have  
the plot numbers  
written on this,  
but it should  
be pretty easy  
to match them  
up by habitat  
type



PIED/CEMO  
#27

SCARP  
WOODLAND





- Slide 1 Old-growth pinyon-juniper woodland on the mesa top; note quantity of dead and down wood.
- Slide 2 Steep bluffs dotted with pinyon pine and juniper on the southerly edge of the mesa; note large Rocky Mountain juniper in the foreground.
- Slide 3 Ponderosa pine, Gambel's oak and Rocky Mountain juniper are all common along the intermittent streams.
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- Slide 6 Meadow (grama-galleta steppe) along southerly intermittent drainage; Psilotrophe tagetina is in bloom.
- Slide 7 View from southerly tip of mesa/ridge top looking toward northwesterly knoll.

To G.Fitzgerald:r03f02d02a  
CC R.Thibedeau:r03f02d07a  
CC B.Kuykendall:r03f02d04a

From: WILLIAM H. MOEHN:R03F02A

Postmark: Apr 01,93 8:53 AM

Delivered: Apr 01,93 8:57 AM

Subject: Forwarded:

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Comments:

From: WILLIAM H. MOEHN:R03F02A

Date: Apr 01,93 8:53 AM

fyi

Previous comments:

From: REGGIE A. FLETCHER:R03A

Date: Apr 01,93 8:41 AM

Enclosed is a summary of contacts Gerald Henke made with the livestock industry on our submitting the draft RNA establishment reports to the Chief for his signature. While it is not spelled out in the summary, Gerald informs me that none of the persons contacted voiced objections to proceeding with those RNA's in the Forest Plans in either state. For new RNA's we will need to contact these individuals once again and if boundaries are changed to any degree we will need to do likewise. Please consider these contacts as adequate for public involvement for these individuals and the organizations they represent. This should be placed in the project file for all of the draft ER's covered by Forest Plans as of this date and for which we are doing public involvement.

Reggie Fletcher, Regional Ecologist April, 1, 1993

Previous comments:

From: GERALD HENKE

Date: Mar 31,93 2:48 PM

names added

-----X-----

## RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS'S

Discussions have occurred within the past two months with the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association (C.B. Lane) and individuals that attended the annual meeting of the New Mexico Range Improvement Task Force concerning those identified Research Natural Areas in Forest Land and Resource Management Plans in Region 3. Discussions focused around the present National Forest public involvement process and that those identified Research Natural Areas in Forest Plans would be forwarded to the Chief's for inclusion into the National Research Natural Areas system. One such discussion with the Arizona Cattle Growers occurred by phone on March 30, 1993 while the conversation with the New Mexico Range Improvement Task Force (John Fowler, Jim Knight, Kirk McDaniel, Karl Wood, Dean John Owens) and attendees (David Kincade, Bill Ball, Stearling Carter, Ray Margo, Linden Parker) of that meeting occurred on February 18, 1993.

As supplementary material to public involvement on formalizing the proposed Research Natural Areas which are contained in current Forest Land and Resource Management Plans through signature of the Chief of the Forest Service, the following record is provided. On August 13-14, 1992, John Humke, representing the national office of The Nature Conservancy; Dan Campbell, Peter Warren and Mark Heitlinger, representing the Arizona Chapter of The Nature Conservancy; Fenton Kay representing the Arizona Heritage Program, Arizona Game and Fish Department; Rick Johnson and Bill Waldman representing the New Mexico chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the New Mexico Natural Heritage Program met with Larry Henson, Regional Forester, Forrest Carpenter, Deputy Regional Forester, Teresa Prendusi, Regional Botanist, Art Briggs, Director Land Management Planning and Reggie Fletcher, Regional Ecologist. (18)

Among the topics discussed was the pursuit of the formalization of the Region's proposed Research Natural Areas. The Nature Conservancy and Heritage Program officials urged the Region's representatives to pursue whatever means necessary to satisfy the new RNA establishment report requirements in order to obtain the Chief's signature. The representatives also encouraged continued investigation into the possibility of locating additional suitable RNA's and securing their establishment.

Reggie Fletcher  
Regional Ecologist

MESSAGE DISPLAY FOR WILLIAM H. MOEHN

To G.Fitzgerald:r03f02d02a

19

Rejected by Post office

G.Fitzgerald:r03f02d02a

AOS error 159: Control point directory max size exceeded

From: WILLIAM H. MOEHN

Postmark: Jul 27,93 2:00 PM

Delivered: Jul 27,93 2:03 PM

Subject: Forwarded: FY 94 Matching Grants Proposals

Comments:

From: WILLIAM H. MOEHN:R03F02A

Date: Jul 27,93 2:00 PM

ideas??

JUL 30 1993

Previous comments:

From: REGGIE A. FLETCHER:R03A

Date: Jul 22,93 8:41 AM

The past two years that we have been able to compete for this funding which comes to about \$15,000 for special studies on RNA's we have been doing cost share work with the New Mexico Heritage Program for studies in the pinyon-juniper RNA's. This is also a joint project with research. If any of you have ideas for additional partners for bringing in funds please let me know. We would like to pursue a continuation of this year's studies on spatial relationships of the plant species in the pj. Reggie

Message:

From: Jacob L. Whitmore:WO

Date: Jul 19,93 11:04 AM

For those of you planning proposals for the September 1st deadline (that's all of you, I hope!), let me toss out something that might help you in the competition. Those proposals that offer big fat matches (e.g. \$8,000 requested from WO, matched by \$11,000 from other sources) have always have an advantage in the competition (if they met the other criteria, of course). But it is becoming obvious at this end that we need to bring in bigtime dollars from OUTSIDE the agency, whenever possible. So: if those "other sources" are Dept. of Interior, or TNC, etc., this will give us much more clout when we try to convince the FS that the Program needs to be considered for greater funding levels!

Nothing wrong with having the Region, Station or NF match the WO part, but whenever possible, go for those non-FS bucks!

FYI: for FY 92, the \$235,000 from WO was matched by \$237,250 (\$95,350 of which was non-FS).

Best regards,

--Les--

-----X-----

MESSAGE SCAN FOR WILLIAM H. MOEHN

To RNA  
To B.MOEHN:R03F02A

From: REGGIE A. FLETCHER:R03A

Postmark: Jul 26,93 8:08 AM

Delivered: Jul 27,93 8:36 AM

Subject: Forwarded: Comments on Hauger Wash and Buckhorn M... RNA's

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Comments:

From: REGGIE A. FLETCHER:R03A

Date: Jul 26,93 8:08 AM

These are the formal comments on the above RNA establishment reports. For those of you working on EA's and wording that will require further modification of our establishment reports, please note the type of comments we have received. Reggie

Previous comments:

From: Margaret J. Boland:WO

Date: Jul 23,93 4:27 PM

Reggie--Ber Brown and I have been trying to reach you for the last few days to talk about our comments. We will both be out of town next week (Ber gets back in the office on Thursday if you want to talk with him). I'll be back the following week if you'd like to discuss our ideas. Sorry we couldn't reach you earlier. PEG

-----X-----

1. P. 2, Location: Access section should indicate form of transport required. 4-wheel drive? Horse? Walk?
2. P. 4: no climate records/length of record? No mention of any weather station?
3. No plant/animal name authors? No reference to E.L.Little for trees?
4. Recreation conflict: equestrian use of the RNA.
5. In the text there is no reference to Table 1: indeed there is no Table 1--only a Table 2 & 3 (in the text: but both Tables are labelled Table 2).
6. P. 1, Objectives. This is a statement of objectives??
7. P. 9: Timber para; "are" should be "is". Recreation para equestrian??
8. P. 10, veg. mgt. para: nor = no; Admin. Records & Prot.; Regional Forester will approve studies on that part of the RNA located on the wilderness area.
9. Figure 4, caption: District misspelled
10. Figure 5, caption: Roosevelt misspelled
11. Three of the references on P. 11 (Brown et al 1980, Knipe et al 1979, and Pase/Brown 1982) were not mentioned in the text--unless my quick perusal overlooked something. Also: Kuchler 1966, mentioned in Table 1, is not listed in "references". Also: several references in the text have dates not in accord with their counterparts listed in "references".

--Les Whitmore--



COMMENTS ON BUCKHORN MTN.  
(by Peg Boland)

The Forest/Region did a good job of following the suggested format sent out last September, and the length of the EA is just about right. The conditions fit Example 3 and there is seemingly no need for more than 2 alternatives in the EA. The title of the EA needs to be changed to "Environmental Assessment" rather than "Environmental Analysis."

There are several other problems with the EA than can be easily fixed. One is that site specific effects are not discussed in the EA. Reference is made to page 171 of the Forest Plan EIS but these are not summarized. An EA needs at least a one or two sentence summary of the effects in the Forest Plan EIS. Also, the environmental effects noted on page 171 do not provide the specifics needed for the Chief to determine what the long-term environmental effects would be of his decision to establish this RNA. It is especially important that the Chief know the specific environmental effects since his decision allocates this area to a RNA prescription for a long time, if not permanently; this decision is not likely to be revisited when the Forest Plan is revised. Much of the information necessary to disclose the site specific environmental effects of this decision seems to be in the ER; it would be preferable if they were pulled into the EA rather than just referencing the "impacts" section of the ER since the wording of them would be a little different in the EA. Once again, just a few sentences would do in the case of this EA. For example, one effect of establishing the RNA is limitation of future travel access by prohibiting future trail or road development and monitoring the need to close current trails or unmaintained travelway. In this particular RNA, it is unclear whether or not this travelway was once used for motorized vehicles, and if prohibiting this use will have any social effect, etc. This just needs a little clarification; based on what Ber Brown tells us about the area, there is not likely to be much impact but the Chief wouldn't know that unless you tell him in a sentence or two. This kind of discussion just lets the Chief know what is being given up by establishing the RNA, and how much is really being relinquished.

Also, there is a seeming contradiction in the EA in that the first paragraph of Alternative A says that "The area will be withdrawn from mineral leasing" and the second paragraph says that "Site specific consequences will be disclosed in more detail if or when mineral entry is proposed for withdrawal." If the decision to establish this RNA actually withdraws the area from mineral leasing, more minerals analysis is necessary. If site specific consequences of both mineral leasing and mineral entry for locatable minerals will be disclosed at a later date if or when the area is proposed for withdrawal, then the EA should not say the area will be withdrawn from mineral leasing. This needs some clarification. If it is likely that some individual or company will try to develop mineral claims, would it be better to combine the RNA establishment and mineral withdrawal with appropriate environmental disclosure as is now being done for the Hoosier Ridge RNA? This is just a suggestion to consider.

Whitmore Comments on the Hauger Wash RNA Establishment Record

1. P. 2, 1st full para: two sentences describe size (680 acres). Delete one of them.
2. P. 3, 1st para under Flora: 3 cover types or 4?
3. P. 3, 2nd para under Physical & Clim. Cond.: No weather stations nearby? No data from nearest station?
4. P. 4, 1st full para: 2 or 3 plant cover types?
5. P. 4, Plant List: no author names (eg Linnaeus)?? No authority (eg Grey's Manual, etc.).
6. Same with fauna names (author names & authority)
7. P. 9: there WILL BE NO minerals problem??
8. EA: developed by a full team of experts? Minerals? Archeologist? The EA is very brief. I HOPE it will do the trick! Peg?
9. P. 2, 1st full para: Lat. & Long. needed down to seconds (degrees & minutes only). This is my preference, but not required!

Excellent maps!

--Les--

COMMENTS ON HAUFER WASH  
(by Peg Boland)

The Forest/Region did a good job of following the suggested format sent out last September, and the length of the EA is just about right. The conditions fit Example 3 and there is seemingly no need for more than 2 alternatives in the EA. The title of the EA needs to be changed to "Environmental Assessment" rather than "Environmental Analysis."

There are several other problems with the EA than can be easily fixed. One is that site specific effects are not discussed in the EA. Reference is made to page 171 of the Forest Plan EIS but these are not summarized. An EA needs at least a one or two sentence summary of the effects in the Forest Plan EIS. Also, the environmental effects noted on page 171 do not provide the specifics needed for the Chief to determine what the long-term environmental effects would be of his decision to establish this RNA. It is especially important that the Chief know the specific environmental effects since his decision allocates this area to a RNA prescription for a long time, if not permanently; this decision is not likely to be revisited when the Forest Plan is revised. Much of the information necessary to disclose the site specific environmental effects of this decision seems to be in the ER; it would be preferable if they were pulled into the EA rather than just referencing the "impacts" section of the ER since the wording of them would be a little different in the EA. Once again, just a few sentences would do in the case of this EA. For example, one effect of establishing the RNA is limitation of future recreation use by prohibiting future trail or road development. In this particular RNA, based on what Ber Brown tells us about the area, there is not likely to be much impact but the Chief wouldn't know that unless you tell him in a sentence or two. This kind of discussion just lets the Chief know what is being given up by establishing the RNA, and how much is really being relinquished.

Also, there is a seeming contradiction in the EA in that the first paragraph of Alternative A says that "The area will be withdrawn from mineral leasing" and the second paragraph says that "Site specific consequences will be disclosed in more detail if or when mineral entry is proposed for withdrawal." If the decision to establish this RNA actually withdraws the area from mineral leasing, more minerals analysis is necessary. If site specific consequences of both mineral leasing and mineral entry for locatable minerals will be disclosed at a later date if or when the area is proposed for withdrawal, then the EA should not say the area will be withdrawn from mineral leasing. This needs some clarification. If it is likely that some individual or company will try to develop mineral claims, would it be better to combine the RNA establishment and mineral withdrawal with appropriate environmental disclosure as is now being done for the Hoosier Ridge RNA? This is just a suggestion to consider.

MESSAGE DISPLAY FOR G.FITZ

To G.Fitzgerald:r03f02d02a

From: WILLIAM H. MOEHN:R03F02A

Postmark: Mar 12,93 8:32 AM

Delivered: Mar 12,93 8:33 AM

Subject: Forwarded: Reply to: RNA Management Area Prescription

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Comments:

From: WILLIAM H. MOEHN:R03F02A

Date: Mar 12,93 8:32 AM

fyi

Previous comments:

From: REGGIE A. FLETCHER:R03A

Date: Mar 12,93 7:54 AM

Connie has a good point. Any documents planned for RNA's that we have previously called management plans should be considered analysis documents and called management strategies with NEPA developed for particular projects such as fencing or a prescribed fire.

Previous comments:

From: Connie Millar:S27A

Date: Mar 12,93 6:45 AM

A general comment: We're getting pressure from our Forest LMP folks that we should not be writing RNA "Management Plans", i.e., there should be no mid-level Plans (just LMP and project plans). This is more than semantic, they insist: if the RNA MP indicates a new mgmt direction, then the LMP should be amended (some insist this even when RNA MP just gives more elaboration to S&Gs in LMP); if the RNA MP is adding details to a specific project, the decisions should be in a project plan (= NEPA project). We are solving this by taking the planning process/planning document to be a RNA Management Strategy--ie, the result of a interdisciplinary resource analysis (= think tank). Any specific projects suggested that require EAs would get them later on case-by-case basis.

Message:

From: Tom Andrews:S28A

Date: Mar 11,93 3:44 PM

Hello everyone!

Any suggestions for refining this would be greatly appreciated. Some of the ideas in here also apply to possible Manual revisions.

Many thanks,

Tom

-----X-----



*Research*

ALISON M. BERRY  
Associate Professor  
Department of Environmental Horticulture

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Davis, California 95616-8587

Office: (916) 752-7683  
Fax: (916) 752-1819

August 1 1993

Dearest Graciela, sorry if this is slow,

16

But was very pleased to receive your letter of June 7 re: Comanche Canyon proposed RNA and had planned to respond sooner, but alas,

Believing that Nature Research is badly needed and that areas with little disturbance should be protected for conservation of scientific data yet unobserved. With the high level of resource manipulation from the railroads and USFS both, there are far too few areas of the Carson ~~Nature~~ where nature remains largely undisturbed. I wish that all roadless areas would be protected by a ban on all new road construction. Perhaps the engineers could be set to work on environmental restoration. We have more than enough roads.

*Already scope of this decision*

This sounds like an important area to designate since, if any vegetation type has been heavily roaded and disturbed by firewood gatherers, it is the pinon - juniper and its value is more than simple economics, which is important. But, so are the deer mice, tit mice, and all those lovely little critters who frequent pinon and rely on it for their genetic survival. I don't have the list, but believe there are some threatened, endangered or sensitive species who need it too, like sage grouse and a sparrow (brewers?). Wonder if any can be found on this area? Perhaps they might migrate through.

I question the need for a fire plan and wish I could have seen the area, but alas, have no transportation and it isn't easy to get around. If the last fires occurred over 100 years ago, were other fires stopped and prevented from entering the area since then, or were they spared by nature and should you allow nature to handle the issue in its own way? I sent Gretchen an article on the non-natural impacts of prescribed burns & suggest you read it in this regard.

Is it possible to extend the boundary down to the 7300 altitude contour in the southwest corner? From the map, it looks like the hill below the south peak would play an essential role in the integrity of the northern part of the hill (peak). Of course I would favor any reasonable suggestion to extend RNA protection to as large an area as feasible since the larger the area, the greater the biologic potential for future reference. Have there been T&E surveys of the area? *Can be conducted regardless of decision Based on funding*

I apologize again for losing your letter for so long and hope that these (still influenced by exhaustion) comments, into your (also overwhelming) diet of paperwork and issues <sup>not to be</sup> considered. Hope you got some alert, prompt input from others less chaotic than me, but it's been a crazy summer and am sorry I couldn't get to more of your forest events. Hope this thing flies through the amendment channels and gets the big okay, looks good to me.

Thanks for the good work,

bonnie bonneau

*Bonnie Bonneau*

888 JUL 19 1993

July 15, 1993

(15)

To: Graciela Terrazas,  
District Ranger  
EL Rito Ranger District  
P.O. Box 56  
El Rito, NM 87530

From: Barbara Manzanares  
P.O. Box 732  
Medanales, NM 87548



Re: Research Natural Area in Comanche Canyon

I would like to go on record as being completely opposed to the establishment of a Research Natural Area in Comanche Canyon. I am opposed to any further closures of or restrictions placed on, U.S. Forest Service lands in this area.

Your method of requesting Public Comment on actions taken by the El Rito Ranger District, should include better notification to the communities of Medanales and Abiquiu. We are directly affected by the use or non-use of these public lands, which we have "traditionally" used for centuries.

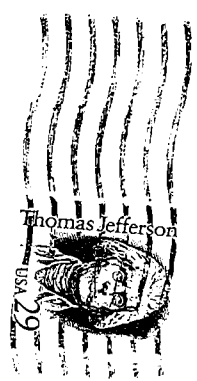
The field trips should also be better coordinated. Notification of cancellations or changes should be taken more seriously by your office.

The actions that the U.S. Forest Service takes on the lands in Northern New Mexico are of deep and serious concern to us. If the public does not comment on your actions, it is because they are not informed of what you are doing.

I expect that you will consider amending the Forest Plan and take this area out of special area management.

Barbara Manzanares  
P.O. Box 732  
Medanales, NM 87548

Graciela Terrazas  
District Ranger  
El Rito Ranger District  
P.O. Box 56  
El Rito, NM 87530



Handwritten initials or signature.





United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

El Rito  
Ranger  
District

P.O. Box 56  
JCT St. 110 & 96  
El Rito, NM 87530

---

Reply To: 1950

Date: June 7, 1993

Ms. Kathy Albrecht  
P. O. Box 6040  
Taos, NM 87571

Dear Friend

The El Rito Ranger District is seeking public comment on the establishment of a Research Natural Area in Comanche Canyon. This canyon is approximately 10 miles west of El Rito, New Mexico. The agency proposed action is to establish approximately 526 acres of old pinyon and juniper forest as an area to be managed for research of this vegetation type.

This would limit the use of this area to non-motorized recreation use and research. If established the standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan would apply to this area. These prescribe that there would be no harvest of wood products and no grazing of livestock. Off-road vehicle travel, open campfires, recreational activities that would result in degradation and the introduction of non-native species would also be prohibited.

Actions that would be taken under this action would include the construction of effective road closures, signing of the area and the development of a prescribed natural fire burn plan. Fences to restrict the movement of livestock into this area may also be constructed if livestock begin to use the area. When appropriate and feasible this area will also be withdrawn from mineral entry.

Currently this area is not used by livestock due to lack of water and in-accessability. The area is relatively untouched by firewood gathers and maintains old growth like characteristics. The old pinyon/juniper forest is interspersed with sagebrush flats. The last fires in the area occurred over 100 years ago. Soils are formed from sandstone and shale and are highly variable. A complete report on the existing condition of the area is available at the El Rito Ranger District.

The Desired Future condition for this area as defined by the Forest Plan and the RNA Establishment report is as follows. The area remains free of disturbance from people. The area is not significantly modified except by natural disturbances such as fire. This area provides an excellent example of pinyon-juniper in advanced succession. These features are preserved in a pristine nature to study. This biotic community is highly valued in Northern New Mexico to maintain traditional lifestyles. Therefore



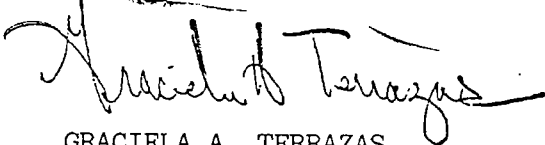
the area will provide important information about management methods to maintain sustainability of this economically valuable vegetation type.

This proposed action is consistent with the Carson National Forest Plan. This area was identified in Amendment #3. Two other alternatives which are being considered are (1) to maintain the area as a potential Research Natural Area and take no action at this time and (2) Amend the Forest Plan and take this area out of special area management.

A field trip to this area will also be scheduled for June 17th if interest exists. This date can be negotiated if another time is convenient for interested parties. The field trip will leave the El Rito Ranger District at 10:00 am and will last approximately 4-5 hours. Plan on walking about 1/2 mile and bring a lunch.

Any comments on this action should be submitted in writing or by telephone by July 1st. If you have any questions or for more information contact Gretchen Fitzgerald at the El Rito Ranger District at 581-4554.

Sincerely,



GRACIELA A. TERRAZAS  
District Ranger

Caring for the Land and Serving People

Graciela,  
I strongly support the establishment of this RNA! Please proceed to bring it to reality. Sorry, I was out of town when earlier comment was sought.  
- Kathryn

June 30, 1993

Graciela A. Terrazas, District Ranger  
El Rito Ranger District  
Carson National Forest  
P.O. Box 56  
JCT St. 110 & 96  
El Rito, NM 87530

13

Dear Ms. Terrazas:

We have recently received your letter dated June 7 regarding the proposal to establish a research natural area in Comanche Canyon.

We have determined that the project will have little to no potential to impact water quality, provided that all road closures are effectively revegetated to prevent erosion during storm events.

Thank you for contacting us, and we look forward to continued cooperation. If you have any questions, please call me at 827-2821.

Sincerely,

Brian R. Wirtz  
Environmental Specialist  
Surface Water Quality Bureau

JUL - 2 1993

Bruce King  
Governor

Judith M. Espinosa  
Secretary

Ron Curry  
Deputy Secretary

Harold Runnels Building  
1190 St. Francis Drive  
P.O. Box 26110  
Santa Fe, NM 87502  
(505) 827-2850  
FAX (505) 827-2856



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## Research area comments sought

The El Rito Ranger District is seeking public comment on the establishment of a research natural area in Comanche Canyon,

located about 10 miles west of El Rito near Ghost Ranch. The proposed action is to turn 526 acres of old piñon-juniper forest into an area to be managed for the research of this vegetation type and limit the area to non-motorized recreational use. If established, no harvest of wood products nor grazing of livestock would be allowed, and recreational activities that might result in the degradation and introduction of non-native species would be prohibited. The area is relatively untouched by firewood gatherers and maintains old growth-like characteristics. The piñon-juniper forest is interspersed with sagebrush. The last fire in the area was more than 100 years ago. A complete report on the existing condition of the area is available at the El Rito Ranger District.

~~(S)~~  
12

JUL - 1 1993



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

El Rito  
Ranger  
District

P.O. Box 56  
JCT St. 110 & 96  
El Rito, NM 87530

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Reply To: 1950

Date: June 7, 1993

RECEIVED  
USFWS-AFO  
6190  
JUN 09 '93

Ms. Jennifer Fowler-Propst  
Field Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Suite D, 3530 Pan American Highway, N. E.  
Albuquerque, NM 87107

Dear Friend

The El Rito Ranger District is seeking public comment on the establishment of a Research Natural Area in Comanche Canyon. This canyon is approximately 10 miles west of El Rito, New Mexico. The agency proposed action is to establish approximately 526 acres of old pinyon and juniper forest as an area to be managed for research of this vegetation type.

This would limit the use of this area to non-motorized recreation use and research. If established the standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan would apply to this area. These prescribe that there would be no harvest of wood products and no grazing of livestock. Off-road vehicle travel, open campfires, recreational activities that would result in degradation and the introduction of non-native species would also be prohibited.

Actions that would be taken under this action would include the construction of effective road closures, signing of the area and the development of a prescribed natural fire burn plan. Fences to restrict the movement of livestock into this area may also be constructed if livestock begin to use the area. When appropriate and feasible this area will also be withdrawn from mineral entry.

Currently this area is not used by livestock due to lack of water and in-accessability. The area is relatively untouched by firewood gathers and maintains old growth like characteristics. The old pinyon/juniper forest is interspersed with sagebrush flats. The last fires in the area occurred over 100 years ago. Soils are formed from sandstone and shale and are highly variable. A complete report on the existing condition of the area is available at the El Rito Ranger District.

The Desired Future condition for this area as defined by the Forest Plan and the RNA Establishment report is as follows. The area remains free of disturbance from people. The area is not significantly modified except by natural disturbances such as fire. This area provides an excellent example of pinyon-juniper in advanced succession. These features are preserved in a pristine nature to study. This biotic community is highly valued in



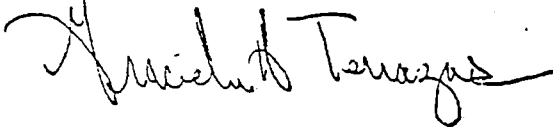
Northern New Mexico to maintain traditional lifestyles. Therefore the area will provide important information about management methods to maintain sustainability of this economically valuable vegetation type.

This proposed action is consistent with the Carson National Forest Plan. This area was identified in Amendment #3. Two other alternatives which are being considered are (1) to maintain the area as a potential Research Natural Area and take no action at this time and (2) Amend the Forest Plan and take this area out of special area management.

A field trip to this area will also be scheduled for June 17th if interest exists. This date can be negotiated if another time is convenient for interested parties. The field trip will leave the El Rito Ranger District at 10:00 am and will last approximately 4-5 hours. Plan on walking about 1/2 mile and bring a lunch.

Any comments on this action should be submitted in writing or by telephone by July 1st. If you have any questions or for more information contact Gretchen Fitzgerald at the El Rito Ranger District at 581-4554.

Sincerely,



GRACIELA A. TERRAZAS  
District Ranger

Caring for the Land and Serving People

<b>NO EFFECT FINDING</b>
The described action will have no effect on listed species, wetlands, or other important wildlife resources.
Date <u>6.29.93</u>
Consultation # <u>222-93-I-349</u>
Approved by <u>[Signature]</u>
U.S. FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE NEW MEXICO ECOLOGICAL SERVICES FIELD OFFICE ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



# Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society

June 23, 1993

9

Graciela A. Terrazas, District Ranger  
El Rito Ranger District  
USDA Forest Service  
Post Office Box 56  
El Rito, NM 8530

Dear Ms. Terrazas:

Thank you for your letter on the establishment of a RNA in Comanche Cañon. While we support the establishment of RNAs, we are concerned about the fact that in some cases, leaving the area alone may be a de facto management decision. In particular, although "natural disturbances such as fire" will be allowed, will fires burn with historic frequency in the surrounding area, allowing "natural" fire to enter the RNA? Further, to what extent is the present condition in part a result of disturbances such as grazing in the late 1880s-1920 time frame and not a "natural" state at all.

These comments are intended to encourage you to draft a management plan for the RNA that is based on sound science, including knowledge of prior human use (historic and prehistoric), fire frequency, etc. You will recognize hints of M. Botkin's *Discordant Harmonies, A New Ecology for the 21st Century*, a book which, though I do not entirely agree with, I recommend to you as a land manager.

I would enjoy the opportunity to visit the area at some time in the future, perhaps in August, and will contact you at that time if you can join me.

JUN 24 1993

Sincerely,

Thomas Jerryis  
60 Barranca Rd.  
Los Alamos, NM 87544

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ROAD CLK			
WATER CLK			
...			

JUN 24 1993

	INFO	ACTION	INITIALS
DFR			
TIMBER			
RANGE			
SILVI			
ARCH./LANDS			
FMO			
EMO			
PREP			
TSA			
NEPA			
RNG TECH			
RESC CLK			
CONP CLK			
FILE			

District Ranger  
 El Rito Ranger District  
 Carson National Forest  
 POBOX 56  
 El Rito, NM 87530

Dear District Ranger

I want to voice my support for a 526-acre research area in Comanche Canyon where motorized vehicles, fires and the removal of forest products would be banned.

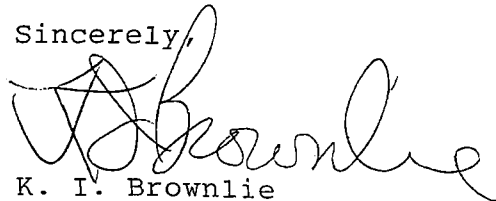
I have lived over 65 years and have seen all the natural areas of the US and Western Canada. I enjoyed Yosemite when there were only a few thousand people there on the July 4th weekend and driven in Glacier National Parks when there were no paved roads. New Mexico forests are some of the last places on earth that can be enjoyed if they are left in a natural state.

The reason there are so many rodents spreading disease is because the coyotes have been poisoned and there are killer bees and other insects to be feared because the natural habitats of the birds of prey have been destroyed.

We must take some strong positive action to preserve our precious natural heritage. Most people I talk to do not want a lot of artificial interference in the National Forests, just maintain them as they are. Believe me you are not going to improve on nature by spending large amounts of money the way you have been.

Also please review the qualifications of the people who are allowed to research the area. Remember the so-called scientist who killed the bird to save it. A good deal more common sense is needed by the people who are supposed to be administering our natural resources for the common good.

Sincerely,



K. I. Brownlie

June 22, 1993

755 West Manhattan SF NM 87501



6-22-93

TO: MRS. GRACIELA A TERRAZAS  
FR: MR. NICHOLAS LOVATO  
RE: RNA Project Comanche Area

(2)

It is my concern that the RNA Comanche Project would affect the following:

- 1) Would this closure affect any grazing rights which may be issued in this area?
- 2) Would this be a permanent closure?
- 3) Could this area be a suitable area to introduce the Mariner turkeys being that the area is going to be closed? (Doubtful under another Dec. Dec.)
- 4) Are other areas being considered for closure or projects in the future? - I.S. - outside scope of decision.
- 5) Do you have sufficient personnel to avoid road closure violations?

Thank you for considering these topics.

*Nick Lovato*

Box 22

Ojo Caliente NM

87549

583-2159

6

Re  
5  
/

## Forest officials seek public input

The El Rito Ranger District of the Carson National Forest is seeking public comment on the creation of a 526-acre research area in Comanche Canyon, near El Rito, where motorized vehicles, fires and the removal of forest products would be banned.

Comments about the proposal will be accepted at the district by phone (581-4554) or by mail until July 1.

The area, which is largely undisturbed, mature piñon and juniper forest, is ideal for study, according to district officials. A field trip is proposed into the area on June 17.

Record of phone conversations on Comanche RWA

(5)

Jeff Kline - State Lands office 6/14/93  
All for it. We need some baseline data. <sup>Implementation</sup> - <sup>Dependent on funds</sup>  
would be interested in any Cooperative research  
projects. I told him about Petra and research  
there.

6/15/93

Allison Berry (920-7041)  
Doing research in Mesa Verde and is interested  
and thinks it is a great idea. She is doing research  
on nitrogen-fixing plants in P.S. Will attend field  
trip 5/28/93

Louis Torres - Expressed interest. will go out the  
24<sup>th</sup> of June to look at the area.

Toanie Berdie - thinks it is great and wants to see  
the area

Felicite Wilson - thinks it is great and hope it - 6/10/93  
happens.

Barbara Manzanaro - wants to attend field trip, 6/15/93  
Aman Word

6/16/93 Richard Martiney - Is concerned that we will  
advertize the area and draw attention to it  
which will create more poaching problem. Suggests  
we close the road 1 mile away from it.

MESSAGE

DELIVERED WITH SLIP

I AM NEVER AVAILABLE

MY OFFICE IS CLOSED

I AM LEAVING TO SEE A PATIENT

28-1-1988

I AM ON VACATION

MEMORANDUM OF CALL

Previous editions usable

TO:

Gretchen

YOU WERE CALLED BY

YOU WERE VISITED BY-

Alison Berry

OF (Organization)

es

PLEASE PHONE

FTS

AUTOVON

820-7041

WILL CALL AGAIN

IS WAITING TO SEE YOU

RETURNED YOUR CALL

WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE

Re: Potomac Wildlife

Area (Rescue)

Ecologist

W. S. Hanning

RECEIVED BY

HNA

DATE

6/

TIME

MEMORANDUM  
OF CALL

Previous editions usable

TO: Datcher

YOU WERE CALLED BY-  YOU WERE VISITED BY-

Mattie/Howard Picken  
OF (Organization)

PLEASE PHONE ▶  FTS  AUTOVON

581-4843

WILL CALL AGAIN  IS WAITING TO SEE YOU

RETURNED YOUR CALL  WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MEM

MESSAGE

TO: Want to go on hike  
to Coconino Canyon

OF (

RECEIVED BY Jossie DATE 06/22/93 TIME 1703

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018 STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-81)  
Prescribed by GSA  
U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1991 281-781/40014 FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

MESSAGE

Re: Petaca Wildlife  
Area. [Rescue]  
Ecologist  
W. S. Hanning

RECEIVED BY HNA DATE 6 TIME

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018 STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-81)  
Prescribed by GSA  
U.S. G.P.O. 1991 281-781/40011 FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

MEMORANDUM OF CALL

Previous editions usable

TO: Hutchen

YOU WERE CALLED BY--  YOU WERE VISITED BY--

Barbara Manzanares  
OF (Organization)

685-4463 - Arizona

PLEASE PHONE ►  FTS \*\*  AUTOVON

WILL CALL AGAIN  IS WAITING TO SEE YOU\*

RETURNED YOUR CALL  WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE  
Wants to sign up for the Thursday field trip. Call her if that's not OK.

RECEIVED BY TINA DATE 6/14/93 TIME 4:22

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018 STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-81)  
Prescribed by GSA  
\* U.S. G.P.O. 1990 - 281-781 FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

M

TO: Want to go on Hiker to Coconino Canyon

OF (

RECEIVED BY Jessie DATE 06/22/93 TIME 1703

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018 STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-81)  
Prescribed by GSA  
\* U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1991 281-781/40014 FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

MESSAGE

Re: Petaca Wildlife Area (Rescue) Ecologist  
Wendy Sharp Hanna

RECEIVED BY TINA DATE 6/ TIME

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018 STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-8)  
Prescribed by GSA  
\* U.S. G.P.O. 1991 281-781/40011 FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

June 9, '93

Dear Getches:

For the first time in <sup>(3)</sup> many years I received a letter from this ranger station which does not concern cutting trees! How on earth did you do it? Can it be that this 100% timber-oriented district is, at last, recognizing multiple use? !!

I am completely in favor of what you want to do in Conanche cañon. Fact is, I am so pleased about it that I can hardly believe it. All I can say is: thank you.

The area around the spring (near the road) has some sort of historical value, I have heard. There is supposed to have been an Indian battle there. I can remember when arrowheads were profusely scattered around there.

I guess you know that enforcement of the new rules won't be easy. With Short leaving, there goes law enforcement. (The ranger doesn't seem to believe in it.)

Anyway - thanks  
Sincerely,  
Felicite Wilson

Bx 215  
El Rito  
N. M. 87530

JUN 9 1993



Ms. Gretchen Fitzgerald,  
U.S. Forest Service  
El Rito,  
N. M. 87530



mNEPAMs. Kathy Albrecht  
P. O. Box 6040  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPAAttn: Ben Neary  
Albuquerque Journal  
328 Galisteo St.  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPAMr. David Bates  
Taos Environmental Association  
P. O. Box 15  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPAMr. Michael Belshaw  
P. O. Box 205  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPACanjilon Ranger District  
P. O. Box 488  
Canjilon, NM 87515

mNEPAMr. Larry Caudell  
Wildlife Legislative Council  
P. O. Box 8178  
Albuquerque, NM 87198

mNEPAMr. Antonio I. DeVargas  
P. O. Box 695  
La Madera, NM 87539

mNEPAForest Guardians  
c/o Samuel M. Hitt  
612 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPAForest Trust  
P. O. Box 519  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

mNEPAMr. Juan Garcia  
General Delivery  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAMr. George Grossman  
NM Wilderness Study Committee  
1391 Santa Rosa Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPAMr. Rudy J. Jaramillo  
General Delivery  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

mNEPAMr. Dennis Jaramillo  
General Delivery  
La Madera, NM 87539

mNEPAMr. Thomas Jervis  
Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society  
60 Barranca Road

2

Los Alamos, NM 87544

mNEPANLa Comunidad/Carson Forest Watch  
c/o Joan Berde  
P. O. Box 15  
Llano, NM 87543

mNEPANMs. Debra Link  
P. O. Box 752  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Andy Lopez  
Rte. 1, Box 31  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Greg Martin  
P. O. Box 8  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. James W. Norton  
Southwest Regional Director  
The Wilderness Society  
510 Galisteo St.  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPANMr. Carlos Ortega, Jr.  
. and Mr. Jimmy J. Ortega  
General Delivery  
La Madera, NM 87539

mNEPANMr. Jim Piatt, Bureau Chief  
Environmental Improvement Division  
Harold Runnels Building  
1190 St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87503

mNEPANMr. Cloveo Rael  
P. O. Box 1223  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

mNEPANMr. Andrew Sandoval, Division Chief  
Habitat, Environment and Lands  
New Mexico Game and Fish  
Villagra Building  
Santa Fe, NM 87503

mNEPANMr. Hank Saxe  
P. O. Box 15  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPANConservation Committee  
Sierra Club of Santa Fe  
440 Cerrillos Rd., #G  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPANMr. Bruce Smith  
P. O. Box 145  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Carlos Sanchez, V. Pres.

Duke City Lumber Company  
P. O. Drawer 430  
Española, NM 87532

mNEPAMr. Robert W. Stewart  
Box 9505 Nickell Road  
Ranchos de Taos, NM 87557

mNEPAMr. Fred Swetnam  
P. O. Box 4190  
Fairview St.  
Española, NM 87535

mNEPAMr. Luis Torres  
P. O. Box 30113  
Española, NM 87532

mNEPAMs. Connie Valdez, President  
Northern New Mexico Community College  
El Rito Campus  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAMrs. Felicite Wilson  
P. O. Box 215  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAMr. Brian Wirtz  
Surface Water Quality Board - EID  
1190 St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87503

mNEPATres Piedras Ranger District  
P. O. Box 728  
Tres Piedras, NM 87577

mNEPAAlamosa Livestock Assoc.  
c/o Elias Salazar, President  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

mNEPAMartin Ranch  
Mike & Tim Martin  
P. O. Box 8  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAMr. Dwayne Atencio  
P. O. Box 462  
Dixon, NM 87527

mNEPAMr. Louis Oliver, President  
New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts  
Route 15, Box 1025  
San Lorenzo, NM 88041

mNEPAMr. Fred Romero  
Secretary-Treasurer  
1006 San Ildefonso Drive  
Española, NM 87533

mNEPAMr. Mike Casabonne, Committee Chairman  
State Trust & Public Lands

P. O. Box 1451  
Hope, NM 88250

mNEPAnMr. Cliff Bain  
P. O. Box 297  
Arroyo Hondo, NM 87513

mNEPAnMs. Judy Bishop  
NM & AZ Parks Conservation Council  
3005 Calle Quieta  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

mNEPAnMs. Bille Bolton  
P.O. Box 4878  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPAnMs. Bonnie Bonneau  
P.O. Box 351  
El Prado, NM 87529

mNEPAnMs. Claire Cochran  
NEPArth First  
P. O. Box 1184  
Rancho de Taos, NM 87557

mNEPAnBetty Jane Curry  
Cuba Public Land User's Association  
Box 143  
Cuba, NM 87013

mNEPAnJerry Dury  
Stone Forest Industries  
PO Box 488  
Reserve, NM 87830

mNEPAnLeslie Davis  
Rt. 4, Box 61 C  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPAnMr. Scott Draney  
P.O. Box 61  
Tres Piedras, NM 87577

mNEPAnMs. Jennifer Fowler-Propst  
Field Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Suite D, 3530 Pan American Highway, N. E.  
Albuquerque, NM 87107

mNEPAnProfessor H. Paul Friesema  
2040 Sheridan Road  
Evanston, IL 60208-4100

mNEPAnTony Gallegos  
Office of Senator Pete Domenici  
625 Silver S.W., Suite 120  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

mNEPAnMr. Joe Gurule, Jr.  
General Delivery  
Vallecitos, NM 87581



mNEPANMike Hess  
White Sands Forest Products, Inc.  
PO Box 209  
Alamogordo, NM 88310

mNEPANMs. Nan Lipsett  
P.O. Box 269  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPANCharlie Lopez  
Western Council of Industrial Workers (WCIW)  
Rt. 3, Box 176-F  
Española, NM 87532

mNEPANButch Maki/Kay Roybal  
Office of Representative Bill Richardson  
548 Agua Fria  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPANMr. Nick Medley  
17 E. Wildflower  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPANMr. Luis Pena  
P.O. Box 746  
La Madera, NM 87539

mNEPANRio Arriba County Commissioners  
%Rio Arriba County Courthouse  
Tierra Amarilla, NM 87575

mNEPANMr. Robert Trapp, Editor  
Rio Grande Sun  
P. O. Box 790  
Española, NM 87532

mNEPANGovernor, San Juan Pueblo  
San Juan Pueblo, NM 87566

mNEPANThe Santa Fe New Mexican  
P. O. Box 2048  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

mNEPANMs. Clare Swanger  
P.O. Box 1762  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPANThe Taos News  
P. O. Box U  
Taos, NM 87571

mNEPANDavid M. Vackar  
Office of Senator Jeff Bingaman  
625 Silver Avenue, S.W. Suite 130  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

mNEPANMr. Paul and Susan Lisko  
P. O. Box 1242  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

Ghost Ranch Conference  
HC 77 Box 11  
Abiquiu, NM

mNEPAnMr. Bill Montoya  
Director  
New Mexico Department of Game & Fish  
Villagra Building  
Santa Fe, NM 87503

mNEPAnMr. Bob Stewart  
Carson Forest Watch  
Box 9505 Nickell Road  
Ranchos de Taos, NM 87557

mNEPAnMr. Luis Torres  
Box 30113  
Española, NM 87532

mNEPAnMr. Grove Burnett  
Rt. 11, Box 9A  
Glorieta, NM 87535

mNEPAnMr. Duane Atencio  
P.O. Box 462  
Dixon, NM 87527

mNEPAnMr. Jim Fortune  
General Delivery  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAnMs. Annette Norvelle  
Box 394  
Arroyo Hondo, NM 87513

mNEPAnMr. Arturo and Ms. Toni Sisneros  
P.O. Box 55  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAnMr. Ray Munyon  
NNMCC #211  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPAnMr. John Talberth  
419 E. Palace Avenue, Suite #2  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPAnMr. Marco Lowenstein  
Southwest Region Coordinator  
Public Forestry Foundation  
P.O. Box 701  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

mNEPAnMr. Johnny Gallegos  
General Delivery  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

~~mNEPAnMr. Kelly Gurule~~  
General Delivery  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

*Unknown*

mNEPAnMr. Daniel Gurule  
General Delivery

Vallecitos, NM 87581

mNEPANMadera Forest Products Association  
c/o Mr. Delbert DeVargas  
P. O. Box 3, Cañon Plaza  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

mNEPANVallecitos Sawmill  
P.O. Box 246  
Vallecitos, NM 87581

mNEPANMr. Anastacio Ortega, President  
Jarita Mesa Livestock Association  
General Delivery  
La Madera, NM 87539

mNEPANMr. Rudy Maestas  
El Rito Livestock Association  
P.O. Box 682  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Les Haas  
General Delivery  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Dan Joseph  
General Delivery  
Ojo Caliente, NM 87549

mNEPANMr. Jake Vigil  
General Delivery  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Jack Edwards  
General Delivery  
El Rito, NM 87530

mNEPANMr. Flaviano Gutierrez  
Petaca Land Grant  
General Delivery  
Petaca, NM 87554

~~mNEPANMr. Glen Ayers~~ *Address unknown*  
Western Earth Support Cooperative  
P. O. Box 800  
LaPorte, CO 80535

mNEPANMs. Carmen Andrews  
P. O. Box 141  
New Alamaden, CA 85042

mNEPANMr. Charles Barbee, Dist. Highway Engineer  
P. O. Box 4127  
Coronado Station  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

mNEPANMs. Gina Covina  
P. O. Box 226  
Vallecitos, NM 87581



mNEPANMr. Lawrence Gallegos  
P. O. Box 529  
Questa, NM 87556

mNEPANMr. Ernest Gonzales  
Rt. Box 11  
Vadito, NM 87579

mNEPANMr. Jim Hickey  
Rt. Box 22C  
Vadito, NM 87579

mNEPANMr. Dave Henderson  
P. O. Box 9314  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

mNEPANMr. Preciliano Martin  
P. O. Box 425  
Duluth, MN 55801

*-forwarding  
order expired*

mNEPANMr. John Miller  
P. O. Box 219  
Red River, NM 87558

mNEPANMr. Patrick J. Baker  
P. O. Box 3362  
Española, NM 87532

mNEPANArlis & Reid Guide & Outfitters  
P. O. Box 664  
Chama, NM 87520

mNEPANTy Piper  
New Mexico Trout  
1313 Mountain View Road  
Sandia Park, NM 87047

mNEPANMr. Sam Ray  
dba Bear Paw Outfitters  
31825 CR500  
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

mNEPANMr. Richard H. Ray  
dba Lobo Outfitters  
Rt. 2, Box 94  
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

mNEPANPatrick M. Torrez  
dba New Mexico Mountain Adventures  
2903 Monroe NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87111

mNEPANMr. Moises Morales  
P. O. Box 39  
Tierra Amarilla, NM 87575

mNEPANMr. Jim S. Sarabia  
General Delivery  
Petaca, NM 87554

mNEPAnMr. Nicholas Lovato  
Box 184  
Ojo Caliente, NM 87549

mNEPAnMr. Dennis Duran  
P. O. Box 733  
Santa Cruz, NM 87567

mNEPAnMr. John Geddie  
8040 Bellamah Ct., N. E.  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

mNEPAnKeshi  
Robin Dunlap  
227 Don Gaspar Avenue  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

mNEPAnCelerino Archuleta  
El Rito Laboato Association-Secretary  
P.O. Box 4007  
Fairview, NM 87533

mNEPAnRicardo Martinez  
El Rito Labato Association-President



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

El Rito  
Ranger  
District

P.O. Box 56  
JCT St. 110 & 96  
El Rito, NM 87530

(1)

---

Reply To: 1950

Date: June 7, 1993

Ricardo Martinez  
El Rito Labato Association-President

Dear Friend

The El Rito Ranger District is seeking public comment on the establishment of a Research Natural Area in Comanche Canyon. This canyon is approximately 10 miles west of El Rito, New Mexico. The agency proposed action is to establish approximately 526 acres of old pinyon and juniper forest as an area to be managed for research of this vegetation type.

This would limit the use of this area to non-motorized recreation use and research. If established the standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan would apply to this area. These prescribe that there would be no harvest of wood products and no grazing of livestock. Off-road vehicle travel, open campfires, recreational activities that would result in degradation and the introduction of non-native species would also be prohibited.

Actions that would be taken under this action would include the construction of effective road closures, signing of the area and the development of a prescribed natural fire burn plan. Fences to restrict the movement of livestock into this area may also be constructed if livestock begin to use the area. When appropriate and feasible this area will also be withdrawn from mineral entry.

Currently this area is not used by livestock due to lack of water and in-accessability. The area is relatively untouched by firewood gathers and maintains old growth like characteristics. The old pinyon/juniper forest is interspersed with sagebrush flats. The last fires in the area occurred over 100 years ago. Soils are formed from sandstone and shale and are highly variable. A complete report on the existing condition of the area is available at the El Rito Ranger District.

The Desired Future condition for this area as defined by the Forest Plan and the RNA Establishment report is as follows. The area remains free of disturbance from people. The area is not significantly modified except by natural disturbances such as fire. This area provides an excellent example of pinyon-juniper in advanced succession. These features are preserved in a pristine nature to study. This biotic community is highly valued in Northern New Mexico to maintain traditional lifestyles. Therefore



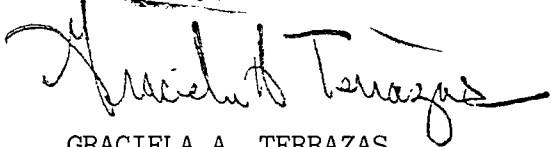
the area will provide important information about management methods to maintain sustainability of this economically valuable vegetation type.

This proposed action is consistent with the Carson National Forest Plan. This area was identified in Amendment #3. Two other alternatives which are being considered are (1) to maintain the area as a potential Research Natural Area and take no action at this time and (2) Amend the Forest Plan and take this area out of special area management.

A field trip to this area will also be scheduled for June 17th if interest exists. This date can be negotiated if another time is convenient for interested parties. The field trip will leave the El Rito Ranger District at 10:00 am and will last approximately 4-5 hours. Plan on walking about 1/2 mile and bring a lunch.

Any comments on this action should be submitted in writing or by telephone by July 1st. If you have any questions or for more information contact Gretchen Fitzgerald at the El Rito Ranger District at 581-4554.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Graciela A. Terrazas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

GRACIELA A. TERRAZAS  
District Ranger

Caring for the Land and Serving People