



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Roswell Field Office
2909 West 2nd
Roswell, NM 88201

IN REPLY REFER TO:

8322Fort Stanton ACEC Plan

Jan. 03, 2003

Dear Public Land User:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Roswell Field Office is asking for public comments on the Draft Route Designation Plan and Environmental Assessment (RDP/EA) for the Fort Stanton Area Of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The 60-day public comment period starts at the date of this letter. An evening public open house will be held on January 23, 2003 from 6:00 through 9:00 PM at the Capitan, New Mexico, Senior Citizen Center, adjacent to the Capitan, New Mexico High School. BLM specialists will be on hand during the public open house to answer questions you may have on the planning process and to assist you. At the end of the 60-day public comment period, BLM will evaluate the comments and finalize the plan.

The Route Designation Plan/Environmental Assessment is the formal route designation process of the Fort Stanton ACEC plan, finalized on March of 2001. Existing roads will either be left open or be closed to public use. The proposed trails system would be designed for equestrian and other non-motorized uses. The proposed trails would allow the public to use designated trails instead of existing roads within the ACEC. If you have any questions please contact Paul T. Happel at (505) 627-0203 or Howard Parman at (505) 627-0212.

Sincerely,

/s/ Paul T. Happel

for Edwin L. Roberson
Roswell Field Manager

Attachment:

Fort Stanton ACEC/ Draft Route Designation Plan/EA.
PTH Fortstan/letterRDP draft

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9/23/02

**FORT STANTON
AREA OF CRITICAL
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

ROUTE DESIGNATION PLAN
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

PHOTOS

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CHAPTER ONE

FORT STANTON

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

ROUTE DESIGNATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND :

During 1999-2001 The Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern collaborative activity plan (ACEC Plan) (NM-060-2000-0141) was developed with local communities and representatives from Lincoln County following the recommendations of the Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan of October 1997(RMP). The ACEC Plan was completed on August 28, 2001. One of the outgrowths of the ACEC plan is to develop a Route Designation Plan/environmental Assessment (RDP/EA). This RDP/EA will designate vehicle routes of travel as open or closed. Certain designated routes of travel for mountain bike/horse/hiking trails will be closed to motorized vehicles. The attached base map from the ACEC Plan, page 2-16, "Fort Stanton Existing Roads and Proposed Road Closures", will be used as a basis for the proposed route designation within the ACEC. Refinements in Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) management will be based on the aforementioned map.

The location of the Fort Stanton ACEC is within the un-surveyed portion of the Fort Stanton Military Reservation, New Mexico Prime Meridian. The location of the ACEC is T9S., Range 14 & 15E., T 10S., R14 & 15E(see attached map).The management goals of the ACEC are to protect the biological, archaeological and scenic qualities of Fort Stanton, while providing quality recreation opportunities.

The locations of the proposed trails on the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Lincoln National Forest, Smokey Bear Ranger District(USFS)are as follows:

A proposed trail will exit the Fort Stanton ACEC and enter the USFS lands at T.10S., R.15E., Section 7 SW 1/4 NW 1/4. and continue on established Forest Road Number 593A, intersect Road

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Number 9022 and continue west to an un-numbered USFS road and exit USFS lands at T.10S., R.14E., Section 14 South SW 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4. At this point it will exit USFS lands and enter the Fort Stanton ACEC administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The second trail on the USFS administered lands exits Fort Stanton ACEC and enters USFS lands on an un-numbered USFS road at T.10S., R.16E., Section 4 NW 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4. This unnumbered road connects with USFS road number 585 and continues west and intersects with Lincoln County Road E-007, leaving USFS property and entering Fort Stanton ACEC (see attached map).

The proposed Designated Trails map on page five shows the proposed trails on the Fort Stanton ACEC as well as two proposed trails on the U.S. Lincoln National Forest, Smokey Bear District. The two proposed trails on the Lincoln National Forest are on Forest Service roads.

The management goal in the 1997 RMP are to protect the biological, archaeological and scenic qualities of the ACEC, while providing quality recreation opportunities. The RMP states the use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV's) will be limited to designated roads and trails. The plan is also consistent with 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8342, and BLM Manual 8342.

The RMP lists the following details regarding OHV travel within the ACEC:

- A 100-foot wide corridor measured from the edge of the Rio Bonito and Rio Salado will be closed to OHV use to protect sensitive riparian resources, except for the use of designated roads within the corridor.
- All multi-use trails (equestrian, hiking, and mountain bike trails that are located on existing roads will be open to OHV use.
- The Feather Cave Archaeological Complex will be closed to OHV use, except for U.S. Highway 380 and the Fort Stanton Cave Road.

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The Fort Stanton ACEC plan developed the following Statements, challenges, actions, goals and objectives as a baseline for this Plan/EA:

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

Under the Roswell RMP, approximately 24,000 acres was designated as limited to designated roads and trails for OHV use, to protect soils, cultural resources, and vegetation, especially threatened and endangered species and their habitat. The use of OHV's will be limited to designated roads and trails, with the exceptions to the limited designation listed in Chapter 1 of the ACEC Plan.

The ACEC has not been signed adequately to implement the RMP OHV decisions. Most users have used the area in a prudent manner. Due to increased pressures from the public, users have driven over terrain and caused new two-track roads. These newly formed tracks have been followed by other recreationists and have caused the two-track trails to develop into established roads. A route designation plan/environmental assessment (Plan/EA) is the outcome of the recommendations in the ACEC Plan. The Plan/EA will develop routes of travel as open or closed. Certain routes of travel such as mountain bike/horse/hiking trails would be closed to motor vehicles.

Challenges:

- Preventing new roads being formed by users.
- Closing roads to areas where appropriate, such as habitat for the endangered Kuenzler hedgehog cactus.
- Closing roads which have been traditionally used to access areas within the ACEC.
- Determining which roads should be maintained and to what standard.

GOAL:

Manage OHV's to protect the environment within the Fort Stanton ACEC.

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Objectives:

- Protect special use trails from unauthorized use.
- Close unwanted roads through the transportation plan process.
- Designate roads, parking areas and trail heads.

RECREATION TRAILS

The majority of the 40 miles of existing roads/trails have not been adequately developed for recreational use. The Fort Stanton Riding/Hiking Trails consist of old two-track and bladed roads, and are not conducive to hikers who want a trail experience. In addition to the existing trails up to 20 miles of new trails (hiking, equestrian or OHV) could be developed under the RMP. The proposed new trails will exclude Off Highway Vehicles from certain areas. The Rio Bonito National Petroglyph Trail has been developed for about 1.5 miles by volunteer help. The trail needs modifications and yearly maintenance. The Tlaloc trail is mostly old two-track and bladed roads. Some modifications will be needed to attract mountain bikers to continue to use this trail.

Challenges:

- Linking trail designation and maintenance with the route designation plan to determine which roads would be converted to trails, and the maintenance or improvements to trails within the ACEC.
- Developing a trail plan for the ACEC which would include location and length of new trails within the ACEC; coordinating trail development with the Lincoln National Forest; determining use of trails by foot traffic, horse or mountain bikes; marking all trails within the ACEC; and possibly hardening existing crossings of the Rio Bonito and Salado Creek.

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Action:

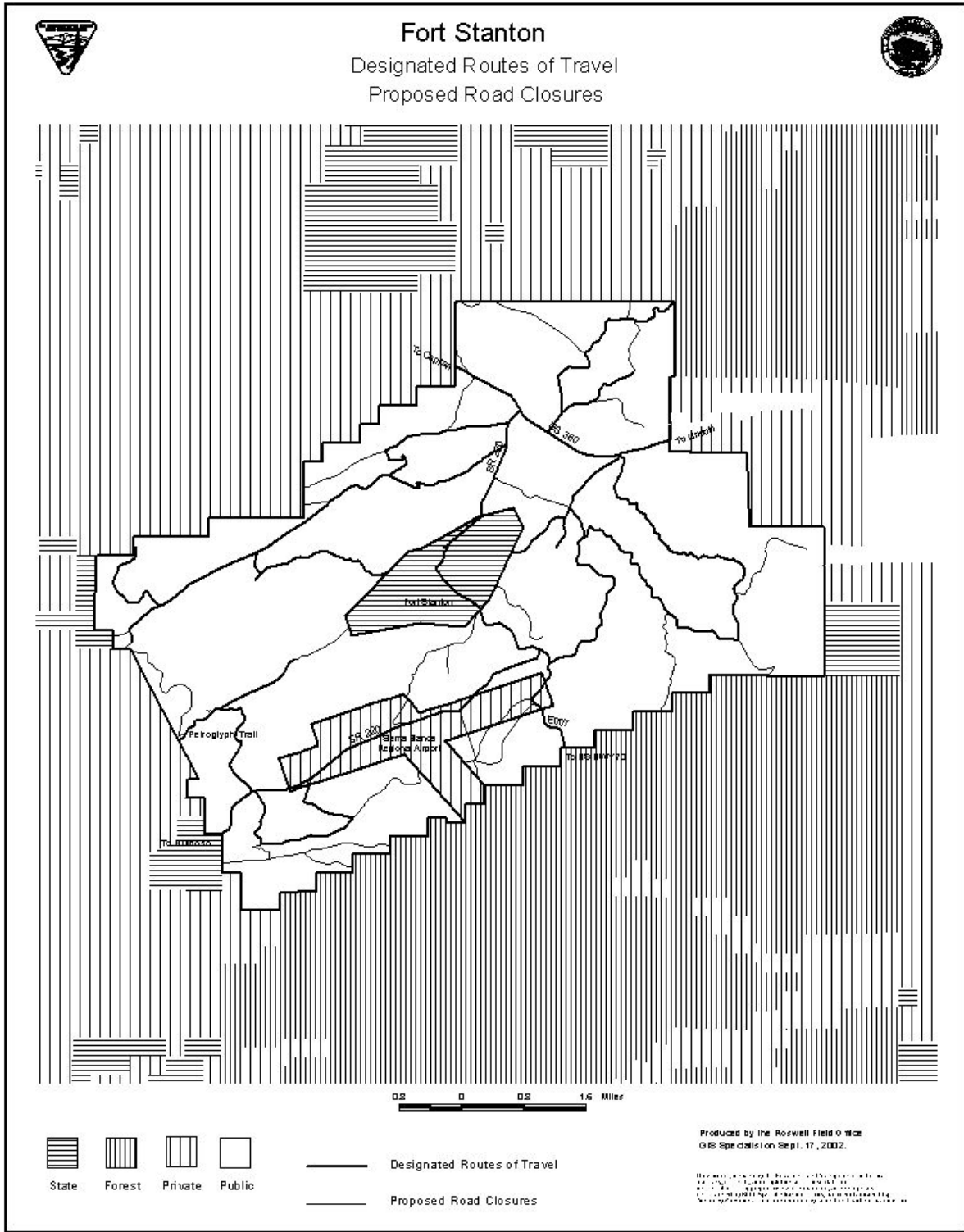
- BLM will begin a route designation planning process (this document) that will guide trail development and possible road closures within the ACEC. The goal of the plan will be to eliminate as much of the current road/trail dual designation as possible. This will be a public process and include environmental analysis.

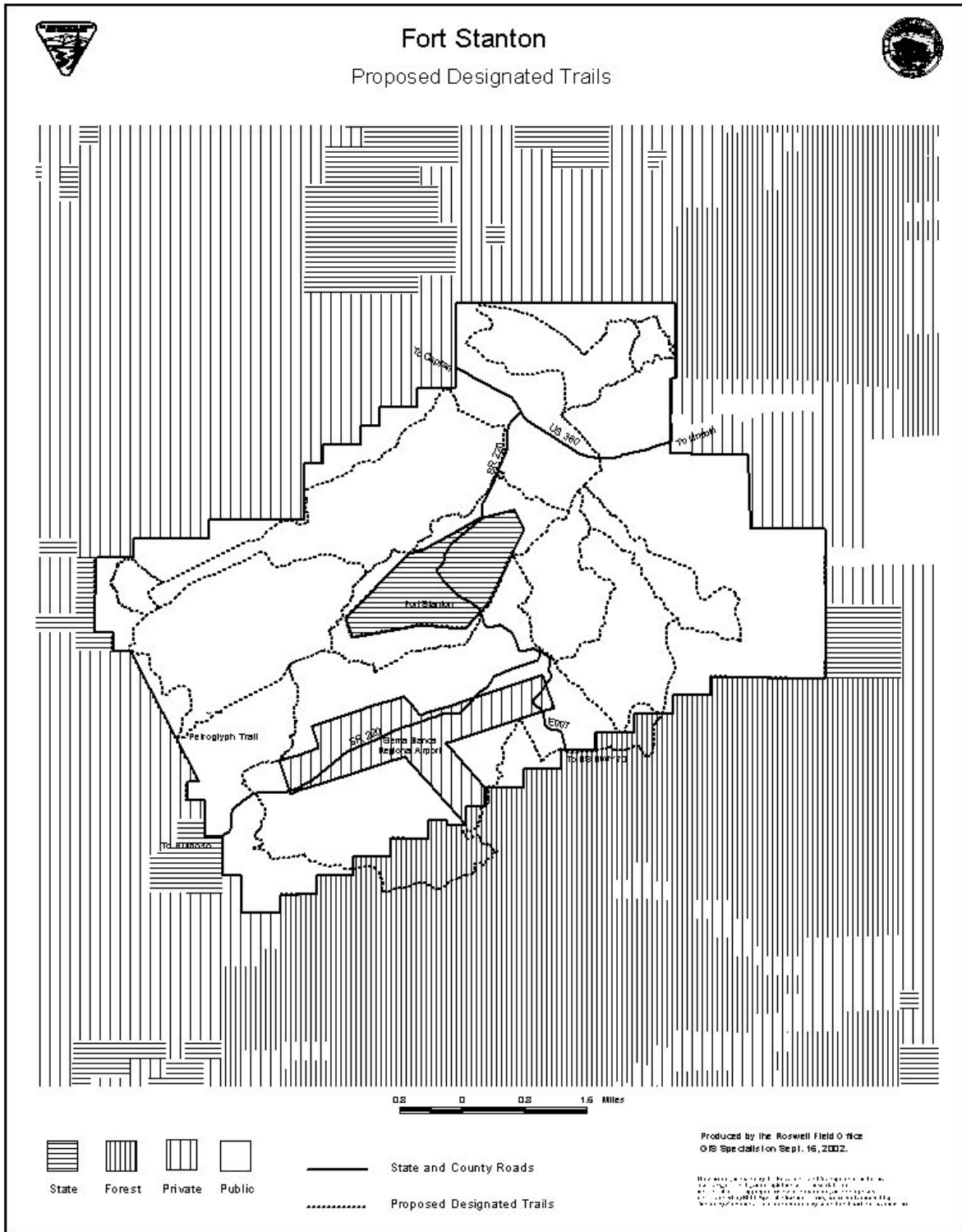
Goal:

- Develop environmentally responsible special use trails within the ACEC, monitor potential conflicts between recreation users of these trails and mitigate those conflicts.

Objectives:

- Design, Develop and Designate trails that are environmentally friendly and blend into the landscape.
- Coordinate trail links with the Lincoln National Forest, Smokey Bear Ranger District.
- Sign trails and provide information and brochures at trail heads.





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PROPOSAL:

Transportation Network:

Implementation of the route designation network within the ACEC will reduce the 54 miles of traveled roads and two track roads within the ACEC to 35 miles of active maintained roads within the ACEC. The existing roads proposed for abandonment are redundant or cause resource problems, have no function, no legal access, or are not needed within the ACEC. The proposed road and trail network would provide visitor access to the majority of the ACEC, while providing protection of threatened and endangered species, riparian areas, cultural resources, special use trails, and other special areas.

The proposed trails will add 60 miles of multi-use trails to the ACEC. Six miles of trails on the route designation plan are located on the Lincoln National Forest Smokey Bear Ranger District as described in this document. All of the proposed trails will be located away from existing roads or in some cases on previously closed roads within the ACEC. The proposed trails all have been ridden, Global Positioned (GPS), and designed by equestrian riders. The American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC), Lincoln County Sheriffs Posse, and many other interested riders have volunteered thousands of hours to mark, design, and ride the proposed trails. Three national endurance events have used the trails under BLM special recreation permits to try out the trails for equestrian purposes.

In the past, roads were used as trails within the ACEC. Through the Route Designation Plan (RDP) some roads will be closed to motor vehicle travel and reserved for non-motorized use. Other roads will be closed completely and reclaimed. Existing trails such as the Rio Bonito Petroglyph Trail and established mountain bike trails will be maintained or improved on an as needed basis. Newly proposed trails will be developed using the trail criteria set out in this document.

Administrative vehicular use of non-designated routes may be allowed on an as needed basis. Use of non-designated routes will be kept to the minimum possible and may include limited vehicular access to maintain wildlife guzzlers, existing pipelines and other resource facilities within the ACEC.

Road and Trail Construction:

Roads within the ACEC will be managed to BLM Road Standards. Trails, if constructed, will be built and designed to U.S. Forest Service standards for trail construction. If existing roads are used, they will be allowed to narrow down using the existing vegetation, such as pinon and juniper trees, to lessen the road width. Some of the proposed closed roads will be narrowed by mechanical means to lessen the trail width and OHV use.

Trail location objectives are to provide a facility on the ground that produces a minimum physical impact on the land, is visually pleasing, requires minimum maintenance, and functionally provides for the intended use.

Trail Criteria Guide:

The following general and specific trail criteria will be used as a guide:

- A. Use existing trails as much as possible.
- B. Terrain and elevation variety should not be extreme; suitable for family backpacking and mountain biking.
- C. Route is suitable for long season use.
- D. Locate where suitable for both winter and summer activity to the degree terrain and climate patterns permit.
- E. Provide access points to towns, villages and National Forest.
- F. Trail should meander to take advantage of scenic panoramas, historical and resource management situations for interpretation purposes.
- G. Trails should not make great or sudden changes in elevation.
- H. Trail grades should contour rather than undulate up and over steep topography.
- I. Trail networks should disperse visitors away from fragile riparian areas and areas of environmental concerns.
- J. Avoid trail locations along heavy use roads.

Signing:

Route designation signing is proposed for the roads and trails within the ACEC. The signing will be designed to inform the public of the status of the road or trail. Every effort will be made to complement the route signing and numbering of the

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adjacent U.S. Department of Agriculture, Lincoln National Forest sign plan.

All open routes are designated by route number signs, Trail routes are marked with "T" before the number. Roads will be marked with an "R" before the number. Signs will have vehicle symbols to designate the types of vehicles allowed on the roads and trails. Symbols with a Red Slash indicate activity that is not allowed (see examples of OHV signing). Absence of a route designation sign on roads, two-track roads or trails means the route is closed to motorized vehicle use. Unless otherwise designated, travel by foot or horseback is welcome on undeveloped BLM Public Lands.

Signs will be placed at access points to the ACEC stating "do not drive off designated roads" to deter the proliferation of additional unplanned vehicle routes. If new unplanned routes are created, they will be signed "Closed to Vehicles"

PROPOSED SIGNING FOR AREA

**LIMITED USE AREA
TRAIL OPEN TO**

BROWN BACKGROUND WHITE REFLECTIVE LETTERING

White border
white
graphics



**CLOSED TO ALL
MOTORIZED
VEHICLES**

(White reflective background with black letters)

TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCE VALUES



THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE,
OF PUBLIC LANDS OFFICES IS
SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
PROVIDE CLERICAL WATCHMAN
RESULT IN TIME OF APPROVAL/REVIEW



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(BLM)
ROSWELL FIELD
OFFICE
2500 W. SECOND
ROSWELL, NM 80201
(505) 837-5112



White border
white
graphics

**LIMITED
USE AREA**

BROWN BACKGROUND WHITE REFLECTIVE LETTERING

**VEHICLES MUST REMAIN ON
DESIGNATED ROADS
NO CROSS COUNTRY TRAVEL**

(White reflective background with black letters)

TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCE VALUES



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OF PUBLIC LANDS OFFICES IS
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OFFICE
2500 W. SECOND
ROSWELL, NM 80201
(505) 837-5112



White border
white
graphics

**OPEN
ROUTE**

BROWN BACKGROUND WHITE REFLECTIVE LETTERING

**THIS ROAD OR TRAIL IS OPEN
TO ALL VEHICLE USE**

(White reflective background with black letters)

TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCE VALUES



THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE,
OF PUBLIC LANDS OFFICES IS
SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
PROVIDE CLERICAL WATCHMAN
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White border
white
graphics

RED SLASHES

**CLOSED
ROAD**

BROWN BACKGROUND WHITE REFLECTIVE LETTERING

**THE ROAD BEYOND
SIGN OPEN TO
ADMINISTRATIVE
USE ONLY**

(White reflective background with black letters)

TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCE VALUES



THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE,
OF PUBLIC LANDS OFFICES IS
SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
PROVIDE CLERICAL WATCHMAN
RESULT IN TIME OF APPROVAL/REVIEW



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PROPOSED SIGNS FOR AREA



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Approximately 24,000 acres have been designated as limited to designated roads and trails for OHV use under the existing RMP.

In the event of route closures, it may be necessary to construct physical constraints to routes of travel. This will be accomplished either with pipe fences or steel gates cemented into the ground across routes, or with a series of boulders, high berms, or deep ditches depending on the terrain. Smaller four foot gates and small cattle guards can be used to designate mountain bike and equestrian travel routes when these routes pass through fences or next to administratively approved routes that are closed to vehicles. Zig/Zag pedestrian gates will be used as access through fences on designated trails.

E. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Public notification of vehicle designations was conducted extensively during development of the 1997 Roswell RMP. The RMP contains a list of agencies, organizations, and individuals notified of the planning effort, as well as associated Federal Register Notices, newspapers, television and radio stations notified through press releases. The Proposed RMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement includes all public input received during the planning process, and the BLM's responses.

Public notification of the proposed designated routes is part of this plan and the Environmental Assessment process for this route designation plan. Additional public notifications through the Federal Register and the local news media will be conducted for any proposed closures.

F. POST-DESIGNATION ACTIONS

1. Sign Installation: Signs denoting all routes of travel will be installed as the first priority of the finalized plan. Routes closed to vehicles will be signed when the Federal Register notice is finalized (for existing routes) or as they are discovered (for new, trespass routes).

2. Use Supervision: The BLM will conduct regular field patrols

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using volunteers and employees, at least once per month, to check signs and watch for new, unplanned routes.

3. Environmental Monitoring: The BLM will use enlarged aerial photographs at least once every ten years to evaluate long-term changes in natural resource conditions. On the ground monitoring will be conducted by BLM specialists and by contract. The impacts on natural resource values are not anticipated to be significant as analyzed in Environmental Assessment NM-060-2002-0119.

4. Enforcement: BLM Law Enforcement Rangers will be used to ensure compliance with the vehicle designations, and may issue citations for violators. Trespass procedures can also be used to reclaim administrative costs from violators, vandals attacking signs or vehicle barriers, etc.

5. Maintenance: Signs and vehicle barriers will be maintained or replaced as needed to insure public understanding of and compliance with OHV rules.

G. COST ESTIMATES:

The anticipated costs of implementing this plan are:

1. Plan preparation and approval ½ work month.
2. Sign requisition and procurement \$5,000.
3. Federal Register Notice \$500.
4. Use supervision and enforcement, two work month annually.
5. Vehicle barriers. It is anticipated that vehicle barriers are needed at an approximate cost of \$500 each.

H. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

An environmental analysis of this plan is found in Chapter Two in EA-NM-060-2002-0119.

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I. APPROVAL

The Fort Stanton Off-Highway Vehicle Route Designation Plan and
Environmental Assessment has been
Prepared By:

Paul T. Happel, Natural Resource Specialist Date

Reviewed By:

Tim Kreager, Assistant Field Manager for Resources Date

Approved By:

Edwin L. Roberson, Field Office Manager Date

CHAPTER TWO

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORT STANTON ACEC ROUTE DESIGNATION PLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER NM-060-2002-0119

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The Fort Stanton Area was designated as the Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the 1997 Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD). On August 28, 2001, a decision record was signed for the Roswell Field Office, Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern Final Activity Plan, Number NM-060-2000-0141 (ACEC). One of the outgrowths of the ACEC Plan is to develop a Route Designation Plan/environmental Assessment (RDP/EA). This RDP/EA will designate vehicle routes of travel and trails as open or closed, and develop the potential for new trails within the ACEC. In addition, certain routes of travel such as mountain bike/horse/hiking trails will be closed to motor vehicles. The attached base map from the ACEC Plan page 2-16, "Fort Stanton Existing Roads and Proposed Road Closures" will be used as a basis of the proposed route designation within the ACEC.

The location of the Fort Stanton ACEC is within the un-surveyed portion of the Fort Stanton Military Reservation, New Mexico Prime Meridian. The location of the ACEC is in T9S., Range 14 & 15E., T 10S., R14 & 15E (see attached map). The management goals of the ACEC are to protect the biological, archaeological and scenic qualities of Fort Stanton, while providing for quality recreation opportunity.

The location of the proposed trails on the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Forest, Smokey Bear Ranger District (USFS) are as follows:

The proposed trail will exit the Fort Stanton ACEC and enter the

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USFS lands at T.10S., R.15E., Section 7 SW 1/4 NW 1/4., and continue on an established Forest Road Number 593A, intersect Road Number 9022 and continue west to an un-numbered USFS road and exit USFS lands at T.10S., R.14E., Section 14 South SW 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4. At this point it will exit USFS lands, and enter the Fort Stanton ACEC administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The second proposed trail on the USFS administered lands exits Fort Stanton ACEC and enters USFS lands on an un-numbered USFS road at T.10S., R.16E., Section 4 NW 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4. This unnumbered road connects with USFS road number 585 and continues west and intersects with Lincoln County Road E-007, leaving USFS property and entering Fort Stanton ACEC. The proposed map for the trails is located in the attached Route Designation Plan (RDP).

B. Purpose and Need For The Proposed Action

The ACEC has not been signed adequately to implement the RMP Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) decisions for the ACEC. Due to increased pressure from the public, users have driven over terrain and caused new two-track roads. These newly formed tracks have been followed by other recreationists and have caused the two-track routes to develop into established roads. This Environmental Assessment (EA) will designate routes of travel within the ACEC. The routes of travel will be designated open or closed (see definitions in appendix). Also, certain routes of travel such as mountain bike/horse/hiking trails would be developed solely for that use and closed to motor vehicles.

C. Conformance with Land Use Planning

The Proposed action is consistent with Bureau policy and guidance as well as actions analyzed in the Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision of October 1997 Record of Decision (RMP).

The Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern, Final Activity Plan, was developed March 2001 , # NM-060-2000-0141, as an activity plan derived from the RMP.

D. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

Other pertinent statutes affecting the proposed action include:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976, as amended;
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (36 CFR 800);
- Clean Air Act (CAA) as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401);
- Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 300f);
- Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1977 (33 U.S.C)1251;
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6901);
- 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8342 Designation of areas and trails.
- BLM Manual 8340 Off-Road Vehicles of 9/13/1885.
- BLM Manual 8341 Conditions of Use (Off Road Vehicles) of 5/25/1982.
- BLM Manual 8342 Designation of Areas and Trails (Off-Road Vehicles) of 9/13/1985.
- New Mexico Motorized Vehicle Access Program, Supplemental Guidance for Off-Highway Vehicle Management of February 24, 1994.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Description of the Proposed Action

Transportation Network:

Implementation of the route designation network within the ACEC will reduce the 54 miles of traveled roads and two track roads within the ACEC to 35 miles of active maintained roads within the ACEC. The existing roads proposed for abandonment are redundant or cause resource problems, have no function, no legal access, or are not needed within the ACEC. The proposed road and trail network would provide visitor access to the majority of the ACEC, while providing protection of threatened and endangered species, riparian areas, cultural resources, special use trails, and other special areas.

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The proposed trails will add 60 miles of multi-use trails to the ACEC. Six miles of trails on the route designation plan are located on the Lincoln National Forest Smokey Bear Ranger District on existing roads as described in this document. All of the proposed trails will be located away from existing roads or in some cases on previously closed roads within the ACEC. The proposed trails all have been ridden, Global Positioned (GPS), and designed by equestrian riders. The American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC), Lincoln County Sheriffs Posse, and many other interested riders have volunteered thousands of hours to mark, design, and ride the proposed trails. Three national endurance events have used the trails under BLM special recreation permits to try out the trails for equestrian purposes.

In the past, roads were used as trails within the ACEC. Through the Route Designation Plan (RDP) some roads will be closed to motor vehicle travel and reserved for non-motorized use. Other roads will be closed completely and reclaimed. Existing trails such as the Rio Bonito Petroglyph Trail and established mountain bike trails will be maintained or improved on an as needed basis. Newly proposed trails will be developed using the trail criteria set out in this document.

Administrative vehicular use of non-designated routes may be allowed on an as needed basis. Use of non-designated routes will be kept to the minimum possible and may include limited vehicular access to maintain wildlife guzzlers, existing pipelines and other resource facilities within the ACEC.

In a USDA/Forest Service publication dated June 2000, on Forest roads, A Synthesis of Scientific Information the text states that: "Terrestrial vertebrates are affected by roads on populations act along three lines: Direct effects, such as loss and fragmentation; road use effects, such as traffic causing vertebrate avoidance or road kill; and additional facilitation effects, such as over hunting or over trapping, which can increase with road access".

Within the ACEC some of the roads cause fragmentation of habitat, vertebrate avoidance and over hunting by visitors to the ACEC. Some existing roads proposed for deletion are redundant or are presently causing resource damage within the ACEC, such as erosion and loss of vegetation. Administrative vehicular use of non-designated routes may be allowed on an as needed basis. Use

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of non-designated routes will be kept to the minimum possible and may include limited vehicular access to maintain wildlife guzzlers, existing pipelines and other resource facilities within the ACEC.

In the past roads were used as trails within the ACEC. Through the RDP some roads will be closed to motor vehicle travel and reserved for non-motorized use. Other roads will be closed and reclaimed. Existing trails such as the Rio Bonito Petroglyph Trail and established mountain bike trails will be maintained or improved on an as needed basis. Newly proposed trails will be developed using the trail criteria set out in this document. The RMP proposed 20 miles of new trails within the ACEC. New trails will be developed using the trail criteria guide in the attached Route Designation Plan.

Signing:

Route designation signing is proposed for the roads and trails within the ACEC. The signing will be designed to inform the public of the travel status of roads or trails within the ACEC. Road and trail numbers will be placed on signs to correspond to maps and brochures available at wayside parking lots within the ACEC and at BLM administrative offices. Informational signs would be posted at entry points within the ACEC. Other signs which display the types of route markers used, may be found at numerous locations within the ACEC. All open roads and trails would be marked with signs. Some roads and trails would also have symbols restricting certain activities. The proposed signs are located in the attached proposed Route Designation Plan.

Every effort will be made to compliment the route signing and numbering of the adjacent U.S. Department of Agriculture, Lincoln National Forest sign plan. Interpretive kiosks will be constructed and placed in the vicinity of wayside parking lots and trail heads within the area. Interpretive kiosks will be used within the ACEC for road and trail systems and other aspects of the ACEC.

B. Alternatives To The Proposed Action

1. Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative): The No Action alternative would be to not sign or close roads that are causing resource damage or are redundant within the ACEC. Trails within the ACEC would also not be developed or designated.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. General Setting

Fort Stanton ACEC is comprised of approximately 26,000 acres of public land. Approximately 24,000 acres are administered by the Bureau of Land Management and approximately 2,000 acres is managed by the State of New Mexico as historic Fort Stanton and a portion managed by the New Mexico Penitentiary. The Sierra Blanca Regional Airport is also within the boundary of the ACEC and is surrounded by the ACEC.

Many of the roads that exist within the ACEC were developed or improved during The past 30 years by New Mexico State University under their stewardship of the area. In 1997 the Roswell Resource Management Plan established the area as an ACEC. An Activity Plan was finalized in August 28, 2001. The attached Route Designation Plan and Environmental Assessment are a part of the management prescriptions of the ACEC Plan.

The area is heavily used by recreationists. Major equestrian and mountain bike events have taken place within the ACEC mostly on existing roads. The area is used daily by equestrian riders, mountain bikes, hikers and sightseers. Billy the Kid Scenic Byway uses U.S. Highway 380 and State highway 220 through the ACEC. Lincoln County road E007 is also included within a part of the ACEC.

B. Affected Resources/Critical Elements

The following critical elements have been evaluated and are either not present or are not affected by the Proposed Action or the Alternative in this assessment: Air Quality, Farmland - Prime or Unique, Flood Plains, Native American Religious Concerns, Wastes-Hazardous or Solid, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Low Income or Minority populations or communities and Environmental Justice.

1. Topography:

The topography of the ACEC is highly variable, with rolling hills, wide flat-topped mesas and narrow, rocky canyons and ridges. It is situated in the foothills of the Sierra Blanca and Capital Mountains. Elevation above sea level ranges from 6,000 feet in the east to 7,020 feet in the west. The drainage's in the south portion of the ACEC are in a southeasterly direction. The runoff from these drainage's flows into Little Creek and eventually into the Rio Ruidoso. Runoff from other drainage's in the northern portion of the ACEC flows into the Rio Bonito, and Salado Creek which eventually joins the Rio Bonito.

2. Climate:

The climate is semi-arid with normal monthly temperatures ranging from 35°F in January to 70°F in July (Dunkel, 1984). Observed minimum and maximum temperatures were -28°F and 101°F, respectively. Average annual precipitation is 13.9 inches, with average annual snowfall of 20 inches. Annual precipitation has ranged from 6.1 inches to 25.6 inches, and snowfall has been as high as 64 inches (Dunkel, 1984).

3. Vegetation:

Grasslands, pinyon-juniper (PJ) and riparian are the major vegetation communities in the ACEC. PJ dominates the landscape of the ACEC, primarily as the result of wildfire suppression. About 13,000 acres of PJ are growing in homogenous stands. PJ prevails in many areas that could support more of a grassland aspect, such as the low hills, draws and drainage's.

The grassland vegetation type, found on less hilly sites and mesas, is dominated by blue grama. A typical blue grama community is composed of blue grama, hairy grama, sidebars grama, cane bluestem and western wheatgrass, with sagewort and verbena, as common for species. The muhly-blue grama community is dominated by creeping muhly, blue grama, verbena, scarlet globemallow, and broom snakeweed. A third community within the grassland vegetation type is characterized by walking stick cholla, blue grama, verbena, and, invading one-seed juniper.

The pinyon-juniper vegetation type is characterized by pinyon, alligator juniper, one-seed juniper and wavyleaf oak. It should be noted that the dominant tree species in the "PJ" type is one-seed juniper. Pinyon pine and alligator juniper are not as an

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aggressive invading species, and in most areas are low in density. These trees and shrubs are dominant in the communities of the lower slopes. Blue grama, New Mexico muhly, pinyon ricegrass, sidebars grama, Plains lovegrass, and wolftail are the typical understory of grasses.

Within the brush on the upper slopes, however, pinyon and juniper are less predominant and scattered with the woody species wavyleaf oak and skunkbush sumac. The understory of this community is typically forbs, commonly western yarrow, coast wallflower, purple geranium, and the half-shrub tasselflower brickellia.

Riparian areas constitute only about three percent of the ACEC (about 660 acres). The riparian areas are found along the Rio Bonito and Salado Creek, several springs/seeps, and a small wetland area behind Salado Dam.

The majority of the riparian vegetation type occurs along two waterways, the Rio Bonito and Salado Creek. Woody plants of the Rio Bonito community are coyote willow, peachleaf willow, narrowleaf cottonwood, lanceleaf cottonwood, Arizona walnut, boxelder, Russian olive and saltcedar. Kentucky bluegrass, bentgrass, bulrush, cattail, inland rush, gaura, summer-cypress, horsetweed, poison hemlock, and stickseed are the typical wetland grasses and forbs.

4. Lands/Realty/ROW:

New Mexico Highway 220 connects U.S. Highway 380 with Alto, New Mexico via Fort Stanton and the airport. Lincoln County Road E007 junctions with NM 220 east of the airport and connects with U.S. Highway 70 to the south. Roads through the ACEC provide access for the public and administrative use of the area. The water line serving the fort is south of the Rio Bonito running from the west boundary of the ACEC to the fort. Power lines in utility corridors supply electricity to the fort and airport.

5. Minerals:

The Proposed Action would not affect BLM's management of minerals in the ACEC. The ACEC is withdrawn from mineral entry.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

1. Air Quality:

The ACEC is surrounded by U. S. Forest Service lands, State Lands and private property. The Capital Wilderness is located approximately nine miles northeast of the ACEC and the White Mountain Wilderness is located approximately eight miles west of the ACEC. Both are classified as a Class I airsheds.

Environmental Impacts:

There will be some fugitive dust when the roads are maintained in late summer but it should not affect the air quality of the area.

The No Action Alternative would cause fugitive dust as vehicles use the area.

2. Water Quality:

The proposed area is in the upper Rio Hondo drainage basin, which consists of the Rio Bonito and Rio Ruidoso watersheds. The two streams come together to form the Rio Hondo at the town of Hondo approximately 11 miles southeast of Fort Stanton. Except for South Mesa, the entire area lies within the Rio Bonito watershed. The Rio Bonito flows for approximately nine miles through Fort Stanton, including 3.3 miles through the Upper Rio Bonito area. The South Mesa area drains to Little Creek, which eventually reaches the Rio Ruidoso at the mouth of Devil's Canyon below Glencoe.

The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) has been delegated authority to designate uses and establish water quality standards for waters of the State. The WQCC (2000a) has identified perennial reaches of the Bonito below Angus, and the Rio Ruidoso below the U.S. 70 bridge near Seeping Springs Lakes as parts of Segment 2208. Designated uses for Segment 2208 include fish culture, irrigation, livestock watering, wildlife habitat, a coldwater fishery, and secondary contact (e.g., wading).

The WQCC (2000a) has also established water quality standards to protect the designated uses, and directs periodic water quality assessments to ensure that standards are met. According to the

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WQCC (2000b), the coldwater fishery and irrigation use are not supported on the Bonito due to stream bottom deposits (i.e., sediment). The probable sources of sediment listed were agriculture, removal of riparian vegetation, streambank modification/destabilization, and other unknown sources.

Environmental Impacts: The Proposed Action would improve water quality from current conditions by eliminating unwanted roads and roads that cause excessive silting of the rivers. The cumulative benefits provided under the Proposed Action could be significant when coupled with other BLM projects and similar efforts on Lincoln National Forest, State, and private lands.

Minor, adverse impacts to surface water quality could occur for a short period during and after road blading and trail construction. The soil disturbance could result in a small amount of sediment loading to streams, though rapid regrowth of ground cover species would quickly offset these effects.

No ground-water impacts would be expected under any Alternative. Neither the long-term benefits nor the short-term impacts expected under the Proposed Action would be realized under the No-Action Alternative.

3. Soils:

The *Soil Survey of Lincoln County Area, New Mexico (USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1983)* was used to describe and analyze impacts to soils. Soils in the treatment area can be grouped into three general categories.

Valley Bottoms. Cumulic Haplustolls are found in the Rio Bonito valley. Manzano loam is found on low terraces above the river bottom and in draws in Cemetery Pasture. These soils are derived from alluvium and are deep and well-drained. Surface textures range from loam to gravelly sandy loam. Permeability is typically slow and runoff is moderate. The hazards of water and wind erosion are moderate.

Uplands on the East Side. Deacon loam and Tortugas-Rock outcrop association are found on uplands, breaks, and ridges in Cemetery Pasture and the east side of South Mesa. The Deacon loam and Tortugas soil are derived from alluvium and

limestone, respectively. The surface texture of the Tortugas soil is very cobbly loam. The Deacon loam is deep, but the Tortugas soil is shallow. Both are well-drained and have moderate permeability. The runoff is moderate for the Deacon loam, but is rapid for the Tortugas soil. Therefore, the water erosion hazard is high for the Tortugas soil and moderate for the loam. The wind erosion hazard is high on the loam, but only slight on the Tortugas soil.

Uplands on the West Side. Uplands, valley sides, swales, and ridges on the west Spur, West Mesa Bench, South west side of South mesa, and the Dairy pasture are represented by Hightower-Oro Grande complex, Pena-Dioxice complex, Remunda clay loam, and Romine extremely gravelly loam. Oro Grande very cobbly clay loam is also found in Dairy Pasture. Most of the soils are derived from alluvium, though residuum, andesite, sandstone and igneous rock are also sources. They are generally well-drained and range in depth from very shallow to very deep. Permeability is typically moderate, and runoff medium to rapid. The hazard of water erosion can be moderate to high, and wind erosion can be slight to moderate.

Environmental Impacts:

A variety of alternatives are possible under the Proposed Action, and specific impacts would depend on the methods used. Roads and trails would be water barred to prevent excessive acceleration of soil loss. Trails would be constructed on the contour to prevent soil erosion. Any expected adverse impacts would be minor and mitigated at the time they are observed.

Under the No-Action Alternative, the short-term risks of accelerated erosion would not occur, however, the expected long-term benefits would also not be realized.

4. Floodplains:

The floodplain has been changed from prehistoric conditions by construction of Bonito Dam, grazing, upstream development, road construction, alteration of the stream channel, and brush encroachment.

For BLM administrative purposes, the 100-year floodplain provides

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the basis for floodplain management on public lands. It is based on maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (1983).

Environmental Impacts:

The Proposed Action would improve floodplain functions, and benefit the stream corridor overall. There would be a small amount of disturbance associated with the project, but it would be limited by restricting vehicle traffic from floodplain areas. None of the benefits provided by the Proposed Action would be realized under the No-Action Alternative.

5. Non-native, Invasive Species:

On February 3, 1999, the President signed Executive Order 13112 (EO), Invasive Species. The EO dictates that "each Federal Agency whose actions may affect the status of invasive species shall, to the extent practicable and permitted by law: prevent the introduction of invasive species; detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner; monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction and provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them." The Noxious Weed Management Act of 1998 for the State of New Mexico finds that noxious weeds have caused extensive economic damage in New Mexico.

Specifically, the presence and spread of noxious weeds: decreases land values and productivity, forces out nutritious forage for livestock and often causes the death of livestock and crops; harms the environment by crowding out native vegetation and endangered species, increasing fire danger, increasing water usage; and; increases government and industrial costs by increasing highway cleanup costs, decreasing the lease value of state and federal public lands and curtailing the hunting, fishing and recreational use of the land.

"Class A" weeds are considered to be non-native species with limited distribution in New Mexico. Preventing new infestations and eliminating existing infestations is the highest priority.

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"Class B" weeds are non-native species that are presently limited to portions of the state. They are designated for control in regions where they are not yet widespread. Preventing infestation in these areas is a high priority. In regions where a "Class B" species is already abundant, control is decided at the local level with containment as the primary goal. "Class C" weeds are other non-native weeds found in New Mexico. Many of these are widespread in the state. Long-term programs of suppression and management are a local option, depending upon local threats and the feasibility of management in local areas. The area will be monitored for weeds by the BLM staff and weed eradication programs will be initiated as weed species are found.

Environmental Impacts:

Vehicles which are carrying a seed source are a major transportation of noxious weed seeds. The unwanted species seeds would usually drop off of vehicles and grow along roads within the area. If unchecked the species would spread from the roads into adjacent pastures within the ACEC.

The No Action Alternative would result in a "status quo" situation. Native vegetation would decrease, productivity would decline and a monoculture of invasive species would become established. Use of the area would not be conducive to recreationists, such as bird watchers or picnickers, as noxious weeds are not extensively used by wildlife and have a tendency to be irritating to pass through. The sites would also become a "nursery area" or seed source for noxious weeds, spreading up and down the Rio Bonito valley.

6. Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Habitat:

Fort Stanton provides diverse habitats for approximately 151 species of birds, 38 species of mammals and 9 species of fish.

Several bird species associated with pinyon-juniper woodlands are the common flicker, ladderbacked woodpecker, acorn woodpecker, pinyon jay, scrub jay, mountain chickadee, common bushtit, plain titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, blue-gray gnatcatcher, gray vireo, rock wren, and Montezuma quail.

The blue grama grassland habitat supports such species as scaled

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quail, roadrunner, western meadowlark, Northern harrier, brown-headed cowbird, vesper sparrow, lark bunting, rufous-crowned sparrow, and horned lark.

Several species of birds occur in the riparian community or near other sources of water. Representative species are acorn woodpecker, killdeer, mourning dove, mallard, bufflehead, belted kingfisher, blue grosbeak, lesser goldfinch, yellow-rumped warbler, Northern waterthrush, and yellow-breasted chat. In addition, the bald eagle winters throughout the area, and the Rio Bonito drainage is an important wintering area.

The diversity of small mammals provide for an excellent prey base for carnivores such as the coyote, gray fox, bobcat, raccoon, badger, striped skunk, long-tailed weasel, and occasionally black bear and mountain lion.

Blue grama grassland mammal species include the spotted ground squirrel, pocket gopher, silky pocket mouse, Ord's kangaroo rat, bannertail kangaroo rat, northern grasshopper mouse, southern plains woodrat, and the pronghorn antelope.

Other mammals use the pinyon-juniper woodland habitat to some extent. Mule deer occur throughout the Fort Stanton area. During winter, some deer migrate from the higher elevations of the Sierra Blanca Mountains to the Fort Stanton area. Since 1990, a number of Rocky Mountain elk have used the area on a yearlong basis.

Beavers use the riparian habitat to the exclusion of upland habitat. Over the past years, beavers have built dams and lodges on the Rio Bonito. Annual floods that wash out the dams seem to be the most serious problem for beavers. Beavers may also leave the area when water levels drop.

Fish species found in the Rio Bonito are the Rio Grande sucker, brook trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, fathead minnow, white sucker, Rio Grande chub, longnose dace, and mosquitofish.

In addition, an extensive list of aquatic insects and herptiles can be found in the Fort Stanton Habitat Management Plan on file at the Roswell Field Office.

Environmental Impacts: Blading and constructing trails would be a

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temporary displacement of terrestrial wildlife during the actual activities due to human activity and noise levels. Wildlife would shy away from roads and trails when vehicles and pedestrians are using the roads and trails within the area.

Long-term positive impacts will result from the proposed action due to the increased amount of habitat that will be left alone or have reduced vehicle traffic. More seclusion areas for wildlife will be available

Threatened and Endangered species such as the Kuenzler cactus would receive a positive affect due to vehicles staying on designated roads and away from Kuenzler cactus habitat. Roads would be closed in Kuenzler cactus areas to protect the species.

Under the No Action alternative more actions would be unregulated and cause additional problems for wildlife and impacts to the Kuenzler cactus.

7. Cultural Resources:

Human occupation of the Fort Stanton area extends back in time to about 9,000 years before the present. This date is based on isolated paleoindian projectile points and not in association with paleoindian archeological sites. The Archaic time period is represented by a number of sites as is the Formative, also called the Ceramic time period. The variety of prehistoric sites ranges from open sites to rock shelter, cave, architectural and petroglyph. Site density is high along major drainage's such as the Rio Bonito.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Hispanic people began settling in the area. By 1855, Fort Stanton was built to provide protection for the local population from the Mescalero Apaches. Besides Fort Stanton proper, there are known historic sites dating to the same time frame and associated with Fort Stanton.

There have been several large cultural inventory surveys on the Fort Stanton Reservation. One of these was undertaken prior to the construction of the Sierra Blanca Regional Airport. Other large surveys have focused on the Rio Bonito drainage. Smaller surveys have occurred prior to small scale surface disturbing projects such as water line and fence construction.

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In addition to cultural surveys, excavations have been permitted as part of archeological field schools, for research and ahead of construction projects.

Environmental Impacts:

Depending on the techniques implemented for road maintenance and trail construction, identification and protection of cultural resources will vary. However there will be more than minimal surface disturbance, cultural inventory and avoidance will be required.

The No Action alternative would have no impacts on cultural resources in the area.

8. Cave/Karst Resources:

The Fort Stanton ACEC has a number of significant caves or karst features. The management goal of the Roswell RMP is to protect the natural and scenic values of caves while allowing for limited recreational and educational use of the caves. Under the 1997 Roswell RMP, surface disturbance will not be allowed within 200 meters of known cave entrances passages or aspects of significant caves or significant karst features.

Environmental Impacts:

The Proposed Action would not effect cave/karst because there are no roads or trails where significant caves are known to exist or there is high potential for cave/karst resources. If, during or after road or trail construction or maintenance, a cave or karst feature is located, an inventory would be initiated to determine the significance of the cave resource. Residual impacts of surface run off and silting should not have a significant affect on the cave/karst resources and would be diverted from known cave/karst resources.

The No Action alternative would have little short-term impacts on cave/karst resources in the area.

9. Outdoor Recreation:

The Proposed Actions are located within areas of high potential for recreation activities. The attached Route Designation Plan has been developed for equestrian, mountain bike and foot trails

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within the area. Presently there are recreation developments at the Fort Stanton Cave/campground, Horse Trails Parking lot and the Lower Rio Bonito recreation area. Roads are currently used as ways of travel for equestrian/Mountain Bike/foot travel. The proposed trail network will move the trails off of roads and into the surrounding country side. The recreation enthusiasts would have a quality recreation experience and not be in competition with motorists using the same roads.

Environmental Impacts:

The Proposed Action would, in the long term, benefit recreation activities by channeling the visitor to areas that can take recreation impacts. Impacts of the Proposed Action on casual recreation use would be short-term, occurring when the projects are being carried out. Once roads and trails are designated or closed to public use the ACEC will benefit, No new roads are anticipated within the area.

The No Action alternative would have little short-term impacts on recreation use of the area.

10. Visual Resources (VRM):

The Visual Resources within the proposed area are Class II and III. The Class II rating means that any changes in any basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the landscape. A contrast may be seen but should not attract attention. The Class III rating means the contrasts to the basic elements caused by the management activity may be evident and begin to attract attention in the landscape. The changes, however, would remain subordinate to the existing landscape. The Proposed Action should result in short term visual impacts to the casual observer. New trails will be constructed on the contour to blend into the surrounding landscape. Roads would be closed or rerouted that are visually intrusive to the area.

Environmental Impacts:

There should be very little visual impacts from road maintenance and trail construction. The impacts of blading the roads should not be noticeable after a two month period.

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The No Action alternative would cause no impacts on visual resources.

11. Road/Trail Maintenance:

Roads within the ACEC will be maintained to BLM Road Standards. Trails would be designed and constructed to USFS standards. Trail location objectives are to provide a facility on the ground that produces a minimum physical impact on the land, is visually pleasing, requires minimum maintenance, and functionally provides for the intended use.

Environmental Impacts:

Impacts would be minor if BLM Road Standards and USFS standards for newly constructed trails construction are followed.

The No Action alternative would have little short term impacts. The area would suffer long term impacts on the roads and trails within the ACEC due to lack of maintenance and proliferation of roads within the area.

IV. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS:

Population increases and recreation demand increases are considered the primary multipliers of cumulative resource degradation effects for the future. There will be positive effects providing designated roads and trails for visitor use within the area.

Increase in regional metropolitan populations and other recreation demands may also impact Fort Stanton's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Other southwest recreation sites, areas, parks and facilities have experienced a general increase in resource degradation within the past fifteen years. The trend is expected to continue as the public becomes more aware of the value of public lands to the nation.

The No Action alternative maintains the status quo. The No Action alternative avoids short-term impacts such as road maintenance and trail construction while its long term impacts of poor road placement and redundancy of roads would continue to cause environmental damage to the area.

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V. MITIGATION MEASURES

See the Proposed Action for mitigation measures to impacts.

VI. RESIDUAL IMPACTS

There should be no residual impacts to designated roads and trails that are constructed and maintained to BLM road policy standards and trail construction to USFS standards.

VII. PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

PERSONS CONSULTED:

Dan Baggao, Wildlife Biologist
Michael Bilbo, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Jim Desmond, Fire Management Officer
Pat Flanary, Archaeologist
Rand French, Wildlife Biologist
Tim Kreager, Assistant Field Manager, Resources
Mike McGee, Hydrologist
Helen Miller, Rangeland Management Specialist
Bill Murry, Park Manager/Recreation
Albert Najar, Park Maintenance
Joseph Navarro, Rangeland Management Specialist
Howard Parman, Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Chuck Schmidt, Rangeland Management Specialist
Jim Schroeder, Hydrologist
John Spain, Rangeland Management Specialist
Irene Salas, Realty Specialist
Randy Vinson, Range Technician

VIII. LITERATURE CITED

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County Area, New
Mexico. 217 pp.

IX APPENDIX

OHV DEFINITIONS AND DESIGNATIONS

OHV DEFINITIONS:

The OHV definitions are derived from the current RMP and are uniform definitions for current RMP's within the BLM.

OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV):

An OHV is considered to be any type of vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other terrain.

OHV DESIGNATIONS:

Open:

Vehicle travel is permitted in the area (both on and off roads) if the vehicle is operated responsibly in a manner not causing, or unlikely to cause significant undue damage to or disturbance of the soil, wildlife, wildlife habitat, improvements, cultural, or vegetative resources of other authorized uses of the public lands.

Limited:

Designated areas and trails where the use of an OHV is subject to restrictions, such as limiting the number of vehicles allowed, or dates and times of use (seasonal restrictions); limiting use to designated roads and trails. Combinations of restrictions are possible, such as limiting use to certain types of vehicles during certain times of the year.

Closed:

Designated areas, roads, and trails where the use of an OHV is permanently or temporarily prohibited. Emergency use of vehicles is allowed.

OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OFF ROAD VEHICLE)

Any motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, travel on or immediately over land, water, or other natural terrain, excluding: (1) Any nonamphibious registered motorboat; (2) Any military, fire, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle while being

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used for emergency purposes. (3) Any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the authorized officer, or otherwise officially approved; (4) Vehicles in official use; and (5) Any combat or combat support vehicle when used in times of national defense emergencies.

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XI. DECISION RECORD

DOCUMENT EA# NM-060-2002-0119

DECISION RECORD

Decision: I have reviewed this proposed action, including the environmental impacts and have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. Therefore, no further environmental analysis is required. It is my decision to implement the Fort Stanton ACEC Route Designation Plan and Environmental Assessment. Any comments made to this proposal were considered and any necessary changes have been incorporated into the Environmental Assessment.

Any person who is adversely affected by a final decision of the authorized officer may file a written appeal to the Final Decision for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge under 43 CFR 4.470. A period of 30 days after the decision becomes final is provided in which to file an appeal and petition a stay of the decision in this office.

Timothy R. Kreager,
Assistant Field Office Manager - Resources

Date

Gerald M. Hawkes
District Ranger
Smokey Bear Ranger District
Lincoln National Forest

Date

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XII. DECISION RECORD

DOCUMENT EA# NM-060-2002-0119

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RATIONALE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potential significant environmental impacts. I have determined the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Rational for Recommendations: The proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. Designation of roads and trails within the Fort Stanton ACEC will provide for quality recreation opportunities for the visiting public. Implementation of the route designation network within the ACEC will reduce the 54 miles of traveled roads and two track roads within the ACEC to 35 miles of active maintained roads within the ACEC. The existing roads proposed for abandonment are redundant or cause resource problems, have no function, no legal access, or are not needed within the ACEC. The proposed road and trail network would provide visitor access to the majority of the ACEC, while providing protection of threatened and endangered species, riparian areas, cultural resources, special use trails, and other special areas.

The proposed trails will add 60 miles of multi-use trails to the ACEC. All of the proposed trails will be located away from existing roads or in some cases on previously closed roads within the ACEC. Six miles of trails on the route designation plan are located on the Lincoln National Forest Smokey Bear Ranger on existing roads as described in this document. The proposed trails all have been ridden, Global Positioned (GPS), and designed by equestrian riders. The American Endurance Ride Conference(AERC), Lincoln County Sheriffs Posse, and many other interested riders have volunteered thousands of hours to mark, design, and ride the proposed trails. The proposed trail network will provide visitor access to the majority of the ACEC while providing protection of threatened and endangered species, riparian habitat and cultural resources. The proposed action will be in compliance with the Roswell Resource Management Plan and

DRAFT Route Designation /EA - Fort Stanton ACEC. File Name
Fortstatn/route_des_plan_fortstan
9/23/02

Record of Decision (October, 1997.

Timothy R. Kreager,
Assistant Field Office Manager - Resources

Date

Gerald M. Hawkes
District Ranger
Smokey Bear Ranger District
Lincoln National Forest

Date