

**Carson  
National Forest**

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# News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Fire damages historic cabin** *Investigation indicates vandalism*

**Taos, N.M., January 9, 2009**—A suspicious fire has damaged a historic building in the Tres Ritos area. Forest law enforcement officials are looking for tips from anyone who might have seen anything noteworthy or suspicious on January 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Agua Piedra Campground.

The Agua Piedra Shelter is a 600-square-foot log cabin built in the late 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps and was one of New Mexico's earliest ski areas. Visitors used the cabin, also called Sipapu's first ski lodge, as a place to warm up by the fireplace and eat snacks while drinking hot chocolate after a day of skiing. By 1940, the area, about 2 miles east of the present-day Sipapu Ski Area, had become a popular ski hill with two small lifts.

"It's sad when a historic structure like this is damaged in such a mindless manner," Fire Prevention Technician Amy Simms said. "We have such few amenities in the area, it was a special place for local people to visit and enjoy the outdoors. It was built with a lot of hard work and elbow grease, and now it's ruined for everybody."

The shelter was popular in the summer as well as the winter. The building was nearly booked every weekend last year for family reunions and get togethers. The facility will likely not be available this year for those gatherings, because it is unsafe.

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The shelter was eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Agua Piedra Ski Club was formed in the late 1930s by skiers from the local communities of Las Vegas, Taos and Peñasco and it later came to be called the Tres Ritos Winter Sports Area.

The first ski lift was a rope tow powered by a gasoline engine constructed around 1940 and operated until about 1952. The lift gave access to the Cordova Canyon race course and ski slopes and to the trails in a second ski area located in a meadow. A second lift offered skiers other runs to ski down, but it only operated a few years. Lift tickets cost 25 cents per person per day and the area was visited by Forest Service employees and their families, local residents and skiers as far as Amarillo, Texas, according to local histories.

Simms thanked the Peñasco Volunteer Fire Department that responded quickly and fought the fire using snow shovels filled with snow, because the area was inaccessible to the firetrucks due to heavy snowfall.

The public should not enter the facility because the structure is unsafe. Forest Service officials are asking for anyone with information to call the Carson National Forest Service office at 575-758-6200 or the Camino Real Ranger Station at 575-587-2255.

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