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Subject: Forest Plan Revision – Santa Fe National Forest

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Scoping Comments - 81 FR 42641 and 81 FR 45122

Forest Plan Revision

Santa Fe National Forest

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The following comments are being submitted in response the Notice of Intent to revise the Santa Fe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Introduction – Need for Change and Proposed Action

The Notice of Intent to revise the Santa Fe National Plan states, “Designated Areas. There is a need for plan direction to identify and evaluate potential additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System and eligibility for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In addition, plan direction for designated and recommended wilderness areas is needed to protect and enhance wilderness values and character.” There is also the need to change the management direction and a section location of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST).

The Proposed Action that is presented in the NOI is not detailed to the extent necessary for reviewers to identify and clearly articulate opinions and concerns. However, the information that follows in this document should assist the Forest Supervisor through the planning team in identifying specific direction and actions needed to locate the CDNST corridor and adopt appropriate Forest Plan components to provide for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

Planning Guidance – Recreation, Scenery, and Designated Areas

Sustainable Recreation Opportunities and Settings

Plan components need to provide for sustainable recreational settings, opportunities, and access. Sustainable recreation opportunities and settings are those that are economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable. To be sustainable, the established set of recreational settings and opportunities must be an integral part of other resource plan direction and include a compatible scenic character component.

The responsible official needs to use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system to prescribe (establish) outdoor recreation opportunities in land management planning as described in FSM 2310. ROS classes are defined in terms of its combination of activity, setting, and experience opportunities along with associated indicators and thresholds. Sub-classes and seasonal variations of ROS classes may be defined. Socio-cultural meaningful places may be identified as designated areas. The desired conditions for the plan area need to describe the types of recreational settings, including the mix of desired ROS classes, specific kinds of recreation opportunities, and associated infrastructure. Plans need to have standards or guidelines to ensure consistency of projects or activities with desired ROS classes or other desired conditions for recreation. Plans should include desired conditions that describe the natural, built, social, and managerial environment for sustainable recreation.

The information identified in the assessment may provide a starting point to determine the kinds of settings and opportunities to be provided in the plan area. The ability for sustainable recreation opportunities, and the distinctive role of the plan area as a provider

of recreation, should inform and create an overall context for adjusting existing recreational settings and opportunities in a new, revised, or amended plan.

Plans should have objectives that describe the intended achievement of modifying the conditions of areas from their inventoried ROS classes toward desired ROS classes where applicable. Objectives may also be designed to alter the condition of recreation areas, dispersed sites, infrastructure, and services to achieve sustainable desired conditions for recreation in the plan area.

Plans should identify suitable uses in a recreational context that is associated with a prescribed ROS class and designated area purpose. Suitability should be described in terms of what types of recreation use and activities are suitable or not suitable within each management area or geographic area should be based on the desired ROS setting and address recreation use conflicts.

Desired recreation settings and opportunities should inform the basis for applying certain plan components to management areas or geographic areas. Plans may identify a specific set of locations or small areas, such as dispersed recreational sites, for some specific plan components without creating management areas or geographic areas.

Plan content should describe the distinctive role and contribution of the plan area to recreational opportunities and the provision of social and economic sustainability in the broader landscape. Plans may describe management strategies to the development of collaborative capacity through volunteers or partnerships to accomplish recreation objectives for the plan area.

Scenery Management System

The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines to provide for scenic character integrated with other plan components. To meet this requirement the plan:

a. Must include a description of desired scenic character based on the scenery management system. Desired scenic character may be different from existing or potential scenic character identified in the assessment. Depending on the biophysical and cultural attributes of the plan area's landscape, there may be multiple desired scenic character descriptions associated with specific areas.

(1) Desired conditions describing scenic character should include scenic integrity objectives that describe the degree to which desired attributes of the scenic character are to remain. Scenic integrity objectives should be assigned throughout the plan area.

(2) Desired conditions may also describe scenic stability, sustainability, and other measures used in scenery management system. Desired conditions may include maps, graphics, photographs, or visual simulations that give a visual representation of desired scenic character and associated scenic integrity objectives.

b. Should contain standards or guidelines as needed to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects incompatible with desired scenery conditions. Standards or guidelines can also apply to specific scenic integrity objectives, management areas, geographic areas, designated areas or other identified special areas or places. Standards and guidelines can be applied at multiple scales to specific management activities such as timber harvest, utility corridors, trail construction, facility development, or road construction.

National Scenic and Historic Trails

1. When developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for relevant information about existing national scenic and historic trails in the plan area, including established rights-of-way pursuant to 16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2) and direction contained in comprehensive plans (CPs) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1244(e) or 1244(f). For existing or study national scenic and historic trails that do not have such information published, assessments should identify and evaluate other information pertinent to the location and management of national scenic and historic trails.

b. The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify Congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails and plan components must provide for the management of rights-of-ways (16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2)) consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. Plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails and for the potential rights-of-way of those trails designated for study (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)).

c. The Interdisciplinary Team shall use the national scenic and historic trails rights-of-way maps required by 16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) to depict the location of the trail corridor. Where national trail rights-of-way have not yet been selected, the Interdisciplinary Team shall reference the establishing legislation (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)) as the primary source for identifying and mapping the national scenic and historic trails right-of-way. If the right-of-way has not been selected, either through legislation or publication in the Federal Register, the Interdisciplinary Team should use other information to delineate a national scenic and historic trails corridor that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated or is being proposed for designation (16 U.S.C 1244(b)).

d. The Responsible Official shall consult with neighboring Responsible Officials when developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails that cross unit boundaries and shall strive to maintain or establish compatible management approaches while recognizing diverse resource conditions and needs in the different plan areas.

e. Plan components must be compatible with the objectives and practices identified in the comprehensive plan for the management of the national scenic and historic trail. The objectives and practices include the identification of resources to be preserved and the trail's corridor carrying capacity.

f. The Responsible Official shall include plan components that provide for the nature and purposes of national scenic and historic trails in the plan area. In doing so, the Responsible Official should take into consideration other aspects of the plan related to the

trail such as access, cultural and historic resources, recreational settings, scenic character, and valid existing rights.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for a designated area as described in section 24.2 of this Handbook. To meet this requirement the plan:

a. Should include desired conditions that describe the national scenic and historic trail and the recreational, scenic, historic, and other resource values for which the trail was designated.

b. May include objectives for national scenic and historic trails where existing conditions (settings, opportunities, scenic character, cultural and other resources values) are different from desired conditions. These objectives can identify intended activities to improve national scenic and historic trail conditions, mitigate or enhance associated resource values, create or improve connections with communities and visitors, or other desired and measureable outcomes that will improve the national scenic and historic trail experience.

c. May include standards or guidelines to place limits or conditions on projects or activities to protect the trail and associated resource values.

d. May include suitability plan components to limit or prevent incompatible uses and activities.

e. Must identify and map National scenic and historic trails per #1c above.

f. May, to apply plan components unique to the National and Scenic Historic Trail: provide one or more management or geographic areas for a national scenic and historic trail; reference the identified national scenic and historic trail right-of-way, place a corridor around the trail, or use other means to clearly identify where the plan components apply in reference to the trail.

FSM 2350 has more information about national scenic and historic trails—see FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44.

CDNST Corridor Location and Plan Components

The Forest Plan needs to establish and include a map that displays the extent of the CDNST Management Area to assure that the nature and purposes of the CDNST are promoted and protected. The Management Area direction needs to describe nature and purposes desired conditions that are supported by appropriate standards and guidelines. The following are a few broad CDNST Management Area recommendations:

- The extent of the CDNST Management Area needs to be at least 1/2 half mile on both sides of the CDNST travel route following topographic features where it is reasonable to do so, while additional management direction is prescribed for adjacent areas to assure that the CDNST scenery integrity needs are met. This recommendation is based on ROS criteria that identify remoteness for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting as: An area at least 1/2-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with

motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads and trails if closed to motorized use. More than 3 miles would tend to classify the area as Primitive another desirable setting. The Forest Service Scenery Management System identifies that the middleground begins at 1/2-mile of the travel route.

- Management of activities and uses within this Management Area need to focus on providing for the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.11 and FSM 2353.42). The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality, scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor. Other recreation and resource uses along the CDNST may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.
- Location and management factors must be considered, such as, the CDNST needs to be located in more primitive ROS classes where available and once located the management of the CDNST corridor (rights-of-way) must provide for a primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized experiences. Related, scenic management objectives of high or very high need to be met along the CDNST travel route where on Federal land.
- Land management plans need to complete the rights-of-way (NTSA, Sec. 7), Comprehensive Plan (NTSA, Sec. 5), and E.O. 13195 requirements by addressing the following: (1) establish a rights-of-way (Management Area) that is of sufficient width and so located to provide the retention of natural conditions, scenic and historic features, and primitive character of the trail area, and (2) identify specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved..., and an identified carrying capacity [or visitor use management practices] of the trail and a plan for its implementation.
- CDNST Management Area recommendation is describe on the map in the Appendix for the Proposed Action and/or alternatives.

Specific and recommended CDNST Management Area Plan Components are identified in the following table.

CDNST LMP MA Desired Conditions

Descriptions
<p>Consistent with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, the MA provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(A)). The CDNST corridor provides panoramic views of undisturbed landscapes in a tranquil scenic environment. The corridor is of sufficient width to encompass national trail resources, qualities, values, associated settings and the primary use or uses. This includes vistas, campsites, water sources, and other important resource values. Desired conditions are principally characterized by Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings.</p>

CDNST LMP MA Objectives

Descriptions
Complete the CDNST unit plan (FSM 2353.44(b)(2)) within three years. ¹ [Example of stepped-down and staged planning and decision-making.]
Complete the CDNST travel route through the MA within five years. [Example of proposed and possible actions.]

CDNST LMP MA Standards or Guidelines

Descriptions - See FSM 1110.8 for Degree of Compliance or Restriction “Helping Verbs” and “Mood of Verb” Definitions
Scenery Management
Manage the travelway as a concern level 1 travel route. Resource management actions must meet a Scenic Integrity Level of Very High or High (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(4)).
Recreation Management
Resource manage actions and allowed uses must be compatible with maintaining or achieving Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS class settings, except motor vehicle use is allowed if such use is in accordance with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(6) and FSM 2353.44b(11).
Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5), FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44b(8)).
Motorized and mechanized use may only be allowed where such use is in accordance with CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5)&(6) and FSM 2353.44b(10) and (11).
If the interval between natural water sources is excessive, consider developing and protecting water sources for hikers and pack and saddle stock use (FSM 2353.44b(9)).
Special Uses Management
Activities, uses, and events that would require a permit must not be authorized unless the activity, use, or event contributes to achieving the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(7)).
Minerals Management
Mineral leases are to include stipulations for no surface occupancy.
Permits for the removal of mineral materials are not to be issued.
Mineral withdrawals should be enacted in areas with a history of locatable mineral findings.
Timber Management
Lands are not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is not scheduled and does not contribute to the allowable sale quantity.
Vegetation Management
Vegetation may be managed to enhance CDNST values, such as to provide vistas to view surrounding landscapes and to conserve natural resources.
Vegetation may be managed to maintain or improve threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat.
Cultural and Historic Resources Management
Protect cultural and historic resources. Interpret National Historic Trails and sites.

¹ This stage of stepped-down planning step could be addressed in a Forest Plan if supported by the Forest Plan EIS.

Lands Acquisition
Provide for land acquisitions to protect the nature and purposes of the National Trail. Prohibit land disposals.
Travel Routes
Segments of the CDNST should fall into Trail Class 2 or 3 and have a Designed Use of Pack and Saddle Stock, except where a substantial safety or resource concern exists, the travel route may have a Designed Use of Hiker/Pedestrian (FSH 2309.18).
Road construction and reconstruction is prohibited; excepted are motor vehicle use circumstances described in CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV(B)(6) and FSM 2353.44b(11).
The CDNST travel route may not be used for a livestock driveway.
Fire Suppression
Fire suppression activities should apply the Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics Implementation Guidelines.
Motor Vehicle Use
The use of motorized vehicles by the general public is prohibited; excepted is motor vehicle use that is in accordance with the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan provisions as detailed in Chapter IV(B)(6).
Other Uses Considerations
Other uses that could conflict with the nature and purposes of the CDNST may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (16 USC 1246(c)).

CDNST LMP MA Implementation Guidance

Partnerships and volunteers are sustained or sought to lead and assist in CDNST programs. Volunteer and cooperative agreements are developed with those the Continental Divide Trail Coalition, volunteers, and private organizations that are dedicated to planning, developing, maintaining, and managing the CDNST in accordance with Sections 2(c), 7(h)(1), and 11 of the NTSA.

The direction in the NTSA, 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2310, FSM 2353.4, and FSM 2380 are used to guide the protection, development, and management of the Trail.

CDNST planning information, including supplemental NEPA guidance, is found in the attached document titled, "[CDNST Planning Handbook](#)."

Thank you for accepting and considering these comments.

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Attachment: CDNST Planning Handbook

Appendix – Core location for the CDNST Management Area

