

# BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF NEW MEXICO

## PUBLIC LANDS/LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER, 2017

### Wildfire and Trails

Trails, fires, trail use and maintenance are all linked together. Wildfires destroy some trails completely, require increased maintenance for others and keep trail users out of the back country for extended periods of time. The ever increasing costs of fighting wildfires have reduced the funds available to the Forest Service for trail maintenance almost to zero. Paul Hessburg's TED talk on wildfire management linked below is very powerful. His conclusions go directly to what BCH does. The Wildfire Today newsletter that sent the video out is a tremendous publication. It is free and comes daily by e-mail.

<http://wildfiretoday.com/2017/08/13/tedx-living-dangerously-in-an-era-of-megafires/>

### National Monuments Review

On August 24<sup>th</sup> Secretary of the Interior Zinke issued his final report on his agency's review of National Monuments. However, only a two-page summary of the report was released to the public, and the summary does not address changes proposed to specific monuments. The rest of the report is being kept secret until an undisclosed time.

A Washington Post article stated that Zinke's report targets three monuments in particular - Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah, and Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon. The New York Times has reported that a fourth, unnamed monument would be reduced. However, nothing will be known for certain, including the fate of the Organ Mountains and Rio Grande del Norte National Monuments in New Mexico, until the final report is released.

For additional information on the monuments review, please see the following article by Legal Planet, another good, free online information source.

<http://legal-planet.org/2017/08/28/the-trump-administrations-arbitrary-review-of-national-monuments/>

### Forest Plan Reviews

Participation in the National Forest Plan Review process for national forests in your area is, next to trail clearing, the most important contribution a BCH member can make to continued equestrian access to public lands. Forest plans guide policy and management decisions that determine, among many other things, trail access, usage

and maintenance. You know the national forests you ride in, perhaps better than many Forest Service employees. Please attend planning meetings and tell the Forest Service what trails should be open to equines, where camping should be permitted, and what trail and campsite maintenance projects should get priority. Also tell them where motorized vehicles and bicycles should be prohibited. Whenever possible, put your comments in writing as well.

The last two Lands Reports provided information on the ongoing forest plan reviews in the Carson, Santa Fe, and Gila National Forests. If you have misplaced those reports, they can be found on our new and greatly improved website.

Information on the ongoing Cibola National Forest plan review can be found at this website:

[https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=FSBDEV3\\_065627](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=FSBDEV3_065627)

Information on the Lincoln National Forest plan can be found here:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/lincoln/landmanagement/planning>

### [Santa Fe County Trails](#)

BCH members in and around Santa Fe County may be interested in the Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails program. The program promotes open space and trails management in the County and currently manages 6,610 acres of open lands, 155 acres of parks, and 34 miles of trails. Many of these trails are open to horses. More information is available at the following website:

[https://www.santafecountynm.gov/growth\\_management/planning/open\\_space\\_planning](https://www.santafecountynm.gov/growth_management/planning/open_space_planning)

### [Information to the Lands Chair](#)

Please send me any information you have on public lands and legislative issues in your area that may affect your Chapter or information on trails such as that provided this month for Santa Fe County. I will be happy to do further research on these matters and/or address them in future Lands Reports.

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