



**Forest Service**

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# News Release

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## National Forests in NM To Close Developed Recreation Sites; Visitors Still Welcome

**Taos, NM**— March 23, 2020 – The five national forests in New Mexico, including the Carson National Forest, will begin the orderly closure of developed recreation sites as early as Monday, March 23, to protect public health and safety and align with state and local measures already in place to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

Although campgrounds, day-use sites, restrooms and other developed recreation facilities on the Santa Fe, Cibola, Gila, and Lincoln national forests are likely to be closed, the vast majority of the forests will still be available to visitors who want to spend time outdoors. At this time, recreation opportunities include hiking and biking on trails, dispersed camping and other activities that support social distancing and small groups.

The Carson National Forest asks members of the public to recreate responsibly by avoiding high-risk activities, like rock climbing, that increase the chance of injury or distress. Law enforcement and search and rescue operations may be limited due to COVID-19. In addition, visitors can help mitigate resource impacts while recreation sites are closed by bringing home their trash (pack it in, pack it out), and by appropriately managing human waste by burying it at least 6-8 inches deep and 200 feet away from water, trails and recreation sites. Visit the Interactive Visitor Map at <https://www.fs.fed.us/ivm/> for more information on available activities.

“We know how much our communities and our visitors value all the recreation opportunities the national forests have to offer,” Carson National Forest Supervisor James Duran said. “This decision was not made lightly, but we believe people understand the serious risks posed by facilities that draw large numbers of people into close proximity with each other. We appreciate your patience and understanding of our efforts to mitigate those risks to protect public health and safety.”

The developed recreation site closures will remain in effect until further notice. The Forest Service thanks all New Mexicans, visitors and partners for their cooperation. Please report any instances of vandalism to facilities to the local ranger district office.

All SFNF offices are conducting business and providing services virtually. The Carson National Forest will continue to coordinate its COVID-19 response in alignment with all federal, state and local guidance. Visitors to national forests are urged to take the precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For tips from the CDC on preventing illnesses like the coronavirus, go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>.

Contact information for Carson National Forest Headquarters and the ranger district offices is posted on the [forest website](#). Updates on the Carson National Forest response to COVID-19 will also be posted on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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