

Treatment/Project Area: Devil/Turkey

rev. 4/15/11

Geographic Area

- Bounded on north by the Piedra Area and private land, on the east by private land, on the south by private land and highway 160, and on the west by US 160, Columbine RD, private land, and the Piedra River.

Unique Characteristic(s)

- **proposed wild and scenic river Piedra River; “outstandingly remarkable” qualities;**
- **about half of the mixed conifer is in roadless;**
- **includes some of most heavily used area on ranger district (Turkey Springs);**
- most open road access in ponderosa pine cover type;
- **adjacent to Piedra area (area managed for wilderness character);**
- **hut system (Turkey Spgs, Hotz Springs, Monument Park).**

Management Challenges

- **limited road access limits mechanical treatments to mixed conifer;**
- **much of area is steep, rugged;**
- aspen decline occurring throughout geographic area, particularly on southwest-facing aspects;
- **many stands in the area are 50/50 mix of conifers and aspen, which is problematic in sale of timber products;**
- **many system roads in fair to poor condition, needing reconstruction prior to any use (prime examples are Devil Mtn and Chris Mtn Roads);**
- **prescribed burning smoke constraints given proximity to US 160 and west edge of Pagosa Springs** (e.g. Pagosa Lakes);
- Fire Regime Condition Class 3 (high departure from reference conditions) in most warm-dry mixed conifer stands (and lower/adjacent ponderosa pine stands) – heavy fuel loading coupled with fire exclusion (much dead white fir from mortality spike in 2004-2006); generally FRCC 2 (moderate departure from reference conditions) in remaining w-d MC stands;
- forest health issues: **Douglas-fir beetle epidemic**, fir broom rust, in addition to aspen decline;
- many of the range improvements (fences and stock ponds) are beyond their useful life and need to be reconstructed or replaced;
- **high amount of recreation use:** hiking, mountain biking, ATV riding, motorcycles, special events are impacting livestock operations and spreading noxious weeds;
- keeping noxious weed infestations (leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, hounds tongue) contained to current areas and preventing further spread across the landscape;
- adjacent private land is heavily infested with noxious weeds;
- other noxious weed infestations (oxeye daisy, yellow toad flax, musk thistle, Canada thistle) are beyond control capabilities.

Management Emphasis/Desired Conditions

- current forest plan:
 - o semi-primitive non-motorized recreation
 - o range mgt; livestock grazing
 - o management for Management Indicator Species (MIS)
 - o big-game winter range management
 - o timber mgt/wood fiber production and utilization
 - o wild and scenic river corridor (Piedra River)
 - o (limited) semi-primitive roaded recreation.
- proposed forest plan:
 - o **“public and private lands intermix” (aka WUI)**
 - o natural landscapes/limited mgt coupled with “natural processes dominate” (**roadless**)
 - o active management (generally, timber and range mgt).
- desired conditions:
 - o resilient forest conditions (bugs/crud at endemic levels; diversity in tree composition and size/age classes, etc, aspen restoration)
 - o reduced risk for wildfire in/near WUI;
 - o human-initiated disturbances mimic natural disturbances;

Projects

- Approved
 - o **Turkey Springs EA/DN**, includes Turkey Springs area, plus all of Chris Mtn;
 - o - **biomass demo**;
 - o - Chris Mtn stewardship contracts;
 - o - several other areas planned for biomass utilization, small sales (aspen posts/poles),
 - o - **Lower Middle Mtn research project** (in monitoring phase);
 - o - **many areas to include Rx burning following mechanical treatments** (e.g., Brockover Rx burn;
 - o Devil Creek Rx burn;
 - o Horsefly Rx burn;
 - o Mule Mtn Rx burn;
 - o on-going range permitting (grazing, cattle)
- In planning
 - o Turkey Springs Trail Management (EA);
 - o Devil Mtn lodgepole pine eradication;
 - o Devil Mtn Aerial Rx burn.

Resource Topics

- **CWPP – area lies within WUI for Archuleta County CWPP;**
- Vegetation types – typical
 - o ponderosa pine, grading to mixed conifer (both phases) & aspen, then into spruce-fir;
 - o aspen stands in a state of decline, with encroaching conifer
 - o past harvesting in mixed conifer was inconsistent; heavy harvest in some areas, light harvest elsewhere;
- Recreation –
 - current Issues:
 - o heavy recreation use on eastern boundary year-long, with numerous other popular trails (including ATV trails) and recreation areas scattered throughout the area (**compelling need for Turkey Spgs Trail Management EA**);
 - o moderate big-game hunting pressure
 - o Piedra river area receives moderate to heavy use in summer and fall seasons from rafters/kayakers, hikers, anglers, campers, and others
 - o roughly 4 recreation events are permitted in the area each year.
 - projections/potential changes:
 - o EA underway to add numerous trails in analysis area for mountain biking, ATV, and motorcycle use. Expect decision in July.
 - o recreation use will continue to increase in the area, as will the number of recreation events, primarily in the eastern portion of the geographic area.
- Wildlife-
 - o major north - south migration corridor for big game (elk and deer), particularly Chris Mountain, Middle Mountain, Devil Mountain, and Mule Mountain areas
 - o **very popular spring turkey hunting area**
 - o **very popular fall/early winter mountain lion hunting area**
 - o **extensive amount of important big game winter range**
 - o **extensive amount of mountain shrubland habitat, important fall foraging areas for black bear and habitat for many other wildlife including migratory birds**
 - o **potential Mexican spotted owl (federally listed threatened species) habitat present**
 - o Devil Mountain area recently dropped as suitable lynx habitat; none other present
- Grazing –
 - o active cattle grazing allotments throughout; Portions of Sheep Creek, Mesa, Dudley, and Chris Mountain/Park Lake/Martinez allotments, mostly satisfactory conditions. Increased mortality and treatment of timber resources will likely lead to increased forage production as transitory range.
 - o areas treated with prescribed fire would be followed with a minimum one growing season deferment from grazing allowing for seed production and storage of root reserves. If possible prescribed fire would be followed with one year's total rest from grazing
 - o invasive weeds issues throughout area.
- Watershed –

- Piedra River proposed for Wild and Scenic River designation in draft Forest Plan
- isolated areas of erodible soils
- Hatcher Lake is critical municipal reservoir

Opportunities

- Rx burning – several approved burn plans and some in planning;
- biomass utilization;
- inventory and treat invasive weeds with emphasis on ability eradicate, control, or contain infestations.