

Treatment/Project Area: Piedra Area

rev. 5/19/11

Geographic Area

- [description for Piedra Area as whole, which includes part of Columbine RD] Bounded on north by Weminuche Wilderness, upper Mosca/Coldwater/Sand Creeks, on north-east/east by Little Sand Creek (and Williams/Middle Fork poly), southeast by Piedra River (and Devil/Turkey poly), on west by Columbine RD boundary; then west finger of Piedra Area includes much of East Creek (above Vallecito Reservoir).

Unique Characteristic(s)

- **managed for wilderness characteristics;**
- **no roads;**
- high scenic qualities;
- **moderate trails network** (which we've used for management purposes);
- one of few areas on Forest, **managed for wilderness**, that is **mostly mid-elevation**.

Management Challenges

- **management access via foot, horse, helo, or watercraft;**
- forest health, current issues: spruce beetle at upper elevations; Doug-fir beetle at mid-elevations; fir engraver and broom rust at mid-elevations;
- **treatments can only affect moderate to large areas via burning.**

Management Emphasis/Desired Conditions

- current forest plan:
 - o **manage for pristine, primitive, and semi-primitive wilderness characteristics;**
- proposed forest plan:
 - o similar to current forest plan;
- desired conditions:
 - o resilient forest conditions (bugs/crud at endemic levels; diversity in tree composition and size/age classes, etc, aspen restoration)
 - o natural processes dominate.

Projects

- o on-going range permitting (grazing, cattle);
- o (beginning this summer) **4-year CDOW study on black bear populations;**
- o **Piedra Area Rx Burn Plan**, covering about 16K acres (have completed ~3400 ac);
- o **"Birds and Burn Study"** [one of 13 research sites across western US – Birds and Burns Network].

- In planning
 - ??? [Kevin..]

Resource Topics

- Vegetation types –
 - o **largest area on Pagosa** (on San Juan?) **with extensive pre-settlement ponderosa pine** – pine stands **at risk for stand-replacement fire** due to fire exclusion (hence, rationale for efforts behind Rx Burn Plan).
- Recreation –
 - o backcountry/wilderness “style” of rec pursuits;
 - o **premier river canyon** for paddlers, rafters;
- Wildlife-
 - o **conservation population areas for cut-throat trout**, including Sand and Coldwater Creeks;
 - o **otter population in Piedra River** (and some use in larger tributaries);
 - o **fisheries** for reintroduced **otters** is critical;
 - o extensive habitat for bear, birds (hence, research studies);
 - o peregrine aerie near southern tip of poly;
- Grazing –
 - o active cattle grazing allotment.
- Fuels –
 - o Rx burns result in smoke drainage to US 160 corridor;
 - o **rugged country limits means to manage fires.**
- Watershed –

Opportunities

- study use of **Rx fire on restoration of undeveloped mid-elevation forests**;
- can **burn large areas in short period** given good Rx “window”;
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