

SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST AND SANTA FE COUNTY FIELD TOUR- MAY 29TH, 2026

PREPARED BY SOUTHWEST DECISION RESOURCES

On May 29th, the Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) and Santa Fe County ("County") co-convened a field visit meeting in the Village of Cañada de Los Alamos centered on open space and recreation.

The goals of the meeting were to:

1. Learn about recreation and open space management from Santa Fe County and USDA Forest Service jurisdictions, including roles for management, maintenance, and monitoring
2. Identify recreation and open space challenges and opportunities, and a vision for the area

The field tour, attended by 25 individuals included community members, Santa Fe watershed Association, Santa Fe Faire Tire Society, Santa Fe National Forest, and Santa Fe County, included two stops and was facilitated by Southwest Decision Resources. (www.swdresources.com). The following document summarizes discussions and general agreements.

STOP 1: JUNCTION OF USFS LAND AND COUNTY: SOUTH END OF FOREST ROAD 79 NEAR THE CATTLEGUARD

Allowed & Illegal Activities

- Recreation on non-system trails: Although recreating on non-system trails is legal, some residents expressed concern that such activities may lead to illegal activities, such as littering or unwanted ignitions.
- Green wood cutting: This activity is not allowed on the Forest lands surrounding the community. A forest protection officer will be patrolling this area due to increasing community concern and reports of large green trees being cut down.
- Dispersed camping: This activity is allowed, but some residents have expressed concerns about dumping, the risk of fire ignition, and other impacts.
 - There was general agreement that camping has increased, and there is a need to determine where it is appropriate.
 - Participants agreed that parking needs more attention related to camping, and that boulders should be added to block closed roads and delineate camping areas.
- Grazing: Grazing is an allowed use; however, the allotment is currently not in use (deferred), but it could be reinstated in the future.
- Motorized travel: Not allowed for some vehicles. As per the Travel Management Rule policy, forest roads are only open to road-legal vehicles.



Roads & Traffic Counters

- Current speed limit through the Village is posted at 25 MPH.
- County right-of-way limited to 2 - 9 ft lanes
- Roads managed under a weight limit, which limits services available (e.g., dumpsters).
- Traffic counters can be used to detect speed, axle numbers, and the total number of vehicles.
- Traffic count studies need a baseline quantity as well as 3-5 years of long-term monitoring.
- Traffic counters help define "appropriate speed limits". Studies can indicate a need for an increase OR a decrease of the current limit.
- Participants generally agreed that the County and SFNF should partner on traffic counters to identify use and patterns over time. These data could be paired with timing for additional enforcement.

SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST AND SANTA FE COUNTY FIELD DAY - MAY 29TH, 2026 (CONT)

STOP 1: JUNCTION OF SFNF LAND AND COUNTY: SOUTH END OF FOREST ROAD 79 NEAR THE CATTLEGUARD (CONT)

Education & Safety Messaging

- Community concern over speeds within the Village and on Forest roads.
- Digital speed signs could be co-located to inform residents/visitors of speed limits and other needed information, such as fire restrictions.
- Opportunity for County, USFS, and Santa Fe Watershed Association (future partners as well), to co-create kiosk narrative.
- General agreement that kiosks are needed; the current signage is insufficient and located in the wrong area.
- Kiosks and parking serve as entry points to recreation; agreement that kiosks ultimately need links to trails from the parking areas.
- Kiosks need to illustrate social, historical, ecological, and recreational information, and be consistent with County Kiosks in the Village.

STOP 2: NORTH END OF FOREST ROAD 79 AT THE TOP OF THE HILL

Off-Road Travel/Access to Private Inholdings

- The Travel Management Rule is difficult to enforce/educate about because visitors are required to use a map to identify open and closed roads.
 - Particularly difficult in this area, where there are so many old roadbeds.
- There are 2 private inholdings beyond the closed roads at the top of Forest Road 79, and the SFNF is legally required to allow access. There are ongoing discussions about purchasing these holdings.
- Illegal cross country travel and watershed damage was expressed as a concern at the meeting throughout, especially along the road and at the top of FS road 79.
- General agreement that several areas need to be bouldered off with the potential of gates to allow access until/if the purchase of those inholdings can occur.



SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST AND SANTA FE COUNTY FIELD DAY - MAY 29TH, 2026 (CONT)

STOP 2: NORTH END OF FOREST ROAD 79 AT THE TOP OF THE HILL (CONT)

Trails History & Existing Condition

- Discussion of System and Non-System Trails
 - Trails #175 and 176 are current SFNF system trails
 - System trails must meet the Trails Management Objective (TMO), and this is specific to an area. Trails are surveyed to determine their status, including sustainability.
 - Once they are categorized or built as system trails, they become eligible for maintenance.
 - These will be maintained this summer, as funding only applies to system trails.
 - A large network of non-system trails is currently utilized by recreators, and their location is identifiable on crowd-sourced trail apps (e.g., Trailforks).
- Trail Design and User Experience
 - There were differing opinions regarding the user experience, safety, and sustainability of the Bonnie downhill section of the trail. Users who enjoyed the trail described a valuable experience not available elsewhere in the area. Those who did not like the downhill section of the trails stated natural resource and safety concerns.
 - Options could include construction of a parallel (or additional) trail for uphill and downhill hiking and/or modifications to the existing trail to accommodate multiple use.
 - General agreement that a future inventory and assessment of the non-system trails is needed to determine which are sustainable vs those that are contributing negatively to watershed health.
- Legacy Roads and Trails Grant Specifications
 - General agreement on the use of boulders and signage for system trails.
 - Ideally, pairing signage with bouldered locations addressing parking
 - Kiosks are generally supported; however, the grant specifications need to be revisited for approval.
- SFNF commits to having more robust public/community engagement regarding trail management moving forward.

