

FORT STANTON AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

ROUTE DESIGNATION PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



**ROSWELL FIELD OFFICE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EA # NM-060-2002-0119**





United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Roswell Field Office
2909 West 2nd
Roswell, NM 88201

In reply refer to:
8322
Fort Stanton ACEC

JUL 09 2003

Dear Reader:

Attached is the final document for the Route Designation Plan / Environmental Assessment (RDP/EA) for the Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The Planning Process for the RDP/EA is concluded with the signing of the plan and environmental assessment. The completion of the RDP/EA process also makes the beginning of the implementation phase of this plan.

The final RDP/EA records the acceptance of the Draft Route Designation Plan / Environmental Assessment. Eight public comments were received during the sixty day public comment period. These public comments slightly modified the document and changes were made to reflect the comments.

Implementation of the approved plan and environmental assessment will involve many people and much effort over the years. Your continued interest and involvement in the BLM's management of the public lands and resources of the Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern is appreciated and will be an important part of successful implementation of the RDP/EA. If you are interested in more specific information about the plan implementation or would like to become more involved in the management of the resources, please write to the address on the letterhead or call (505) 627-0272.

Sincerely,

Edwin L. Roberson
Field Manager

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FOR FORT STANTON ACEC
ROUTE DESIGNATION**

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CHAPTER ONE

FORT STANTON

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

ROUTE DESIGNATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

During 1999-2001 The Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern collaborative activity plan (ACEC Plan) (NM-060-2000-0141) was developed with local communities and representatives from Lincoln County following the recommendations of the Roswell Approved Resource Management Plan of October 1997(RMP). The ACEC Plan was completed on August 28, 2001. One of the outgrowths of the ACEC plan is to develop a Route Designation Plan/environmental Assessment (RDP/EA). This RDP/EA will designate vehicle routes of travel as open or closed. Certain designated routes of travel for mountain bike/horse/hiking trails will be closed to motorized vehicles. The attached base map from the ACEC Plan, page 2-16, "Fort Stanton Existing Roads and Proposed Road Closures", will be used as a basis for the proposed route designation within the ACEC. Refinements in Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) management will be based on the aforementioned map.

The location of the Fort Stanton ACEC is within the un-surveyed portion of the Fort Stanton Military Reservation, New Mexico Prime Meridian. The location of the ACEC is T9S., Range 14 & 15E., T 10S., R14 & 15E(see attached map).The management goals of the ACEC are to protect the biological, archaeological and scenic qualities of Fort Stanton, while providing quality recreation opportunities.

The proposed Designated Trails map on page five shows the proposed trails on the Fort Stanton ACEC

The management goal in the 1997 RMP are to protect the

Fort Stanton ACEC Route Designation Plan /Environmental Assessment

biological, archaeological and scenic qualities of the ACEC, while providing quality recreation opportunities. The RMP states the use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV's) will be limited to designated roads and trails. The plan is also consistent with 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8342, and BLM Manual 8342.

The RMP lists the following details regarding OHV travel within the ACEC:

- A 100-foot wide corridor measured from the edge of the Rio Bonito and Rio Salado will be closed to OHV use to protect sensitive riparian resources, except for the use of designated roads within the corridor.
- All multi-use trails (equestrian, hiking, and mountain bike trails that are located on existing roads will be open to OHV use.
- The Feather Cave Archaeological Complex will be closed to OHV use, except for U.S. Highway 380 and the Fort Stanton Cave Road.

The Fort Stanton ACEC plan developed the following Statements, challenges, actions, goals and objectives as a baseline for this Plan/EA:

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

Under the Roswell RMP, approximately 24,000 acres was designated as limited to designated roads and trails for OHV use, to protect soils, cultural resources, and vegetation, especially threatened and endangered species and their habitat. The use of OHV's will be limited to designated roads and trails, with the exceptions to the limited designation listed in Chapter 1 of the ACEC Plan.

The RDP/EA will provide the basis for signing the ACEC to implement the RMP OHV decisions. Most users have used the area