

DESERT HERONRIES

Nominated ACEC: Desert Heronries ACEC

Nominated by: New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Size: 48,500 acres

Fish or Wildlife Resource

Relevance

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) nest colonies (heronries) have been documented in Western Soapberry tree stands east of the Pecos River within the planning area since the 1970s. With a limited amount of suitable nesting trees along the Pecos River, these herons are forced to nest several miles away from the river, which is their typical foraging habitat.

The stands of Western Soapberry, associated with ephemeral draws and playas, are essential for the nesting herons as well as for the survival of a host of other avian species in the area, such as Neo-tropical migrants and other heron species. These tree stands also provide a limited amount of foraging habitat for the herons as small mammals, reptiles, and even amphibians inhabit the area around the tree stands due to the shade and higher humidity.

Importance

- Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.