RATTLESNAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

At a glance:
Rattlesnake NRA quick facts

Date established: October 19, 1980
Established by: Congressional designation, Public Law 96–476
Forest Service region: 1, Northern Region
State: Montana
Associated national forest: Lolo
Total Forest Service acres: 60,081
Reasons designated: To preserve “lands with high value for municipal watershed, recreation, wildlife habitat, ecological, and educational opportunities.” (U.S. Congress, 1980)

DESCRIPTION
The Rattlesnake National Recreation Area (NRA) is located in western Montana. It was designated at the same time as the adjacent Rattlesnake Wilderness, and the areas are collectively known as the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness (RNRAW). The RNRAW features alpine lakes, diverse wildlife, and Rattlesnake Creek, a municipal watershed for the city of Missoula. Elevation in the area ranges from 3,600-feet at the entrance to 8,620-feet at the top of McLeod Peak. The recreation area lies south of the wilderness area, with its southern boundary just four miles north of the city of Missoula. It includes 73 miles of trails open to hikers, mountain bikers, runners, cross-country skiers, horseback riders, and dog walkers. The recreation area receives heavy use, particularly in the “South Zone” that extends three miles from the main trailhead. The wilderness area to the north is much more remote and receives far less traffic.

BACKGROUND
The Salish used and resided in the RNRAW landscape for at least several hundred years before European settlers arrived in the 1800’s. Between 1911 and 1923 the Montana Power Company built ten dams on eight lakes in the area to help supply water to the growing city of Missoula; by 1937 they had purchased all the upper-drainage private land west of Rattlesnake Creek. In 1979 the Montana Power Company sold all the dams and water rights to Mountain Water Company.

When Congress passed Public Law 96-476 establishing the RNRAW in 1980, more than a third of the area was in private ownership. In 1983, the Forest Service acquired 21,000 acres in the area from the Montana Power Company. Today, the upper RNRAW is less developed than it was a hundred years ago when small settlements dotted the valley.

People and visitors

Nearest metropolitan area: Missoula, MT; 7 miles
Population within 25 miles: 122,641
Population within 100 miles: 441,817
Annual visitors estimate and geography: Lolo National Forest: 1,202,426 estimated annual visits (2016, NVUM)
Main recreational uses: Hiking, biking, picnicking, hunting, fishing, running
USDA Forest Service Regions

Region 1: Northern
Region 2: Rocky Mountain
Region 3: Southwest
Region 4: Intermountain
Region 5: Pacific Southwest
Region 6: Pacific Northwest
Region 7: Southern
Region 8: Eastern
Region 9: Alaska

Iconic places
USDA Forest Service land
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Photo: Rattlesnake Wilderness in the Lolo National Forest. Available at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/fsnorthernregion/26996619109/in/photolist-9UoUpG-H8AJja-225bNE8-DWfvYY/. License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/.
ARAPAHO NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

At a glance:
Arapaho NRA quick facts

Date established: October 11, 1978
Established by: Congressional designation, Public Law 95–450
Forest Service region: 2, Rocky Mountain Region
State: Colorado
Associated national forest(s): Arapaho & Roosevelt
Total Forest Service acres: 31,102
Reasons designated: “to preserve and protect the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, and wildlife resources of the area and to enhance the recreational opportunities provided.” (U.S. Congress, 1978)

DESCRIPTION
The Arapaho National Recreation Area (NRA) is located in the upper reaches of the Colorado River Valley in north-central Colorado. It sits amid a network of other designated areas, including the neighboring Rocky Mountain National Park to the east and the adjacent Indian Peaks Wilderness on the Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests. The recreation area is situated around five major reservoirs, sometimes called the “Great Lakes of Colorado”: Lake Granby, Shadow Mountain Lake, Monarch Lake, Willow Creek Reservoir and Meadow Creek Reservoir. Grand Lake, the largest natural lake in Colorado, also lies adjacent to the Arapaho NRA. Water-based recreation, including boating and fishing, is the main draw. The area includes developed facilities such as marinas and campgrounds. Two of the five reservoirs allow both motorized and unmotorized boats, the other three allow unmotorized boating only. The NRA and the areas around it are also popular for hiking and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail crosses the east part of the NRA. The Arapaho NRA is home to the largest southern- and eastern-most breeding colony of ospreys in the Pacific Flyway, and biologists have been monitoring summer breeding populations in the area for several decades.

BACKGROUND
The Arapaho NRA was congressionally-designated at the same time as the adjacent Indian Peaks Wilderness. Both designations afforded additional protection and preservation of the scenic, recreation, and ecological values present in the areas around the upper Colorado River Valley.

People and visitors

Nearest metropolitan area: Boulder, CO; 33 miles
Population within 25 miles: 150,980
Population within 100 miles: 4,552,603
Annual visitors estimate and geography: Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests: 4,458,829 estimated annual visits (2015, NVUM)
Main recreational uses: Boating, camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, snowmobiling, skiing
Region 1: Northern
Region 2: Rocky Mountain
Region 4: Intermountain
Region 5: Pacific Southwest
Region 6: Pacific Northwest
Region 3: Southwest
Region 8: Southern
Region 9: Eastern
Region 10: Alaska

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BROWNS CANYON
NATIONAL MONUMENT

At a glance:
Browns Canyon NM quick facts

**Date established:** February 19, 2015
**Established by:** Presidential proclamation, President Barack Obama
**Forest Service region:** 2, Rocky Mountain
**State:** Colorado
**Associated national forest:** Pike-San Isabel
**Total Forest Service acres:** 11,836 (monument also includes 9,750 Bureau of Land Management acres)
**Reasons designated:** “a wealth of scientifically significant geological, ecological, riparian, cultural, and historic resources.” (Presidential Proclamation, 2015)

People and visitors

**Nearest metropolitan area:** Colorado Springs, CO; 66 miles
**Population within 25 miles:** 43,824
**Population within 100 miles:** 7,879,147
**Annual visitors estimate and geography:** Pike-San Isabel National Forest: 4,433,985 estimated annual visits (2016, NVUM)
**Main recreational uses:** White-water rafting and kayaking, backcountry hiking, fishing, photography, stargazing, off-highway vehicle use

DESCRIPTION

The Browns Canyon National Monument (NM) is located in the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, which is managed through a collaborative effort of the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The upper Arkansas River Valley that contains Browns Canyon was a significant resource for the area’s Native Peoples historically and artifacts from the area date back over 10,000 years.

Browns Canyon NM is very popular seasonally for white-water rafting and kayaking. It also has a small system of non-motorized trails and one motorized trail. The area is characterized by steep topography, limited development, and a rugged, backcountry nature. Access is primarily through an unpaved road that runs adjacent to the monument’s east boundary and the Ruby Mountain Recreation Site, which has a campground, toilets, boater put-in to the Arkansas River, and trailheads leading into the monument.

BACKGROUND

Browns Canyon National Monument was designated after decades of interest in preserving the area and support from local non-profits, industries, and citizens. Concurrent efforts by both the Forest Service and BLM, dating back to 1972, established the area as a primitive, roadless area suitable for wilderness. A bipartisan effort to designate the area as wilderness began in the late 1990’s. Friends of Brown Canyon formed in 2003 and pushed politically for designation by collecting hundreds of letters of support from individuals, businesses, and other organizations and testifying in front of a congressional subcommittee. After several efforts to introduce stand-alone legislation to establish Browns Canyon as a wilderness area were unsuccessful, congressional members transitioned to a push for a national monument in 2014. On February 19th, 2015 President Obama designated Browns Canyon as a National Monument co-managed by the Forest Service and the BLM.
Iconic places

USDA Forest Service Regions

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Region 1: Northern
Region 2: Rocky Mountain
Region 4: Intermountain
Region 6: Pacific Northwest
Region 5: Pacific Southwest
Region 3: Southwest
Region 8: Southern
Region 9: Eastern
Region 10: Alaska

0 500 1,000 Miles
0 250 500 Miles

CHIMNEY ROCK
NATIONAL MONUMENT

At a glance:
Chimney Rock NM quick facts

Date established: September 21, 2012
Established by: Presidential Proclamation, President Barack Obama
Forest Service region: 2, Rocky Mountain
State: Colorado
Associated national forest: San Juan
Total Forest Service acres: 4,724 acres
Reasons designated: “spiritual, historic, and scientific resources of great value and significance... nationally significant archaeology, archaeoastronomy, visual and landscape characteristics, and geological and biological features, as well as objects of deep cultural and educational value” (Presidential Proclamation, 2012)

People and visitors

Nearest metropolitan area: Farmington, NM; 46 miles
Population within 25 miles: 31,418
Population within 100 miles: 357,991
Annual visitors estimate and geography: San Juan National Forest: 1,315,491 estimated annual visits (2016, NVUM); “Approximately 12,000 visitors currently visit Chimney Rock annually” (USDA Forest Service, 2019)
Main recreational uses: Archaeological visitation, astronomical and geological interpretation activities, hiking, bicycling, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing

DESCRIPTION
Chimney Rock National Monument (NM) is located at the southern edge of the San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado. The area in and around the monument was home to ancient Pueblo Indians dating back 1,000 years. There are over 100 archaeological sites of significance related to Pueblo cultural history inside the monument, including 200 ancient homes and ceremonial buildings. Some of the buildings and artifacts at the site have been excavated for viewing and exploration. The area remains an important cultural place for descendants of the Ancestral Pueblo People, who return to visit their ancestors and for other spiritual and traditional purposes. The monument is also home to abundant wildlife. Mule deer and elk travel through the site on their migratory journeys every spring and fall.

BACKGROUND
Excavations and survey work in the monument area date back to 1921. In 1970, Chimney Rock was established as an Archaeological Area by the Forest Service, and ongoing excavations and stabilization work occurred off and on over the next several decades. In 1988, Friends of Chimney Rock, which the following year became the Chimney Rock Archaeology Group, was formed by volunteers to provide tours of the area. In 2004, the Chimney Rock Interpretive Association (CRIA) became a separate nonprofit organization that expanded programming and training for tours and educational opportunities alongside Forest Service management. This collaborative partnership helped the site gain recognition as an interpretive area. Excavation and stabilization work continued over the next several years, and an interpretive kiosk was built in 2011. In 2012, President Barack Obama designated the area as a national monument, with the Forest Service managing the monument in continued partnership with CRIA.

Sources used and cited for this text are listed by location starting on page 90
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USDA Forest Service Regions

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Region 1: Northern
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Region 4: Intermountain
Region 5: Pacific Southwest
Region 6: Pacific Northwest
Region 3: Southwest
Region 8: Southern
Region 9: Eastern
Region 10: Alaska

San Juan National Forest

Chimney Rock National Monument

**PINE RIDGE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

**At a glance:**

**Pine Ridge NRA quick facts**

- **Date established:** October 20, 1986
- **Established by:** Congressional designation, Public Law 99-504
- **Forest Service region:** 2, Rocky Mountain
- **State:** Nebraska
- **Associated national forest:** Nebraska
- **Total Forest Service acres:** 6,636
- **Reasons designated:** “to preserve primitive and semi-primitive recreational use in a natural setting as well as other resource conservation values.” (U.S. Congress, 1986)

**DESCRIPTION**

The Pine Ridge National Recreation Area (NRA) is located in the Nebraska Panhandle, occupying the north-facing Pine Ridge Escarpment. Rugged pine-covered hills and sandstone buttes rise out of the great plains and create an unexpected region of timbered canyons and mixed-grass prairies where visitors can enjoy hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. The 40-mile non-motorized Pine Ridge Trail spans the Pine Ridge NRA traveling through ponderosa pine forest, creek bottoms, canyons, and open ridges with great views of the nearby buttes. The area is rich in biodiversity; typical fauna includes coyotes, bighorn sheep, bobcats, elk, white-tailed and mule deer, eagles, hawks, and wild turkeys.

**BACKGROUND**

The area around Pine Ridge was first given federal status in 1902 as a Forest Reserve, with the purpose of creating a forest-planting experiment where seedlings would be planted and distributed throughout the west. In 1950, Nebraska’s Pine Ridge area was officially given national forest status and the Pine Ridge National Recreation Area was officially designated in October of 1986 alongside the Soldier Creek Wilderness area, also located in the Nebraska National Forest. This was accomplished with the intent of providing backcountry recreation opportunities in the ponderosa pine forest of Nebraska.

**People and visitors**

- **Nearest metropolitan area:** Rapid City, SD; 86 miles
- **Population within 25 miles:** 10,685
- **Population within 100 miles:** 237,927
- **Annual visitors estimate and geography:** Nebraska National Forest: 152,295 estimated annual visits (2013, NVUM)
- **Main recreational uses:** Bicycling, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding
USDA Forest Service land
Iconic places
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Nebraska National Forest
Oglala National Grassland
Pine Ridge National Recreation Area

**JEMEZ NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

**At a glance:**
Jemez NRA quick facts

- **Date established:** October 12, 1993
- **Established by:** Congressional designation, Public Law 103-104
- **Forest Service region:** 3, Southwestern
- **State:** New Mexico
- **Associated national forest:** Santa Fe
- **Total Forest Service acres:** 48,841
- **Reasons designated:** “to conserve, protect, and restore the recreational, ecological, cultural, religious, and wildlife resource values of the Jemez Mountains.” (U.S. Congress, 1993)

**People and visitors**

- **Nearest metropolitan area:** Albuquerque, NM; 53 miles
- **Population within 25 miles:** 85,909
- **Population within 100 miles:** 1,327,517
- **Annual visitors estimate and geography:** Santa Fe National Forest non-wilderness visits: 716,795 estimated annual visits (2014, NVUM)
- **Main recreational uses:** Camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, outdoor learning, picnicking, scenic driving, cross country skiing, soaking in hot and warm springs, rock climbing, horseback riding, swimming

**DESCRIPTION**
The Jemez National Recreation Area (NRA) is located in the Santa Fe National Forest in north-central New Mexico, about 40 miles west of Los Alamos. The town of Jemez Springs is located within the boundaries of the Jemez NRA. The Jemez NRA is a high elevation area ranging from 5,800-feet to over 10,000-feet above sea level. The environment is arid, with only 20 inches of precipitation per year. Due to elevation gradients, vegetation ranges from high elevation mixed-conifer forest to dry ponderosa pine forest and open pinon-juniper forests at the lowest elevations. Lush riparian areas are characterized by deciduous trees such as cottonwoods, alders, and willows. Bare rock, cliff faces, flat topped mesas, canyons, and the domed peak of Redondo are scenic highlights. Aside from the dramatic scenery, historic Pueblo ruins and hot springs in Jemez Springs provide other attractions to visitors.

**BACKGROUND**
Native Americans have inhabited the Jemez NRA for millennia, illustrated by the Ancestral Puebloan homes scattered throughout. The Jemez Mountains continue to provide important cultural and economic significance to Native Americans and northern New Mexican communities today, with traditional activities such as grazing, hunting, medicinal plant collection, and timber cutting still important to local peoples. Spanish explorers arrived as early as the 1540s and colonists under the leadership of Don Juan de Onate followed in 1598. At this time, Jemez peoples were forced to abandon their homes, scatter amongst the mesas, and congregate around two centralized missions. Jemez people took part in the 1680 Pueblo revolt but were reconquered by 1696. In 1821, the area gained independence from Spain as part of Mexico and in 1848, it was annexed by the United States following the Mexican War. In 1905 the Jemez Forest Reserve was established, becoming part of the Santa Fe National Forest in 1925.
Photo: Changing colors near Jemez, New Mexico on the Santa Fe National Forest. Available at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/swregion/22331480390. License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/.