

# Cibola

## National Forest and Grasslands

### Mt. Taylor Ranger District



#### Pocket Guide

## New Mexico

2003, Revised 2014



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# Welcome! ¡Bienvenidos!

## to Cibola National Forest Mt. Taylor Ranger District

The San Mateo and Zuni Mountains make up Mt. Taylor Ranger District, which has approximately 520,000 acres of diverse forest lands. Mt. Taylor, the highest point in western New Mexico, is considered sacred to Native Americans. This composite volcano erupted at various times between about 4 million and 2 million years ago. The core of the Zuni Mountains dates geologically to the Precambrian era, 1.5 billion years ago. The Zuni Mountains have a diverse history that includes railroad logging and sheepherding. In 1974 Grants Ranger District was combined with Gallup District, to the west, forming today's Mt. Taylor Ranger District.

## Recreation

Each season provides different opportunities for the forest visitor. In late spring, summer, and early fall hikers and backpackers can enjoy the beautiful vistas along Gooseberry Spring Trail as they approach the summit of Mt. Taylor, or Strawberry Canyon Trail on the way to McGaffey Lookout Tower in the Zuni Mountains. Fall offers warm, clear days and crisp, cool nights and brings with it abundant hunting opportunities in the Zuni Mountains and on Mt. Taylor. Stands of aspen across the district provide beautiful gold and red foliage. Winter sports include; snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The well-known Mt. Taylor Winter Quadrathlon offers the adventuresome a challenging endurance race every February. In summer, skies often display single and double rainbows after seasonal monsoons.



Recreationists enjoy a day at Quaking Aspen Campground.

Developed recreation sites include Quaking Aspen, McGaffey, and Ojo Redondo in the Zuni Mountains and Coal Mine and Lobo Canyon on Mt. Taylor. Photographers and history buffs alike can find many sites and areas to explore and capture in memory or on film. Sunsets are truly beautiful to watch as dusk approaches.

## Forest Health

Grazing, prescribed fire, and thinning are management activities that may be part of a stand prescription. A *prescription* is a written document that outlines timber stand objectives, provides management instructions for vegetation manipulation, and describes desired future condition.



Mt. Taylor hotshot crew conducting a controlled burn. Prescribed fire allows for the removal of heavy underbrush without damaging larger trees, lessening the likelihood of a catastrophic fire.

**Prescribed fire** is a land management tool that aids in restoring and maintaining the health of forest lands. This practice removes built up dead materials, helps control insects and disease, and regenerates certain species such as quaking aspen. It does little damage to the soil and trees because it is carefully planned and managed. Wildlife and domestic livestock, as well as plants, benefit from periodic fires.

**Wildfire** is the result of lightning striking the land and starting a fire or the result of human carelessness. Since fires have always occurred—thereby renewing the cycle of life—land managers may let a wildfire burn under certain conditions as defined by a fire use plan, but must initiate suppression action when resources, property or life is threatened.

**Grazing** by domestic livestock and wildlife assists in maintaining a healthy forest by stimulating grass and forb production. Domestic livestock grazing on the national forest is managed through permit issuance.



A forest area after a thinning treatment.

**Thinning** is another management practice which decrease the number and density of trees in an area. This practice reduces overcrowding and disease so that healthy trees remain and flourish. Foresters write prescriptions, mark trees, and then implement the prescription plan.



A brown color phase black bear.

## Wildlife

Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, wild turkey, black bear, cougar and bobcat are some of the larger animals that call Mt. Taylor Ranger District home. Some of the smaller species you might see are; red-tailed hawks, golden eagles and various mammals, reptiles and amphibians. District staff manage the forest to benefit wildlife through habitat improvement projects. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish works with the district to manage the wildlife on the forest.

## History

Grants is named after the Grant brothers who were contracted to build the railroad in this area in the early 1900s. This western New Mexico town has had a very diverse history that includes; sheep and cattle ranching, logging, railroad construction, coal mining, and the production of carrots. Mining of uranium flourished from the



Log cabins of the early 1900s dot the Zuni Mountains. These structures were the homes of loggers and their families when steam railroad logging was in its heyday.

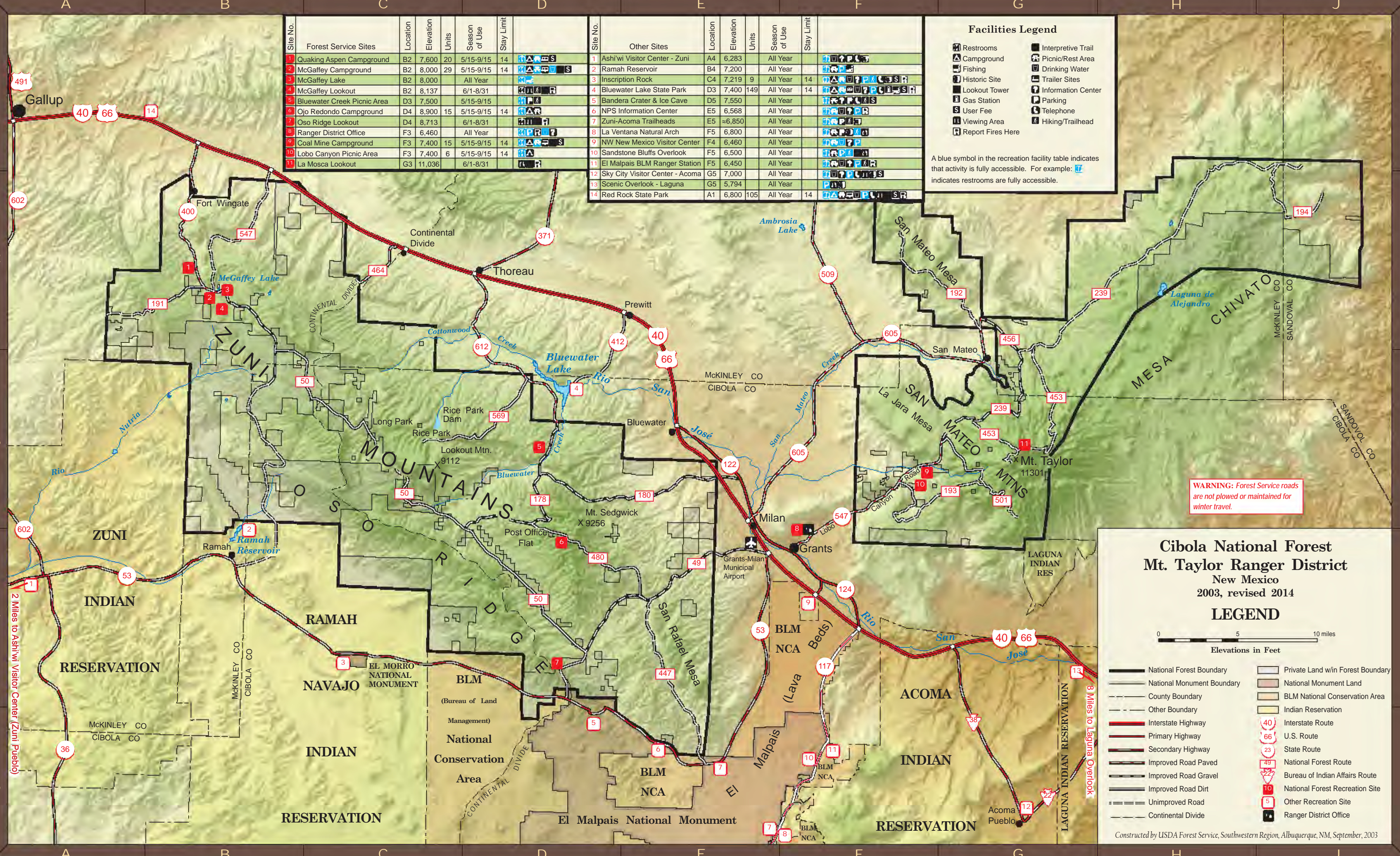
early 1950s to the early 1980s. More recently, there has been an increase in tourism as visitors explore all of the natural, cultural, and historical areas in Cibola County. Rehabilitation work has occurred over the years where lands were heavily logged or grazed. The Zuni Mountains Historic Auto Tour offers the visitor an opportunity to see remnants of railroad and logging camps, as well as homesteader cabins.



Railroad logging in the Zuni Mountains prior to acquisition by the Forest Service lasted only about 50 years (1892-1942), but left its mark on the mountains with extensive cutting and the remains of railroad beds and bridges.

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Forest Service Sites							Other Sites						
Site No.		Location	Elevation	Units	Season of Use	Stay Limit	Site No.		Location	Elevation	Units	Season of Use	Stay Limit
1	Quaking Aspen Campground	B2	7,600	20	5/15-9/15	14	1	Ashi'wi Visitor Center - Zuni	A4	6,283		All Year	
2	McGaffey Campground	B2	8,000	29	5/15-9/15	14	2	Ramah Reservoir	B4	7,200		All Year	
3	McGaffey Lake	B2	8,000		All Year		3	Inscription Rock	C4	7,219	9	All Year	14
4	McGaffey Lookout	B2	8,137		6/1-8/31		4	Bluewater Lake State Park	D3	7,400	149	All Year	14
5	Bluewater Creek Picnic Area	D3	7,500		5/15-9/15		5	Bandera Crater & Ice Cave	D5	7,550		All Year	
6	Ojo Redondo Campground	D4	8,900	15	5/15-9/15	14	6	NPS Information Center	E5	6,568		All Year	
7	Oso Ridge Lookout	D4	8,713		6/1-8/31		7	Zuni-Acoma Trailheads	E5	≈6,850		All Year	
8	Ranger District Office	F3	6,460		All Year		8	La Ventana Natural Arch	F5	6,800		All Year	
9	Coal Mine Campground	F3	7,400	15	5/15-9/15	14	9	NW New Mexico Visitor Center	F4	6,460		All Year	
10	Lobo Canyon Picnic Area	F3	7,400	6	5/15-9/15	14	10	Sandstone Bluffs Overlook	F5	6,500		All Year	
11	La Mosca Lookout	G3	11,036		6/1-8/31		11	El Malpais BLM Ranger Station	F5	6,450		All Year	
							12	Sky City Visitor Center - Acoma	G5	7,000		All Year	
							13	Scenic Overlook - Laguna	G5	5,794		All Year	
							14	Red Rock State Park	A1	6,800	105	All Year	14

### Facilities Legend

Restrooms

Campground

Fishing

Historic Site

Lookout Tower

Gas Station

User Fee

Viewing Area

Report Fires Here

Interpretive Trail

Picnic/Rest Area

Drinking Water

Trailer Sites

Information Center

Parking

Telephone

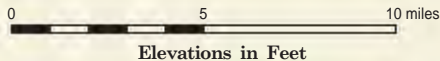
Hiking/Trailhead

A blue symbol in the recreation facility table indicates that activity is fully accessible. For example: indicates restrooms are fully accessible.

WARNING: Forest Service roads are not plowed or maintained for winter travel.

## Cibola National Forest Mt. Taylor Ranger District New Mexico 2003, revised 2014

### LEGEND



Elevations in Feet

- National Forest Boundary

National Monument Boundary

County Boundary

Other Boundary

Interstate Highway

Primary Highway

Secondary Highway

Improved Road Paved

Improved Road Gravel

Improved Road Dirt

Unimproved Road

Continental Divide
- Private Land w/in Forest Boundary

National Monument Land

BLM National Conservation Area

Indian Reservation

Interstate Route

U.S. Route

State Route

National Forest Route

Bureau of Indian Affairs Route

National Forest Recreation Site

Other Recreation Site

Ranger District Office