



DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY
TO THE COMMISSION
Michael B. Sloane

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF GAME & FISH

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3/4/2024

Emily Stout, Architect
State Parks Division
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)
1220 South St. Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87505

RE: North Rio Mora Day-Use Area Site Improvements; Pecos Canyon State Park; 90% Construction Documents; NMDGF No. NMERT-3274

Ms. Stout,

Thank you for informing the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) of State Park's upcoming plans to revitalize the North Rio Mora Day-Use Area in Pecos Canyon (Plans). This letter serves as the Department's response to the proposed Plans, with our comments pertaining to your 90% construction documents summarized below:

- 1) As referenced in our current Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), dated 20 November 2019 (EMNRD No. 20-521-0500-0077), Free Fishing Access Areas must be allowed along the following Fishing Access Areas: Bert Clancy, Jamie Koch, and Mora. In the shared Plans, State Parks proposes to shift the Mora Fishing Access Area north of its current location. Although the Department fully supports the proposed upgrades (e.g., road gradation, slope, substrate, Americans with Disabilities Act features, etc.), we request further clarification regarding the proposed access area location. Specifically, the proposed location presents accessibility challenges for our mobility-impaired users such that if free access is limited to the proposed location, the likelihood of use by our mobility-impaired users will be reduced. The Pecos River adjacent to the proposed location is not conducive to access for anglers with mobility impairments without implementation of significant trail and river bank improvements. Adequate accessibility across all user groups is important to the Department. Furthermore, the Department does not stock trout in the immediate vicinity of the proposed location, but we do near the current free parking location. We've conducted significant fish habitat improvements adjacent to the current free parking location, partly with the intention of creating holding areas for stocked trout. Moving the free fishing access area reduces angler opportunities to harvest stocked trout, especially for anglers with mobility impairments. For these reasons, the Department identifies the current location as more desirable for the provision of Free Fishing Access and recommends its continued use unless

another location that provides for our mobility-impaired users can be mutually agreed upon. The Department supports addition of the proposed free parking location provided that the proposed location is not the only free access parking area available for New Mexico's anglers at the Day-Use Area.

- 2) Based on an auto-generated project report from our New Mexico Environmental Review Tool, we recommend you follow the Department's guidelines for the [Restoration and Management of Native and Non-native Trees in Southwestern Riparian Ecosystems](#) to ensure the project avoids, minimizes, or mitigates impacts to wildlife.
- 3) The Department approves the proposed signage and trail network upgrades. Please advise us as soon as you receive Wild and Scenic River approval and share the details of the finalized design.
- 4) Lastly, the cultural and environmental compliance component appears to be complete. When available, please provide a copy of the completed BA/BO and other appropriate compliance findings to our Agency compliance biologist (Carrie Parris, Carrie.Parris@dgf.nm.gov) and staff archeologist (Jack Young, Jack.Young@dgf.nm.gov) for review. As project efforts progress, please continue to consult with both staff members.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity for review. Aside from the comments above, the presented Plans are in alignment with our current MOA. We look forward to your ongoing progress on this project and are excited, on behalf of New Mexico's outdoor recreationists, for all the beneficial improvements that are underway.

Thank you,

Stewart Liley
Chief, Wildlife Management Division
New Mexico Department of Game & Fish

cc: Donald Auer, NMDGF; Ginny Seamster, NMDGF; Eric Frey, NMDGF; Paul Erker, NMDGF; Carrie Parris, NMDGF; Stephen Apodaca, NMDGF; Arthur Anaya, NMDGF; Jack Young, NMDGF