

San Luis Valley Public Land Center



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NEWS RELEASE

--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE--

NATIONAL FOREST RECREATION INTERVIEW SURVEYS COMING IN OCTOBER

(Monte Vista, CO) -- Beginning October 1, 2004, the Rio Grande National Forest will conduct interviews at day use and overnight developed sites, roads accessing general forest areas and wilderness trails in conjunction with the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. Forest Service personnel will be wearing bright orange vests at designated locations indicated by signs that say "Traffic Survey Ahead". "Our personnel will be waiting to talk to our visitors, so we ask that you take a few minutes to pull over for an interview. We are interested in knowing about your visit to the Rio Grande National Forest," said Greg Thompson, Recreation Staff Officer.

The interview is voluntary. It is intended to gather basic visitor information and is confidential. The basic interview lasts about 8-10 minutes. Every other visitor is asked a few additional questions for an additional five minutes. Survey questions include: where visitors recreated on the Forest, how many people traveled with them, how long they were on the Forest, other recreation sites they visited while on the Forest, and how satisfied they were with the facilities and services provided. About one-third of the visitors interviewed will be asked to complete a confidential survey on recreation spending during their trip.

This on-going National Forest survey has already been conducted once on every National Forest in the country. "We are now returning five years later to update the information previously gathered as well as to look at recreation trends over time. This information is helpful to forest and district recreation planners and with local community tourism planners. It provides our recreation program managers and District Rangers with a good estimate of how many people actually recreate on the Rio Grande NF and what activities they engage in while here on the Forest. Other important information that these visitor interviews tell us is how satisfied visitors are with our recreation services, facilities and the economic benefits recreation is to our local communities," Thompson said.

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All visitors to the Rio Grande National Forest are encouraged to pull over and take part in the scheduled interview surveys. It is important to talk with local people using the forest, as well as visitors from outside the area, so all types of visitors are represented in this study. "Even if you answered the survey questions during a visit to the Forest, we would encourage you stop again during each of your national forest visits," Thompson said. Information about the interview program is available on the web at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum> or contact Greg Thompson at 719-852-6244.

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