



SANDIA COLLABORATIVE

La Madera Project Design Recommendations

TRES PISTOLAS PROJECT TEAM

SEPTEMBER 2021

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TRES PISTOLAS AREA:

Tres Pistas is located north of Interstate 40 and Highway 333 in Tijeras Canyon. The exit off I40 is Carnue, and the turn off heading north from 333 is called Monticello. The trailhead is at the north end of the Monticello neighborhood. There are small signs indicating the direction to the Trailhead.

The Tres Pistas trail area is surrounded by Wilderness on the west, the east, and the north, with a triangle of Albuquerque Open Space on the southeastern side.

The lower section of the trail is a mixed pinyon/juniper/oak vegetation type. The vegetation changes as the trail climbs in altitude.

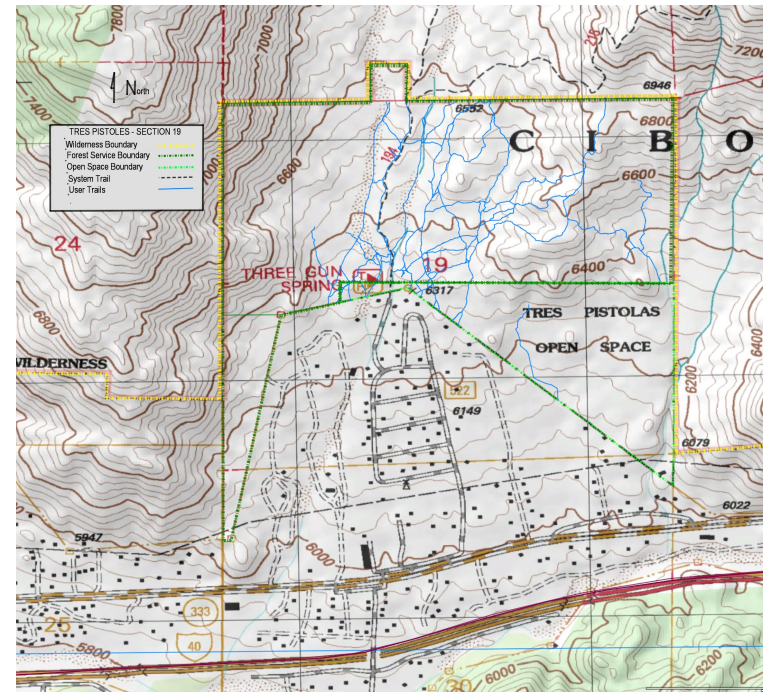
The Tres Pistas trail area has natural springs, with small historic structures near the springs.

The parking area for the trailhead is very small, which limits usage. It is located in the Canyon bottom, which also contributes to drainage problems that affect the Monticello neighborhood to the south in terms of flooding.

The trail moves up the canyon and eventually joins the Embudo springs area and continues on to the South Peak of the Sandia Mountains. The trail is very desirable to recreation users in the colder months because it is south facing, and so does not become too snowy or icy.

The area is considered a wildlife corridor, and the springs are used by wildlife.

There are many user-created trails in the wilderness section, and also resources for the local land grant communities.



Tres Pistas area

TRES PISTOLAS PROJECT

The Tres Pistolas team usually met on the first Monday of each month from 11 am to 12 or 12:30 pm; meeting started in December of 2020 and ran through September of 2021, including two field trips in April and June of 2021.

There were a total of 10 meetings, two group field trips in April and June, and many individual field trips by various members to evaluate trail conditions, plants, spring conditions and historic sites.

The project team includes a total of 21 participants, with an average of 8- 9 participants per meeting. Six members are voting members of the Sandia Collaborative and the others are Stakeholders.

Great Old Broads for Wilderness - Susan Ostlie - Team Leader

Friends of Tijeras Pueblo - Catherine Kelly

Sandia Mountain Bear (and Friends of Tijeras Pueblo) - Stephanie Long

Monticello Neighborhood Association - Dan Poli

NM Native Plant Society - Jim McGrath - Note-taker

NM Dept of Game and Fish - Chuck Schultz

Friends of Tijeras Pueblo - Paula Michel

Sandia collaborative facilitator - Marsha Kellogg

BLM Outdoor Recreation Program manager, Rio Puerco Field Office - Jackie Leyba

Carnue Land Grant Assn; Tijeras Creek Stewards - Moises Gonzales

ABQ Open Space - Kyle Bality

EMRTC - Michael Madden

ABQ Mt Biking Assn. - Seth Bush

EMRTC, GPS/map maker, mountain biker - Tom Mayer

Monticello Neighborhood Association - Dan Getz

Coronado SWCD - Lynn Montgomery

Coronado SWCD, Acequia de los Placitas - Carolyn Kennedy

NM Native Plant Society - Tom Stewart

NM Native Plant Society - Lee Regan

Pathways - Peter Callen

Frequent hiker of Tres Pistolas - Paul Duggan

Priority Problems with Current Conditions

*As defined by the
Tres Pistolas meeting participants.*

Priority Problems

High use, lack of maintenance and poor trail design along the primary trail in Tres Pistas Canyon is causing erosion which decreases the accessibility of the trail for those with mobility issues, who could otherwise use the trail for moderate hikes.

Increased recreational use has the effect of increasing the number and damage caused by user-created trails.

The first part of the main trail coming out of the parking lot is very steep, highly eroded, and unsuitable for some users.

The parking lot and access road contain potholes, and water from rain storms floods the lower part of the access road. Access to the parking lot is confusing without appropriate signage.

Increasing human use along the main trail, in the washes, and on user created trails disturbs wildlife, especially in the two Tres Pistas spring areas, as well as disturbing migrating and nesting birds.

There is an information gap regarding archeological and anthropological sites, photos, GPS information, legal and illegal trail conditions, and native, medicinal, and invasive plants.

Ranger district policy on permits for firewood and medicinal or edible plant harvesting needs to be clarified.

Desired Conditions

As defined by the TRES PISTOLAS meeting participants

Desired Conditions

Tres Pistas Canyon is valued and managed by its neighbors, user groups and the US Forest Services for its natural springs which are critical wildlife habitat; for its cultural artifacts that provide a historical perspective of the canyon; for its flourishing native vegetation and traditional plants that are collected by neighboring community members and are unique to this south facing area. The collaborative monitoring and management of these resources by the US Forest Service, neighboring communities and Tres Pistas user groups contribute to their intact and healthy conditions.

Visitors are directed along a network of well-maintained sustainable trails that are designed to guide visitors away from sensitive habitats and to protect natural, historical and traditional use resources of the canyon. Trails also provide a gradient of difficulty and uses, and connect visitors to adjoining Sandia Wilderness and Albuquerque Open Space.

From the small, maintained parking lot and an easily accessible trailhead, visitors traverse up an easy grade through natural vegetation for approximately the first quarter mile of the official trail. This disperses the erosive energy of stormwater run-off away from the trail and the parking lot and mitigates erosion exacerbated by visitor use.

Recommended Management Actions

*As identified by the TRES PISTOLAS meeting
participants*

Recommended Management Actions

- An assessment of the main trail is needed to address trail repair needs.
- Tres Pistolas trail system and parking area should be assessed for needed improvements to drainage and accessibility.
- A trail crew should repair the trail as indicated by the assessment.
- The steep, initial part of the trail coming out of the wash containing the parking lot should be re-routed to accommodate a lower gradient up the slope.
- Integrity of the ecological condition, flora and fauna, cultural significance, and restoration need to be assessed at the Tres Pistolas Spring area.
- Spring Stewardship Institute will conduct a spring inventory and assess the spring for restoration potential.
- If restoration is necessary, a plan will be developed and implemented.
- The spring areas are maintained to minimize erosion, retain suitable flora, and encourage wildlife usage
- Suitability and feasibility of adding wildlife drinkers on the landscape should be considered.
- The team will create a resource archive that will include photos, GPS information, legal and illegal trail conditions, and native medicinal, and invasive plants.
- The traditional communities will provide a list of the plants collected known to be sustainably harvested, so that the ranger district can waive any need for permitting.
- Cultural features are maintained in suitable condition.
- Develop a partnership with Monticello Neighborhood Association to 1) maintain appropriate signage to direct users to the parking lot; the signs need to be larger than the current signs; and 2) to create proper drainage for water on the access road.
- Interpretive signs will be developed and placed along the main trail as it leaves the parking lot and before the trail goes up the slope out of the wash. A maximum of three signs are needed: 1) A sign that briefly explains the history and significance of the Tres Pistolas trail; 2) A sign that describes the unique character of the vegetation: the south-facing exposure that provides habitat for more southerly species like black gramma (*Bouteloua eriopoda*), scrub oak (*Quercus turbinella*) and desert mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus breviflorus*); 3) A sign that makes trails users aware of the serious invasive plants (cheatgrass - *Bromus tectorum*, blindeyes poppy - *Papaver dubium*) in the area and actions that can be taken to control invasives.
- Long term solution: Cibola National Forest will add a botanist position to supervise contractors to monitor and survey for invasives and rare plants, to remove/control invasives, to develop a Cibola NF sensitive plant list, and to deal with traditional plant concerns of Native American, land grant, and other cultures.
- Develop a collaborative relationship with traditional and cultural plant collectors to maintain a sustainable harvest, including non-mechanized firewood collecting.
- Cibola NF will indefinitely prohibit trapping predators in the Tres Pistolas Canyon area.

La Madera Project Implementation Recommendations

*Next steps the Collaborative can take to move ahead
on the design recommendations.*

(Insert any next steps the team has identified for Collaborative.)

- Sandia District develops a partnership with the Native Plant Society of NM, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Albuquerque Open Space, and other organizations and communities to organize volunteers to remove invasive weeds in the spring beginning in 2022.

(Crystal, insert next steps the SRD has identified that the Collaborative can take.)

THANK YOU!

Questions?