



Forest Service News Release

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San Juan National Forest works toward resolution on Chicken Creek land dispute

Dolores, Colo., Oct. 23, 2024 — The U.S. Forest Service continues to manage a land dispute on the San Juan National Forest involving a fence that was erected in trespass and unlawfully impeded the public's access to parts of this national forest north of Mancos, Colorado. U.S. Forest Service officials met with the parties that constructed the fence and the Montezuma County Sheriff on Wednesday, Oct. 9, and informed them in writing that the fence is in trespass and must be removed immediately. San Juan National Forest Service leadership has been engaged with members of the local community and will be updating area residents as resolution on this matter progresses.

"The Forest Service is deeply committed to maintaining access by the public to all lands on the San Juan National Forest," said San Juan National Forest Supervisor Dave Neely. "We are actively working with the appropriate law enforcement agencies and the community to resolve this matter."

The individuals who constructed the fence and own lands adjacent to the San Juan National Forest identify themselves as "Free Land Holders" and assert that they have ownership or jurisdiction of approximately 1,400 acres of Forest Service-managed lands within the constructed fence line. Forest Service and Montezuma County records indicate that ownership of the subject land has been with the United States as part of the National Forest System since 1927.

These lands support long-standing livestock grazing for local ranchers and the area is popular for recreation including hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing. It is within the Brunot Treaty area which assures hunting access for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and Ute Indian Tribe.

San Juan National Forest leadership is keenly aware of community concerns and questions and takes this matter very seriously. The Forest Service is actively addressing the dispute according to legal and administrative procedures and will promptly provide additional information as circumstances warrant.

For information on the San Juan National Forest, call (970) 247-4874, visit the [forest website](#), or follow us on social media ([X](#) and [Facebook](#)).

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