



OPEN FOR ADVENTURE

Stephanie Garcia Richard, Commissioner of Public Lands
State of New Mexico

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State Land Office Launches New Dispersed and Backpack Camping Pilot Programs for Hunters

SANTA FE, NM – The State Land Office today launched two new pilot programs for licensed New Mexico hunters that will create new dispersed camping opportunities in the White Peak region of Mora and Colfax Counties, as well as options for backpack camping in the Luera Mountains in Catron County. This is the first time in decades that dispersed camping and backpacking have been permitted on state trust land.

[The policy, application, and maps for each pilot program are posted on the State Land Office's website.](#)

The pilot programs are components of the Easement signed in March 2020 between the State Land Office and the New Mexico Game Commission. The Easement gives licensed hunters and anglers access to nearly 9 million acres of state trust land. The State Land Office included in the Easement a provision for the Commissioner of Public Lands to designate, on a pilot basis, dispersed camping and backpack camping in specific areas.

Commissioner Garcia Richard convened working groups comprised of State Land Office staff and representatives from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, grazing lessees, and sportspeople from across the state to help facilitate the creation of the pilot programs. Sportspeople identified the White Peak region and the Luera Mountains as areas where hunters would benefit from new dispersed camping and backpack camping. Today's launch will allow licensed hunters to apply for and receive permits in advance of the upcoming deer and elk seasons in these areas.

“The launch of these pilot programs is the culmination of a long, thoughtful process from our staff and the working groups, aimed to increase access to state trust land, as well as to enhance the overall hunting experience for New Mexico sportspeople,” said Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard. “After a season with the pilots in place, we will see where we were successful as well as the areas where there is room for improvement. Our overall goal is to take what we learn and move forward next year with longer term options for camping and backpacking for sportspeople on state trust land.”

Permit holders are allowed to camp for a 14 day period, including advance time for scouting, with up to three guests. They must follow the terms and conditions of the permit which includes guidelines for campfires, properly disposing of waste, respecting private property, rules for motorized vehicles and staying on designated roads, as well as avoiding prohibited activities.

“The Department applauds the Commissioner’s development of her Open for Adventure Recreational Program on the lands she manages,” said Michael Sloane, Director of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. “Camping is an important component of that program that will further New Mexico’s hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists ability to responsibly enjoy the State’s abundant natural resources.”

At the conclusion of the hunting season, the State Land Office plans to survey all permit holders to assess the success of the pilot program, and make changes and improvements to the policy for future programs or longer term dispersed camping and backpacking options.

In fiscal year 2019, the State Land Office earned over \$1 billion from leasing state trust lands for a wide variety of uses, including ranching and farming, renewable energy, business development, and mineral development. These earnings support 22 land trust beneficiaries, which include public schools throughout the state, seven universities and colleges, the School for the Deaf, the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, three hospitals, correctional facilities, water conservation projects, and public building construction and repair.