

Stop the Public Lands Giveaway
Support the Mark Udall Amendment
on Interior Appropriations

Dry Blue Creek, Gila National Forest, New Mexico
(managed by the U.S. Forest Service)

The Gila National Forest includes some of the wildest country in the lower 48, including the Gila Wilderness, the world's first designated wilderness area (created in 1924). The Forest boasts stands of old-growth ponderosa pine, galleries of cottonwood and willow, and habitat for scores of species that live in the Southwest, including elk and deer. The forest is now home to the reintroduced Mexican wolf.



Southwestern New Mexico's Gila National Forest is remarkably diverse, with rugged mountains, deep canyons, meadows, and semi-desert country.

What's at Stake at Gila National Forest

A 48-acre subdivision in Catron County surrounded by the Gila National Forest is now home to a road controversy that typifies the difficulties increasingly posed to private landowners by RS2477 rights-of-way claims. In this case, the controversy centers on a dirt track known as the Dry Blue Road, which formerly provided access across forest lands along the creek to private land near Alpine, Arizona. In 1983, the road washed out in a flood. The next year, the Forest Service officially closed the road to protect the creek, which is designated critical habitat for the threatened, native loach minnow. The Forest Service also spent thousands of dollars to restore the landscape damaged by the washed-out road.

In May 2001, Catron County adopted a resolution to specifically claim the Dry Blue Road, and any other roads "in existence prior to the federal reservation" of County land, as county roads under authority of RS 2477. All of the homeowners wrote the county to explain that they did not need the road reopened for emergency services because they had quicker, more dependable access via another road and because they enjoy the solitude. Rebuilding the road would also undo the extensive rehabilitation performed by the Forest Service, require removal of sizeable trees, threaten the endangered fish of the creek, and destroy habitat for deer, elk, and other wildlife. Catron County appears to be ignoring these private property owners, however, and the ecological needs of the Creek, in pursuit of its pro-road building agenda.

For more information, contact:

Kristen Brengel, The Wilderness Society (202) 429-2694

Scott Groene, South Utah Wilderness Alliance (801) 486-3161 x26

Marcia Argust, Campaign for America's Wilderness, (202) 266-0434

Jessica Hodge, Sierra Club, (202) 675-7910