

# MAP and GUIDE



NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS

## Río Grande del Norte

National Monument

New Mexico



On March 25, 2013, President Obama signed a Presidential Proclamation designating the Río Grande del Norte National Monument.

The Monument includes over 245,000 acres of public land managed under the proclamation's guidance. Non-BLM lands within the Monument boundary are not affected by the proclamation.

The Río Grande Gorge is by far the most visited part of the Monument, with paved roads providing access to most facilities; there are a few segments that are accessed by maintained gravel roads. The Taos Plateau, on the other hand, is accessed only by a few dirt tracks that are not maintained. High clearance and four-wheel drive is strongly recommended in this area west of the Río Grande. Snow makes many areas impassable in winter, while summer rains can make even the better routes slippery and treacherous.



[www.blm.gov/new-mexico](http://www.blm.gov/new-mexico)

Taos Field Office

575-758-8851

Río Grande Gorge Visitor Center

575-751-4899

Wild Rivers Visitor Center

575-586-1150

The Río Grande del Norte was designated a National Monument to protect four key 'objects of value.' To do so, the proclamation closed the area to location, entry and patent under the mining laws, and from disposition under all laws relating to mineral and geothermal leasing.

### The four objects of value, quoted from the proclamation:

**GEOLOGY** *"The Río Grande del Norte landscape is a testament to the geologic past of New Mexico and the 70 million year tectonic history of the Río Grande Rift, one of the world's major rift systems."*

**CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES** *"For millennia, humans have seasonally passed through the Río Grande del Norte, gathering resources and finding spiritual meaning in its dramatic ... features. Although few have attempted to live year-round in this harsh landscape, the images carved into the gorge's dark basalt cliffs and the artifacts scattered across the forested slopes of the volcanic cones bear ample testimony to the human use of the area."*



**ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY** *"From the cottonwood and willows along the Río*



*Grande corridor, to the expansive sagebrush plains above the gorge on the Taos Plateau, the piñons at the base of Ute Mountain, and the spruce, aspen and Douglas fir covering the mountain's northern slopes, the diversity of both ecosystems and species allows for, and has been the subject of, substantial scientific research."*

**WILDLIFE** *"The river provides habitat for fish such as the Río Grande cutthroat trout as well as the recently reintroduced North American river otter. The Río Grande is part of the Central Migratory Flyway, a vital migration corridor for birds...The vast plateau harbors a significant diversity of mammals and birds...Large mammals, including the Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer pronghorn, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, find their winter homes alongside a population of rare Gunnison's prairie dogs."*





## FACILITIES

**Visitor Centers:** The Rio Grande Gorge Visitor Center in Pilar, open year-round, and the Wild Rivers Zimmermann Visitor Center north west of Questa, open May through September. Staff can help you plan your visit and answer any questions you might have. Both centers stock books, postcards, maps, hats, t-shirts, and souvenirs.

**Campgrounds:** are located in the Orilla Verde and Wild Rivers areas along the Rio Grande corridor. There are developed campgrounds in each area with water, shelters, restrooms, and fire pits/grills (4 in Orilla Verde and 5 in Wild Rivers). In Orilla Verde, group shelters are available at Rio Bravo and Taos Junction Bridge campgrounds, and in Wild Rivers, at El Aguaje and La Junta; these can be reserved in advance. All other campsites in both areas are first-come, first-served. Three primitive camp areas are available in Orilla Verde (no water or shelters). RV hookups (electricity and water only) are available at Pilar and Rio Bravo campgrounds in Orilla Verde.

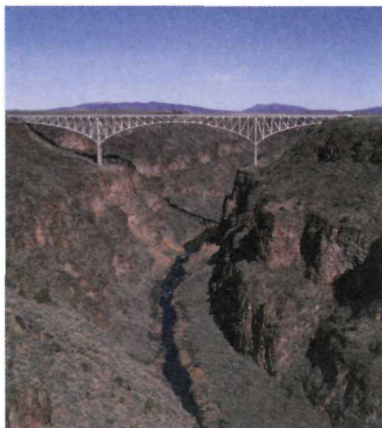


**River Access Sites:** have been developed at John Dunn Bridge, Taos Junction Bridge, and Lone Juniper. South of the Monument are the Quartzite and County Line sites. Restrooms are available at each location.

**Trails:** There are over 20 hiking/biking trails in the Monument, concentrated in the Wild Rivers and Taos Valley Overlook areas. Several trails are also located in the Orilla Verde area. Trail maps are available at our Taos office and both visitor centers, and can be printed from our website ([www.blm.gov/visit/rgdnnm](http://www.blm.gov/visit/rgdnnm)). The Slide Trail is a good introduction to the gorge—about 1.5 miles long, dropping into the gorge along a now closed road, moderate grade and difficulty. The Taos Valley Overlook system offers 20 miles of trail only a ten minute drive south of Taos. Wild Rivers has trails that lead you through the Guadalupe Mountains, with beautiful views of much of the Monument west of the Rio Grande, and several trails that drop into the Gorge and along the Rio Grande. These are steeper but still moderate in difficulty. The Taos Valley Overlook trails and Wild River's Little Arsenic and Las Vistas de Questa Trail are good choices for equestrians.

### Rio Grande Gorge Bridge and Rest Area:

For good reason, one of the most visited sites in New Mexico. Sidewalks along both sides of the 1,272-foot long span offer dramatic views of the Gorge at one of its deepest spots—the river is 656 feet below you. The rest area, operated by the New Mexico Department of Transportation, has picnic shelters, water and restrooms. Day-use only.



**RECREATION ACTIVITIES:** range from the expected—hiking, biking, camping, hunting, fishing and boating, to the less so—rock climbing, hot air balloon rides, and treks with llamas. The BLM has permitted several companies to offer these services—a brochure available—provides contact information, and is on our website.



**Fishing:** Easy access to the river in the Orilla Verde area and at the developed river access site. Brown and rainbow trout, pike, and small-mouth bass are some of the more popular game fish. Many trails in the Upper Gorge provide access to some great fishing sites as well. The Red River is one of the more popular areas.

**Hunting:** for elk, mule deer, and antelope in the Ute Mountain area and the Taos Plateau. Note that the Orilla Verde area, John Dunn Bridge, Taos Valley Overlook and the developed portion of Wild Rivers are closed to target shooting and hunting.

**Birding:** is best in the riparian areas in Orilla Verde, thanks to the Rio Grande's critical role in the Central Migratory Flyway.

**Boating:** The Rio Grande offers the best whitewater opportunities in New Mexico. Private boating doesn't require a permit, and is generally available in the warm months. The Ute Mountain run is closed in April and May to protect raptor nesting. Outfitters are permitted to offer trips on all river segments in the Monument—see our website for contact information.



**Hiking and biking:** is described under trails. Our picks—La Vista Verde trail in Orilla Verde, the Trader's Trail in the Taos Valley Overlook, Big Arsenic or Las Vistas de Questa trails in the Wild Rivers area. For a wilder experience, try hiking to the top of Ute Mountain, the tallest peak in the Monument and designated a Wilderness Area in early 2019. But be warned—there are no trails to follow.

**TRADITIONAL USES** such as cattle grazing, fishing and hunting, firewood and piñon nut collection are listed in the proclamation.

**Wood cutting:** The BLM issues private and commercial wood permits for selected areas in the Taos Plateau area—call our office at 575-758-8851 for information.

**Piñon nut harvesting:** Collecting for personal use is allowed throughout the Monument without a permit; vehicles need to stay within 25 feet of a road used to access the collection site. No commercial harvesting is allowed.