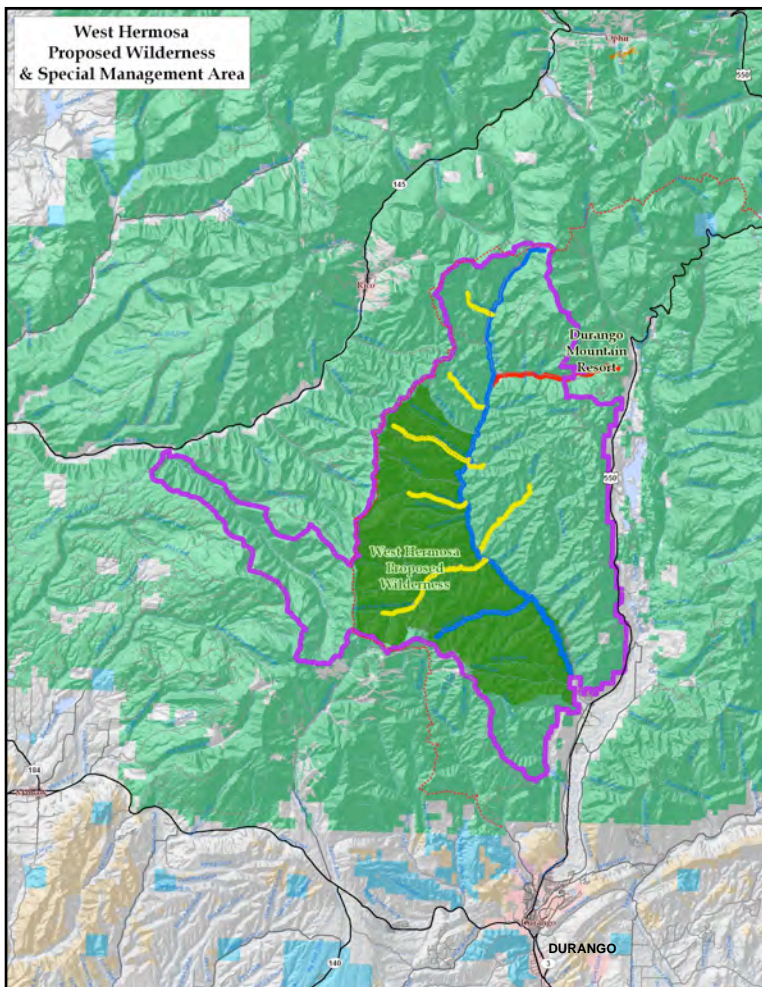


# Explore, Enjoy, & Protect: Hermosa Creek Watershed

## FACT SHEET

The San Juan National Forest and interested stakeholders in southwest Colorado are crafting plans for the future of the 150,000-acre Hermosa Roadless Area, and over 62 miles of Hermosa Creek and tributaries.

The San Juan Citizens Alliance and The Wilderness Society represent thousands of residents across southwest Colorado. Our collective memberships utilize the Hermosa watershed for a multiplicity of recreational activities including hiking, cycling, horsepacking, skiing, hunting and fishing. Our members also highly value the Hermosa watershed for its exceptional ecological resources. Because of the shared appreciation of Hermosa's values combined with a desire to maintain Hermosa in a wild and pristine condition for generations to come, we have jointly crafted a management proposal.



## Protection Goals:

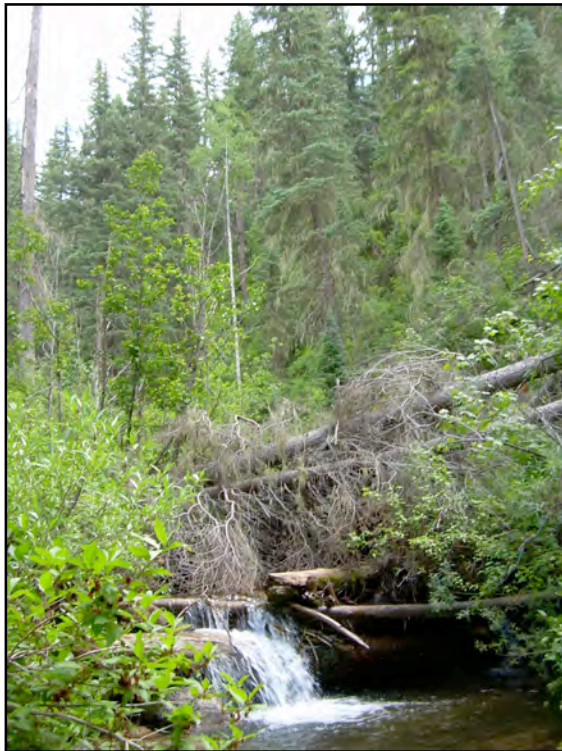
- Focus on managing the landscape as a whole (or unit).
- *Land Protection Goals:*
  - Designate wilderness within the watershed (dark green on map)
  - Designate a National Conservation Area (purple boundaries) - including rims of the valley on north and south, runs from the confluence of Bear Creek (to the west) with the Dolores River upstream to headwaters including Sharktooth and Centennial Peaks
  - Require travel management to delineate routes, and create watershed restoration objectives for headwaters areas
- *River Protection Goals:*
  - Designate Hermosa Creek and tributaries as Wild & Scenic Rivers under the National System (eligible streams marked yellow on map).

**Values:**

The Hermosa Creek watershed encompasses one of Colorado's largest, biologically diverse forests, including at least 17 separate ecosystems, ranging from rocky scrub oak and pinyon-juniper at lower elevations to aspen, spruce, and fir. Tracts of virgin timber exist at elevations as low as 7,000 feet, well below the typical elevation of most protected forested areas in Colorado. Hermosa contains some of the largest stands of old-growth ponderosa pine remaining in the San Juan Mountains. One of Hermosa's most compelling attributes is the large majority of the watershed is roadless and generally un-impacted by past human activities.



Hermosa Creek's tributaries harbor genetically pure strains of native Colorado River cutthroat trout in some of the most important populations in Colorado. The Hermosa watershed provides ideal habitat for rare Canada lynx, and sustains vast herds of deer and elk that draw thousands of hunters annually. Hermosa's pristine beauty and large trail system entices countless hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, horseback users, and numerous other recreational enthusiasts.



**Current Status:**

The San Juan Citizens Alliance and The Wilderness Society are actively participating in multiple processes that are currently underway.

- The Hermosa Creek River Protection Workgroup (<http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection/>) meets monthly, is open to all interested residents, and is contemplating the best means for protecting Hermosa Creek's river values that include its outstanding native trout fishery and primitive recreation opportunities. The Hermosa Workgroup anticipates a recommendation by late 2009.
- The San Juan NF is currently assessing the most appropriate boundaries for a potential new wilderness area that would include Hermosa's western half, with a final decision anticipated in 2010.
- Travel management analysis about appropriate recreational use of the interconnecting trail systems in Hermosa should start later in 2009, with the Forest Service inviting public comment and participation.

Our long-term intention is to translate our proposal into formal legislation with the support of our congressional delegation in order to obtain permanent protection for the resources and activities described.

**For More Information:**

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