



NEWS RELEASE

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ■ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
TAOS FIELD OFFICE ■ 226 CRUZ ALTA RD ■ TAOS NM 87571-5983

Danita Burns ■ Public Affairs Officer ■ 505.761.8713

For Immediate Release

BLM Temporarily Closes Public Lands Near Ute Mountain

TAOS, New Mexico – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Taos Field Office will temporarily close recently acquired lands in the vicinity of Ute Mountain, Taos County, New Mexico to protect the land and its resources until the BLM prepares a management plan for the area.

Nearly 8,000 acres of public land in the vicinity of Ute Mountain will be closed to all entry and use. However, the Rio Grande Gorge below the rim will still remain open yearly to foot travel or boating between June 1 and March 31.

This closure will remain in effect until the BLM completes the acquisition of the property, expected to occur no later than the end of fiscal year 2005. At that time, a management plan will be prepared with input from local residents and other interested parties.

“The closure is necessary so that resource specialists can properly assess the best course of action for this land.” said Sam DesGeorges, BLM-Taos Assistant Field Manager. “The management plan will help us protect this special landscape and allow present and future generations to enjoy this natural treasure, remarked DesGeorges.”

Closure signs will be posted at main entry points and trails in the area indicating the closed area and an explanation for the closure. Maps of the closure area and more detailed information are on file at the Taos Field Office, 226 Cruz Alta Road, Taos, NM 87571.

If you have any questions on this closure, please contact Ron Huntsinger, Field Office Manager, at 505.758.8851.

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Ute Mountain has been a private sanctuary for elk, deer, antelope, and other game. The property provides critical riparian and breeding habitat for the peregrine falcon, golden eagle, brown trout, and the federally-listed endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and threatened bald eagle. The western edge of the property, the Rio Grande Gorge, provides river sports and associated camping, hunting, picnicking, and wilderness recreation. The wild river adjoining the property is a class II, very wild, intermediate run. Located within the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River corridor, the BLM will manage the land to protect its open space, recreational, and wildlife habitat values.

