



NOMINATION SUMMARY: Santa Fe Trail: Piojo Ranch Segments District

The Piojo Ranch district comprises three trail alignments that are adjacent to the busy trade and rendezvous center of what used to be La Junta, the current day Watrous, New Mexico area. They are located on private land, adjacent to and northeast of Tiptonville, New Mexico. Tiptonville is included in the National Historic Landmark district entitled “Watrous (La Junta)” that was listed in 1963. La Junta was an important stop along the trail for travelers continuing west to Santa Fe or east back to Missouri, but is no longer an extant community. Watrous is a railroad town that postdates the Santa Fe Trail period of significance and is the main named town in the area today. Fort Union National Monument is approximately six miles to the north on New Mexico State Highway 161 (shown on some maps as NM 477). The system of trail ruts/swales in this area, with proximity to La Junta/Watrous, Tiptonville, and Fort Union, makes it one of the highest and most significant concentration of trail remnants along the entire Santa Fe Trail.

The Piojo Ranch trail segments are exceptional examples of associated property type “historic trail” identified in the Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail, 1821-1880 Multiple Property Documentation Form. These segments are nationally significant under criteria A in the areas of Transportation, Commerce and Military, and under criteria D as a property that has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory and history. The Piojo Ranch segments are representative of these busy trail intersections and comprise three distinct trail corridors that intersect one another. The acreage that includes these three segments totals 122.91. Each is characterized by a swale, sometimes parallel swales, caused by the heavy use of heavily laden wagons and subsequent erosion. The setting on the property is serene and undisturbed except for Interstate 25 to the south and southeast. Ranches, roads, and other low buildings are about the only evidence of human occupation with the exception of two cell towers about 200 feet tall visible just east of Watrous. The elevation varies from about 6,450 feet to 6,600 feet. Vegetation is prairie-like, consisting of grasses and low forbs, with a few junipers on the west and south ends of the study area. Scenic views for tens of miles are visible in most directions.