

 Merced De Comunidad De San Antonio De Las Huertas

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March 25, 2015

Elaine Kohrman,

Forest Supervisor

Cibola National Forest

2113 Osuna Rd NE

Albuquerque, NM 87110

RE: Comments Regarding Potential Wilderness

The San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant was established in 1767 by the Spanish government. The original establishment was settled by 21 families in what is referred to as the Las Huertas Valley, a described area in Placitas, NM and later the historic village of Placitas. In conducting extensive research concerning the history of the land grant, all information that has been gathered has come to the same conclusion, the Sandia Mountains were and are an imperative part of the history and cultural heritage of the San Antonio de las Huertas land grant descendants.

Here is a brief synopsis of our history:

**September 20, 1765:** Juan Guterries petitions the Spanish government for a parcel of land.

**October, 1765:** The surrounding pueblos give the Spanish government the go ahead to initiate the settlement and that the boundaries do not infringe on tribal lands.

**1767:** The final revised petition is awarded. The settlers had to physically step on the land, run their fingers through the soil, and made a public commitment to live on it, cultivate it and, if necessary, defend it with their own lives. 21 families settled on what we now call our “traditional lands” of 40,000 acres.

**1821:** The Spanish rule came to an end and the Mexican government was set in place.

**May 13, 1846**: The United States takes possession of the New Mexico Territory.

**1848:** The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is signed, protecting the Mexican and Spanish Land Grants.

**1850:** The Organic Act was established by the United States to establish a civil government.

**March 3, 1857:** David Trujillo y Tafoya is born (vital person concerning SADLHLG history)

**May 20, 1862:** The establishment of the Homestead Act.

**1901:** Theodore Roosevelt **breaks** the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and takes 36,000 acres from the San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant. Much of these lands are now belong to the forestry department.

**1905:** David Trujillo y Tafoya homesteaded the Rancho de Osha under the ‘homestead act’. He was able to apply for 160acres and make improvements. This is one of three established homesteads in the Sandia Mountains, but the only homestead that was used collaboratively by the Land Grant heirs.

**1911:** David Trujillo y Tafoya received a “patent” for the 160 acre homestead.

**1920:** David Trujillo y Tafoya dies.

**1920:** Julanita Trujillo y Tafoya Passes the Rancho de Osha to her son and three daughters

**1938:** We have not found evidence of the sale of the Rancho de Osha to the forestry department. This date is hear say, the only document found was dated 1966 when the forestry department patented the Rancho de Osha.

**1945-1951:** Grazing rights are taken away from the SADLHLG heirs and a large part of our heritage is lost.

A portion of the Sandia Mountains housed our traditional lands. (See attached map) Life in the land grant community revolved around the Sandia Mountains. In interviewing the elders from our community each stated how grazing, “was the way of life for the community”. The animals that were raised were the lifeline for the descendants. The Sandia Mountains (Rancho de Osha) enabled the animals to survive from June to October 15th because of the amble water from the Osha Spring and the Agua de Medio Spring both located in the Sandia Mountains. The land grant community was poor and raising animals and farming was the besty way to survive.

The descendants found their yearly meat in the Sandia’s by hunting for deer, rabbit, squirrel and other animals. The Sandia Mountains provided herbs: Cardo Santo (Milkweed) Cota, Capulín (ChokeCherry), Indelo (Fenel), Jewel Weed, Malva (Mallow), Silver Sage, Gordo Lobo (Mullein), Oregano de La Sierra, Oshá, Manzanilla (Pineapple weed), Mordilla (Vervain), Hungos (Mushrooms), Piñon (nuts), Plumajilla (Yarrow) Poleo (Peppermint), Quelites Rosa de Castilla (RoseHip), Trementina (Piñon Sap); Verdolaga (Purslane) Yerba Buena (Spearmint) and Yerba de La Negrita (Scarlet Globermallow).

Building materials such as vigas, latillas, puntales, postas all were used for the building of homes and other structures that were built for the community, as well as the wood harvested.

The descendant understood the importance of the Sandia’s and this was the determining factor to have homesteads established in the Sandia’s. David Trujillo y Tafoya’s homestead was the hub of activity once the United States broke the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The descendants applied for grazing permits to walk their animals to the Rancho de Osha because the Rancho had water. Large parcels of lands in the Rancho were cultivated by the young men from the Land Grant Community to make gardens in the Sandia’s. The drought in Placitas made growing vegetation difficult. So the other two homesteads the Lucero and Gurule homesteads provided fruit, they had orchards that provided needed fruit for the community.

The traditions listed above were passed down from generation to generations until the forestry department ended any grazing, hunting, wood cutting or harvesting of plants.  This hurt the land grant community and has elminated a large portion of our heritage.

In reviewing the area listed for wilderness designation in the Cibola National Forest we believe this would have a negative impact to our community. Our watershed sits at the base of the Sandia Mountains, and the already designated wilderness areas that surrounds our watershed, have limited our possibility of building preventative fire barriers. The area designated as a possible wilderness area around Tunnel Springs would once again limit our possibility of building preventative fire barriers and once again take a portion of our heritage from the descendants. Some of grazing paths that the villagers took to walk to the Rancho de Osha are located in this designated area. As you read through the synopsis of our history the rights and history have slowly been taken from our land grant community and this process continues as other organizations, other than the land grant, make decisions concerning areas that have historical significance to the land grant community. In looking at examples from other land grants, especially the Manzano Land Grant who did preventative fire breaks between the forest and the community preserved their community from catastrophic fire. It is our hope that in the near future we can create a similar barrier for our community. If this area is designated wilderness that would remove the possibility of doing proactive prevention. We as the San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant oppose any wilderness designation that surrounds the Placitas Community.

Sincerely,

Wayne Sandoval, President SADLHLG

Rebecca Skartwed, Vice-President SADLHLG