



Elaine Kohrman
Forest Supervisor
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands
2113 Osuna Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dr. Kenneth Eack
Chairman, Langmuir Laboratory for Atmospheric Research
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
801 Leroy Place
Socorro, NM 87801

12 September 2015

Re: Opposition to a Wilderness area overlapping the Langmuir Research Site

Dear Ms. Kohrman,

Since the 1930's, the weather pattern over the mountains of New Mexico have been recognized as especially suited for thunderstorm research. As a result, the Langmuir Laboratory was built in the Magdalena Mountains of the Cibola National Forest, and has been in operation for over 50 years. During those years, we have established the capability and infrastructure to conduct atmospheric research that is unique in the world. The main Langmuir building was completed in 1963, with the Langmuir Annex and Balloon Hangar added shortly afterwards. Because of the need to make measurements inside thunderstorms, in 1970, the FAA established restricted area R-5113 over the Laboratory to allow us to safely conduct rocket, balloon and aircraft flights.

We are deeply concerned that the establishment of a Wilderness area in the Magdalena Mountains will greatly impact our future ability to conduct our research at the lab. We have a number of instruments that are deployed in the National Forest as part of our use permit, which would not be allowed in a Wilderness area. In addition, installation of new instruments or maintenance of existing instruments would be hindered due to the limited access that a Wilderness area allows for. We also fly balloons, rockets, UAVs and manned aircraft from the Laboratory that could be restricted or prohibited by both the USFS and FAA rules if a Wilderness area were created. Again, access limitations may not allow us to retrieve flown instruments that land in the Wilderness areas, and the FAA recommends or requires aircraft to maintain altitudes no lower than 2000 feet above the ground when flying over Wilderness areas.

801 Leroy Place • Socorro, New Mexico 87801-4750 • Phone (575) 835-5423 • Fax (575) 835-5913
langmuir@tern.nmt.edu • <http://langmuir.nmt.edu>

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Current and future research at the Langmuir Laboratory requires flexibility in the management of the forest that a Wilderness area does not provide for. In 1980, Congress recognized the unique scientific capabilities of our Lab and established the Langmuir Research Site through Public Law 96-550 giving both Langmuir and the USFS the flexibility needed to manage the area for scientific research, as well as other uses such as hiking, hunting and camping.

Establishment of a Wilderness area will be in direct conflict with the purpose of the Langmuir Research Site and prevent or greatly restrict Langmuir Lab's ability to conduct it's work. Because of this, we are in opposition to forming a Wilderness area in the Magdalena Mountains, and in particular within the Langmuir Research Site defined by Public Law 96-550.

Please feel free to contact me at the Langmuir Laboratory Office (575-835-5423), by email at keack@nmt.edu, or at the address above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'KEACK', written in a cursive style.

Kenneth Eack
Chairman, Langmuir Laboratory for Atmospheric Research.