



GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL XRF LAB

GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL X-RAY FLUORESCENCE SPECTROMETRY LABORATORY

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ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87122-2777 USA

12 September 2015

Forest Planner
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands
2113 Osuna Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

re: comment on potential wilderness designation south and north of Albuquerque Elena Gallegos Open Space land

Dear Forest Planner:

I have lived and performed geoarchaeological research in New Mexico for nearly 30 years. I recently retired as Professor of Geoarchaeology from the University of California, Berkeley, and since then have worked as an Albuquerque Open Space Volunteer on trail and archaeological projects in Albuquerque generally and Elena Gallegos Open Space specifically.

One of the many reasons we chose Albuquerque, New Mexico for retirement is the incredible outdoor recreation potential. We designed and built a green home in the far northeast heights in order to be closer to the Sandia Mountain foothills, which to this day we use and work in three to seven days per week. The Open Space area of the foothills, including that under National Forest supervision is in essence the Albuquerque multi-use playground where as I can verify this as a trail volunteer, hikers, runners, dog walkers, and mountain bikers work together to use and improve the trails and environment.

While wilderness designation might seem timely and an environmental safeguard, one must take into consideration not only the resources within the potential wilderness boundaries, but the value that a multi-use environment brings to the welfare of the citizens that will use it. A wilderness designation for those two areas proposed just north and south of Elena Gallegos Open Space would be a travesty for Albuquerque, the citizens of which are the primary users. As an archaeologist who has done extensive reconnaissance in the above noted area, cultural resources are not in danger of destruction. Indeed, the prehistoric resources are invisible to most users.

As an avid mountain biker I would say that a wilderness designation would be destructive to the community itself. The mountain bike community and clubs are the most common trail workers in Open Space and on into USNF space. We appreciate these open spaces and the ability to travel from the Tram to I-40 for fitness and appreciation of the environment. That's why we work so hard to maintain the trails both on Albuquerque and Forest Service land. The proposed wilderness designation would destroy that since Trail 365 would be severed on either side of Elena Gallegos Open Space.

Finally, I realize the budgetary pressures that USNF is under. The lack of enforcement on existing wilderness (off-leash dogs common for example) would only be exacerbated if the acreage of wilderness was increased. Enforcement ability is mentioned in passing in the proposal. I recommend not designating the areas north and south of Elena Gallegos Open Space as wilderness. Don't hinder Albuquerque's multi-use area.

Sincerely,



M. Steven Shackley

cc: Dr. Matt Schmader, Superintendent, Albuquerque Open Space

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