

filed 9/30/13
1408
js

To:
Elaine Kohrman
Forest Supervisor
Cibola National Forest

From:
Melvin Stairs
representing Recreational Prospecting and Geology organizations
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear Supervisor Kohrman,

I am writing this letter in hopes you will consider the significant negative impact any additional designation of public lands as "Wilderness Areas" will have on the over 1,100 members of the several organizations I have the honor of representing. All of the people this letter represents need full unrestricted access to public lands for recreational purposes, to carry out scientific study, or to practice and perfect their profession. Any restrictions of land access means diminished opportunities to earn income, to expand the general knowledge base, or to simply exercise or relax outdoors in the manner they most enjoy.

Many of the citizens this letter represents rely on access and use of public lands as a place to prospect for and collect gems, mineral specimens, and precious metals. Old mining locations, right down to the smallest of prospects, provide opportunities to search for materials in an area known to have produced these sought after resources without incurring the expense and potential ecological impact associated with mining activities on undisturbed ground. Areas currently in use or under claim will eventually become exhausted and without access to other new areas there will be no place for these activities to take place. Others represented by this letter use public lands for important scientific study, to practice and perfect their skills in the field of geology, or to teach others about geology. Without unrestricted access to public lands the opportunities to discover, learn, and teach are greatly diminished.

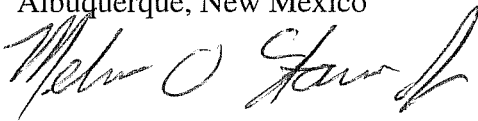
Areas currently proposed in all ranger districts within the Cibola Forest contain historical mining activities and geological features of great importance to the people represented. We feel the Forest Service has done an inadequate job of reviewing the records pertaining to historical mining activity, have not appropriately weighted the need for easy access to geological features and domains, and have not given sufficient consideration to the needs of our collective groups as a whole. Access to these locations needs to be preserved or increased, because without them there is no future existence possible for these organizations.

One of the founding principles of Forest Service management is the Multiple Use Land Policy that guarantees all users of the forest have an equal right to the use of the forest for their enjoyment. We understand that those who enjoy the experience of solitude and a lack of human influence on the land make a wilderness designation a desirable and necessary part of forest service management, and that this experience is a right guaranteed under MULP to those that wish to have it. However the right of one group to experience the forest in the way they see fit must not be allowed to supersede and violate the rights of all other forest users. There is already enough public land currently designated as Wilderness for those who desire a wilderness experience to be able do so. Further expansion of Wilderness will deprive other forest users of their chance to experience the forest in the way they choose to. This is not a balancing act, where one group's desires are weighed against another's. It is the Forest Service's duty to provide adequate accommodation for all groups. The only fair and equitable

way to accomplish this is to manage the land use proportional to the number of users who wish the land to be managed according to their needs. According to a 2012 user survey, only 5% of forest users surveyed make use of areas currently designated as Wilderness; therefore no more than 5% of the total land area within the boundaries of the Cibola National forest, including land currently designated, should be taken away from the general public and used as Wilderness, and then only if that land stringently meets the criteria of land appropriate for wilderness consideration.

We respectfully request that the management of the Cibola National Forest take into consideration all information contained in this letter and that they do not propose to Congress the designation of any public lands above the 'fair proportion' amount needed to fulfill the needs of those who use the forest for wilderness purposes. We further request that forest management work more closely with all user groups to ensure the fulfillment of their members needs so that the forest can remain open for ALL of the public to enjoy.

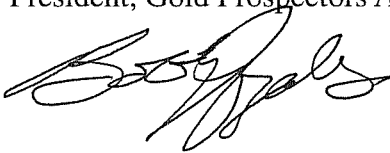
Melvin Stairs
Albuquerque, New Mexico



Robert Regner
President, Albuquerque Gem & Mineral Club (about 775 members)



Bobby Gonzales
President, Gold Prospectors Association of New Mexico (about 175 members)



Dr. William Turner
President, Albuquerque Geological Society (about 100 members)



David Paschal
President, New Mexico Gold Miners Association (about 70 members)

