



County of McKinley

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November 19, 2014

Lee, Bill

Elaine B. Kohrman
Forest Supervisor
2113 Osuna Road NE.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113-1001

Email: cibolamtnsplanrevision@fs.fed.us

RE: Comments on the Revising of the Forest Plan for the Mountainous Ranger Districts Specifically for Identifying Potential Wilderness Area Consideration

Dear Ms. Kohrman:

Please consider these as the comments of McKinley County New Mexico, a political subdivision of the State of New Mexico which has portions of the Mt. Taylor Ranger District in the Mt. Taylor area and Zuni Mountain area of the Cibola National Forest.

We appreciate the opportunity to give comments and to meet the deadline of November 21, 2014, we will simply make our comments brief.

McKinley County has been for some time working with the Mt. Taylor Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest in getting many viable venues for high adventure tourism in the areas of the Cibola National Forest that is within McKinley County. We have also been collaboratively working with Cibola County, to bolster the economic opportunities these projects will provide for both counties.

I bring to your attention the recent collaboration we are about to finish with the Zuni Mountain Trail Partnership which is establishing several miles of hiking and biking trails within the Mt. Taylor Ranger District and throughout the Zuni Mountains. This is a great step forward in working with the forest service in enhancing the economies of our neighboring communities and McKinley County.

Our comment essentially establishes that McKinley County is more interested in working with the forest service to use all the areas that are located in McKinley County in improving economic viability for McKinley and Cibola counties. This would entail the needed use of trails and areas where mechanized although not motorized equipment can be used to enjoy high adventure tourism, specifically bicycling. As a basis for this and in reviewing our status as a political sub-division of the state, we want to reiterate to you that McKinley County, consisting of approximately 5,500 square miles and one of the largest in New Mexico is unique in its economic viability. Of that, almost 5,500 square miles, 20% is private fee land that is both taxable and capable of being used for economic development. The bulk of McKinley County upward of 80% are Indian Allotment and Tribal Trust Lands which is not considered taxable for McKinley county property tax purposes nor do we ever receive a Payment in Lieu of Taxes for this property. In fact, the regulating jurisdiction of tribal trust and Indian allotment land is the federal government as the trustee thus preventing using the land for economic development to help our citizen's quality of life and tax base. We also have Forest land and State Park land which is less than 1% of our approximately 5,500 square miles of land.

McKinley County sees the forest land as a great opportunity for our citizens and economic development. To that end, we have expended funds and countless volunteer hours working to develop relationships not only with the Forest Service but State Parks, National Parks, BLM and others to be able to use public lands that would enhance the sustainability of the land and also enhance economic development through adventure tourism. We see any designation of wilderness area that would limit the availability for economic development using mechanized equipment such as bicycles as limiting our ability to generate economic development through high adventure tourism.

In our comprehensive plan and other arrangements that we have made, we are committed as a local County government to receive any designations for trails that can be used for mountain biking experiences. Thus in reviewing the map in both the areas of the Zuni Mountain and in the Mt. Taylor area of McKinley County, we feel that any wilderness designation would limit or even be detrimental to our efforts in seeking these designations for development.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, we hope to be able to comment more and come to some understanding of the need to be able to access and use the public lands of the forest service in a manner that will help all the citizens and bolster our economic viability.

Very truly yours,



Bill Lee
McKinley County Manager

c: Douglas W. Decker, McKinley County Attorney