



November 21, 2014

Elaine Kohrman,  
Forest Supervisor  
Cibola National Forest  
2113 Osuna Rd. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

RE: Comments for Forest Plan Revision concern Wilderness

Dear Ms. Kohrman:

The Merced del Pueblo de Tajique is a community land grant that was established by Mexico in 1834. For the past 180 years we have relied on the forests surrounding us for the sustainability of our community. Like the other community land grants of the Manzanos our land grant is dependent on natural resources of the forest for maintaining our cultural identity, our spiritual beliefs and practices, our health, safety and general welfare and our economic wellbeing. Our community's longstanding reliance on the forest has been for the uses listed below:

- Harvesting firewood for heating our homes and for retail sale as an income source.
- Gathering herbs for remedios to naturally heal ailments and illness.
- Cultural and Religious purposes.
- Getting vigas, latillas and postas for building homes and fences.
- Hunting wild game during hunting season.
- Picking piñon.
- Gathering landscaping materials.
- Educational field trips for our youth.
- Recreational purposes such as hiking, sight seeing, bird watching, photographing, watching the changing of the leaves, horseback riding, camping and picnicking.

In reviewing the Mountainair Ranger District map of potentially suitable wilderness areas we are concerned that any expansion of Wilderness in the Manzano Mountains will negatively impact not just our community but all of our neighboring land grant communities. Much of the areas identified as potentially suitable due to their proximity to existing wilderness are some of the few areas that escaped the wildfires that ravaged our communities several years ago. By recommending expanding the Wilderness to include these areas the Cibola National Forest will essentially be further reducing the amount of much needed natural resources available to our communities. Part of the purpose and mission of the Merced del Pueblo de Tajique is to serve



and protect our past, current and future heirs. This includes protecting their ability to access and use the natural resources that we have been dependent on long prior to the establishment of the Cibola National Forest. Therefore as a measure for protecting our culture, our heritage and the interests of our current and future heirs the Merced del Pueblo de Tajique is opposed to the expansion of any additional wilderness within the Mountainair Ranger District including all parcels identified as potentially suitable on the map developed for that purpose. In addition, we oppose the Cibola National Forest recommending any other potential Wilderness designations anywhere within the Cibola National Forest that could have an immediate or future negative impact on a community land grant.

Respectfully Yours,

*Venessa Chavez*

President

505-400-0940