

Burris, Wesley

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**U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service**

**2113 Osuna Road NE**

**Albuquerque, NM 87113-1001**

**Dear Ms Elaine B. Kohrman,**

**In reference to current revision of the 1985 forest plan. I am going to give some of my history and my life related to the San Mateo Mountains. I was raised on the east side of the San Matos on old U.S. Highway 85. My mother and father had a ranch and service station, "then known as Fort Craig Service Station." It's now Interstate 25 and there is a rest area half way between Socorro and T.or C. where Fort Craig Service Station was.**

**I grew up working, hunting, trapping, cutting wood and having fun from Al Peak on the North end of the San Mateo's to Springtime and Monticello on the south end. Over the years I have walked or rode horseback from Al Peak to Rosedale and east Red Canyon then to San Juan Peak, from there to Steel Gap and on down to Springtime and Vicks Peak 35 or 40 miles of mountains and I know just about every rock, bush, and tree. My grandfather and grandmother came to New Mexico in 1897-1899 and settled in Rosedale a gold mining town in the San Mateo mountains on the east side. My grandfather worked in the mines for several years. In 1905 he bought a patented mining claim in east Red Canyon at a place called Turkey Springs. He moved his family there and built a ranch and started raising cattle and horses. My dad was born in Rosedale in 1901. His oldest sister was born in Macalester, Okla. Before they came to New Mexico. My dad had 5 sisters and a brother born at Turkey Springs. My grandfather and his family lived there and built there ranch into a big operation. This was from 1905 until about 1928-1930. My grandfather had the first grazing**

permit issued by the Forest Service in 1910 in the San Mateo Mountains. I still have this document. My grandfather and family had expanded the ranch to extend from the top of the San Mateo's out in the flat country 10 or 12 miles east. They built a new headquarters in North Canyon 8 or 10 miles east of Turkey Springs. This was called "the home place" in North Canyon. They moved there around 1928-1930. Then they bought the Big Rosa Ranch on the north end of the San Mateo's in Rosa Canyon. They had almost everything from East Red Canyon to Al Peak. At one time they had around 3000 head of cattle on these ranches. Their home at Turkey Spring was used as a line cabin when they worked cattle. Sometime around 1932 the US Forest Service decided to take my families property at Turkey Springs. A Forest Ranger named Cougler burned the cabin at Turkey Springs and declared the land never belonged to my family. There was a good friend of my dad's that worked for the Forest Service that witnessed this happen and told my grandfather. To this day my family has never been paid for these damages.

How did this happen? My family owned and lived at Turkey Springs before the Forest Service existed and before New Mexico became a state. What gave the Forest Service the right to do what was done? Eventually these ranches were sold and my grandfather and grandmother retired in a home they built about a mile west of US Highway, 85. This happened around 1937. My father built a service station and store on US Highway 85 on property he purchased, which was an old homestead. He then started a ranch to go with the store and service station. That's where I and 4 brothers and 3 sisters were raised. This took place from 1937-1967. I know a lot of history about the San Mateo Mountains, and the people that lived and ranched there.

I spent a big part of my life working for the Federal Government from 1959 to 1987. I worked 13 years for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and 14 ½ years for the US Department of Army, White Sands Missile Range.

After dealing with the Federal Government as long as I have, I have come to the conclusion that no agency within, including the US Forest Service, NEVER learns from their mistakes. They just turn around and do it again, and this holds true with wilderness areas. The Gila wilderness being the first, I believe. Take a close look at what has happen within the Gila the last 50 to 65 years. In the 1950's I had an uncle of mine spent a week walking and fishing the Gila up one creek and down another. There was a lot of timber and quite a bit of open areas. In the 1970's in this same area of the Gila, while hunting Elk, I had to stay

on trails to go anywhere. If you tried to go where there wasn't a trail the brush and down timber with new growth coming up in it was so thick you had to force your way through it. In the 1990's I was back in Willow Creek, doing some work and it was worse yet. You could not walk through the down and dead timber, underbrush and small live trees trying to grow up through all the trash. I have pictures of this and they show the aftermath of total mismanagement.

There is a document, "The Ailing Gila Wilderness" a pictorial review written and produced by Ronald J. White, Division Director,

M. S. Wildlife Science, B.S. Range Science, Certified Wildlife Biologist, Division of Agricultural, Progress and Resources, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, New Mexico State University. December 1995. This document proves exactly what I am stating.

Today you go look at this same area and all you can see is black tree stubs standing up as far as you can see. The remnants of the White Water Boldy catastrophic fire. Yes the drought adds to the problem but did not cause the problem. Total mismanagement of our forests by the US Forest Service, the misuse of the Endangered Species Act, to control people, and the arrogant stupidity and ignorance of the "Green Agenda" is what causes the problems.

The Forest Service wants to put more forests into wilderness? This is ludicrous. Is it because the Forest Service doesn't want to manage our forests so just put them in a wilderness and let them sit there and stagnate? WHAT is your purpose?

My message to you is: do your job of managing our forests the way you were commissioned to do. Provide a sustainable growth of timber to keep sawmills running and providing jobs and supplying our nation with useable lumber, firewood to heat our homes and beautiful forests to enjoy.

That! Forest Service is what I request from you.

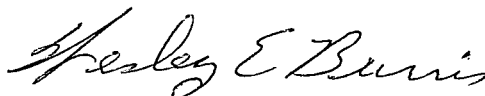
CC: Congressman Steve Pearce

Governor Susan Martinez

Mr. Aubrey Dunn

Rep. Don Trip

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wesley E. Burris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wesley" being more prominent.

Wesley E. Burris