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September 25, 2015

Ms. Elaine Kohrman, Forest Supervisor
Cibola National Forest
2113 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Dear Ms. Kohrman,

The Claunch-Pinto Soil and Water Conservation District (CPSWCD) has reviewed the information provided for the 2nd Phase Wilderness Inventory for the Mountainair Ranger District. The CPSWCD Board of Supervisors do not agree with creating additional wilderness within the Mountainair Ranger District.

CPSWCD has several concerns about adding additional wilderness. They are:

- 1) The three stand changing fires of 2008 demonstrated the need for active forest management on the eastern slopes of the Manzano Mountains. The ability to implement further treatments for watershed restoration would be blocked by an additional wilderness designated lands. Areas contiguous with lands that already have been identified as having wilderness potential should not be considered as candidates for special designation because such designations would create too large of an area inaccessible for future watershed landscape scale restoration.
- 2) Livestock grazing may continue in wilderness, but livestock management becomes more difficult and expensive due to limited access by motorized equipment. Also the new designation would curtail any further range improvements and would make maintenance responsibilities more difficult.
- 3) CPSWCD has been notified by their cooperators of numerous concerns about the impacts to natural resource-based industries, the economic stability, the custom and culture of the citizens of CPSWCD.
- 4) CPSWCD is concerned about the abundance of accumulated fuels in the existing wilderness area. When fires have occurred within the wilderness area they tend to crown out killing most of the trees and spread fire into non-designated

areas. The result of these catastrophic fires is an area where serious soil erosion occurs which can cause damage downslope to forest and adjacent private lands.

5) Climate change and decades of fuel accumulation make efforts to contain large, severe fires dangerous, expensive and ill advised.

6) Within the Gallinas Mountains there is potential for mining strategic rare minerals that are found few places in the world. CPSWCD agrees with potential mining development of this area as a highest and best use.

7) The Gallinas Mountain Unit has significant archeological sites including a pre-civil war Army encampment at Cement Springs. This site and others have not been discussed in the Forest Plan revision documents. There needs be a discussion about site preservation planning protection.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Felipe Lovato, Jr." in a cursive script.

Felipe Lovato, Jr.

Chairman

Claunch-Pinto Soil and Water Conservation District

Cc: Champe Green, Forest Planner, Cibola National Forest