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First name: Sue

Last name: Gunckel

Organization:

Title:

Comments: February 16, 2016

Elaine Kohrman

Forest Supervisor

Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands

2113 Osuna Rd. NE

Albuquerque, NM 87113

Re: Support for the Citizen's Conservation Proposal for the Cibola National Forest Service

I am writing to express my support for the proposed conservation areas put forth by the coalition of conservation, recreation, sportsmen and cultural resource protection organizations in their Citizen's Conservation Proposal, submitted September 25, 2015 to the Cibola National Forest.

The proposal identifies seven priority conservation areas that the Forest Service should recommend for wilderness in the Forest Plan and a separate Outdoor Education and Natural Area. These lands - in the San Mateo, Magdalenas, Bear, and Datil Mountains, as well as the Greater Guadalupe Canyon in Sandoval County - are among the wildest lands left in New Mexico and they are ideal places to protect wilderness character. The proposed Sandia Mountains Outdoor Education and Natural Area would help forge stronger human connections to nature, encourage outdoor recreation and exploration, and share current thinking about the ecology and history of the Sandias.

Wilderness is the highest level of protection for our public lands and is designed to protect lands and wildlife in their natural state. These areas merit this protection, and I urge the Forest Service to recognize their vital ecological, geologic, cultural, historic, and recreational value.

In the face of ever-increasing threats of resource extraction and over-development, I urge you to safeguard these high value conservation lands now to protect our economy, natural heritage, opportunities for outdoor recreation, and livelihood for future generations. Please protect these priority lands in the Cibola National Forest by recommending them as Wilderness and designating the Sandia Mountains Outdoor Education and Natural Area in the Forest Plan.

(Over please)

Sincerely,

Signature: Sue Gunckel Date: 01-16-2016

Printed Name: Sue Gunckel

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The following text has been entered verbatim by FS staff on behalf of the sender:

Ms. Kohrman,

I have forests in my blood and the Cibola is a particular love. As the child of a forester who worked throughout Region 3 from the beginning of his career in the 1930s until the early 1950s, I spent many hours and days in the

Cibola when most of its acreage was, in fact, wilderness. The love of the solitude, beautiful vistas, cool mountain nights became ingrained in my psyche.

As my uncle ranger at Magdalena (before the consolidation of districts) my cousin and I were able to enjoy that country with him. When a teenager one cousin was ranger at Sandia District, at Mountainair and later worked at the Grants office. So, although my Dad had passed away at a young age when he was supervisor of the Deschutes NF, I continued my attachment to wild places.

My husband and I returned to Albuquerque as young people and hiked many of the trails in the Sandias, Manzanos, Gallinas, San Mateos, and Mt Taylor. We loved it when we got into wilderness and the density of people dropped.

I was involved in developing the Citizens Conservation Proposal for a year or so at the beginning of your forest planning process but illness and other circumstances caused me to discontinue my involvement. I know that a very diligent study of the areas recommended for Wilderness and other special statuses was conducted. The areas recommended need permanent protection for the health of the forest, meadows, and watershed. And to allow for places that are sizeable wildlife habitat. Last, but no unimportantly, these lands are needed so people have unspoiled country to gain the health enhancing advantages of solitude and naturalness.