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Title:

Comments: Letter to The Forest Service September 21, 2015

To: Forest Supervisor; E. Kohrman

Dear Ms. Kohrman;

This letter is in response to the Forest Service's request for input from user groups that access the Cibola National Forest for recreational purposes. This input focuses on the current inventory and evaluation of lands that may be suitable for wilderness, specifically those in the Sandia Ranger District including: D5_ADJ1.b48.6 ac, D5_ADJ2 271.1 ac, D5_ADJ3 94.8 ac, D5_ADJ14b 1664.2 ac, D5_ADJ4.c 6.3 ac, D5_ADJ5 1216.7 ac, D5_ADJ6 735.6 ac, D5_ADJ10.b 79.5 ac, D5_ADJ9 332.6 ac, D5_ADJ8 69 ac, D5_ADJ7 4.9 ac and D4_5K27549.3 ac.

We understand the concept of wilderness and support the appropriate creation of wilderness.

Wilderness provides both ecological and social benefits that are unique to the forest including the opportunity for solitude, primitive recreation and the development of individual self-reliance.

Areas managed as wilderness help preserve outstanding ecological, geological, or other features of value. We are fortunate to have the Sandia Wilderness on our doorstep.

However, we the undersigned believe the Sandia Ranger District inventory areas listed above are not suitable for inclusion into the existing wilderness area and that inclusion would not be benefit the diverse user groups and society in general, for one or more of the following reasons:

In general, these areas do not provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Roads, road noise, invasive species, and evidence of mining, woodcutting or other subsistence activities are prevalent. Abandoned roads, existing dirt roads, busy state highways carrying tourist traffic and a major interstate are adjacent to, or bisect these areas.

The city of Albuquerque is visible from a large portion of the western-most inventory area.

Adding these areas to the existing wilderness would not substantially improve the existing wilderness and would only diminish its positive attributes.

Improvements in these areas represent a departure from apparent naturalness. In some of these areas, user-created routes are significant and detract from apparent naturalness. Extensive fencing and signage has been erected by the city of Albuquerque adjacent to the western most area(D5 ADJ6); which detracts from the naturalness of the area.

The western most area under consideration (D5 ADJ6) is adjacent to the city of Albuquerque Open Space (AOS). The AOS is a multi-use area developed by the city to promote and develop health, education, recreation and tourism. Mountain biking is encouraged and it is a significant activity in this buffer zone in the urban-wildland interface. The existing trail system is a unified trail system built on both City and Forest Service land. Incorporating this area into the existing wilderness would be counterproductive to the City's efforts to promote health, recreation and tourism. The addition of these areas to existing wilderness will reduce the Forest Service's ability to access and fight fire in the wildland-urban interface. This diminished ability to fight fire will greatly increase the risk of property damage by not managing the area as a buffer zone.

We believe that precedence and location is an important consideration in determining how all the inventory areas in the Cibola National Forest will be managed in the future. Because the Cibola National Forest inventory areas are not currently designated as wilderness, they have been utilized in a diverse manner representing the diverse interests of the population for a long time.

Designating these areas as wilderness would unnecessarily and arbitrarily restrict or eliminate existing recreational and educational activities.