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First name: Richard

Last name: Berry

Organization: City of Albuquerque

Title: Mayor

Comments: Letter text below entered by FS Staff on behalf of sender.

August 20, 2015

Ms. Elaine Kohrman

Forest Supervisor

Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands 2113 Osuna Rd NE

Albuquerque NM 87113

Dear Ms. Kohrman,

The City of Albuquerque has been an active participant in the United States Forest Service's recent forest plan revision process for the Cibola National Forest. We are executing an MOU with the Forest Service to become a formal cooperating agency in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan revisions. The City and the Forest Service have a long history of cooperation dating back to the Elena Gallegos land purchases of the early 1980s. Our combined efforts led to the acquisition of what would become the Sandia Mountain Wilderness and the city's subsequent retention of the Elena Gallegos/Albert G. Simms Open Space Park.

This long history of cooperation extends to the essentially seamless management of Forest Service lands in the Sandia foothills north and south of the Elena Gallegos, and of open space lands within the Elena Gallegos. Recreational uses and public enjoyment of these areas contribute significantly to the quality of life for our city's residents. We are concerned, therefore, and wish to express our concerns, about the consideration of lands that may be incorporated into the Sandia Mountain Wilderness north of I-40 and east of Tramway.

These areas already have an extensive, popular and very functional mountain biking trail system. Designating these lands as wilderness will remove mountain bicycling and cut off the connections from Open Space lands per the Wilderness Act of 1964. Wilderness designation for this land would almost completely eliminate mountain bicycling from the Sandia foothills, or at the least, force all riders onto a small remnant of Open Space lands. This action would also have a potentially severe impact on economic opportunity of Albuquerque as a great city for outdoor recreation.

As the U.S. Forest Service considers potential areas for wilderness designation, I respectfully urge you to remove lands from consideration that fall north of I-40 and east of Tramway in the Sandia foothills.

Our City staff is ready and willing to work with you during this process, so please do not hesitate to contact me on this important matter.

Richard J. Berry,
Mayor