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First name: Melanie
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Organization: Congress of the United States
Title: Member of Congress
Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to offer our objection to the Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). On behalf of the people of New Mexico, we respectfully request that the LRMP include an exemption for the La Luz Trail Race, similar to the one included in the 1985 LRMP. This race has been conducted under a special use permit for 55 years in accordance with the unique values and characteristics of a wilderness area.

The La Luz Trail Race is a point of pride for New Mexicans and an important source of recreation and tourism. Race participants have always taken to heart the spirit of the wilderness area, remained on the trail, and closely adhered to a leave no trace philosophy.

In a May 1, 2020 letter explaining their decision to not issue a special use permit for the La Luz Trail Race, the Forest Service cited a prohibition of commercial activities in Wilderness Areas as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964. The LRMP, however, includes standards for existing commercial activities such as outfitter-guide activities and allows for special use permits in wilderness areas. We agree with the LRMP that certain existing permitted commercial activities should continue, and in keeping with more than a half century of precedent, request that the La Luz Trail Race remain under that category as it has for many years. This race has been permitted for years under direction from the Wilderness Management Handbook and in full conformance with wilderness requirements.

The T'uf Shur Bien Preservation Trust Area Act recognized the Pueblo of Sandia's claim within the Cibola National Forest and confirmed the status and borders of the Cibola National Forest. In this legislation, the Secretary of Agriculture was directed to "continue to administer the Area as part of the National Forest System subject to and consistent with the provisions of this title affecting management of the Area." With a history of over 50 years, the La Luz Trail Race is an existing use that should be continued. In fact, the Committee Report for an earlier version of the legislation included the La Luz Run as an existing use, demonstrating clear legislative intent to support this continued activity.

We appreciate the thoughtful work that the Forest Service has put into revising the LRMP. This is a much-needed update, however, the removal of the La Luz Trail Race does not properly weigh the importance of the race for the people of New Mexico and the precedent under which it has operated. We urge you to reconsider including the La Luz Trail Race as a permitted special use activity in the LRMP.

If you have any questions, please reach out to us.

Thank you for your consideration.