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Comments: New Mexicans Want Wilderness in Cibola National Forest

Nov 21, 2014

Forest Supervisor Elaine Kohrman

Albuquerque, NM

Dear Forest Supervisor Kohrman,

Thank you for soliciting comments on the Cibola's ongoing inventory for lands with wilderness characteristics. It is critical to make management decisions to protect those characteristics for future generations. The Wilderness preservation system started right here in New Mexico with the first Wilderness in the world, the Gila. This is a uniquely American tradition that serves us well.

Research shows that communities and counties with protected federal public lands generally outperform those without public lands in economic performance measures. Western non-metropolitan counties with more than 30 percent of the county's land base in federal protected status such as national parks, monuments, wilderness, and other similar designations increased jobs by 345 percent over the last 40 years. In 2010, per capita income in western non-metropolitan counties with 100,000 acres of protected public lands is on average \$4,360 higher than per capita income in similar counties with no protected public lands.

Outdoor recreation in New Mexico generates \$6.1 billion in consumer spending; 68,000 direct New Mexico jobs; \$1.7 billion in wages and salaries and \$458 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Wilderness provides countless benefits, both for the forest ecosystem and for human visitors. Large untouched spaces are incredibly important--they provide opportunities for fully functioning ecosystems, create carbon sinks, and allow people to experience nature on a primal and often spiritual level.

Many areas in the Cibola clearly meet the required criteria to be considered wilderness, including areas in the San Mateo, Magdalena, Bear, and Datil Mountains. Please inventory these areas, as well as any other large roadless areas as comprehensively as possible. Protect these areas through the forest planning process and recommend these areas to Congress as suitable for permanent wilderness designation.

Please consider the vast majority of Cibola National Forests users that

favor more Wilderness designations.

Respectfully,

Ms. Susan Thompson
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