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First name: Todd

Last name: Griffin

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Protecting the Cibola

I would like to comment regarding the Cibola's ongoing inventory for lands with wilderness characteristics. While I respect the opinions of those with commercial or other personal interests in developing these areas, I believe we as residents and caretakers of our forest lands have a greater obligation to preserve our remaining wild areas for future generations.

History provides overwhelming evidence of the folly of destroying wildlife habitat for short term human purposes. The result of such policy has left us with little true wilderness area in New Mexico. I believe our grandchildren have the right to experience the forest and its creatures directly, as our grandparents did. Continuing down our current path of destruction, allowing vehicle access and other, even more damaging development, will rob them of this opportunity.

I am particularly chagrined at the continuing loss of habitat in the name of fire prevention and "thinning" programs. In fact, these activities have destroyed and irremediably damaged thousands of acres of wildlife habitat in the past few years alone, with tens of thousands more slated to fall under axe and torch in the years ahead.

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.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Todd Griffin
8 Snowcap Ct
Cedar Crest, NM 87008