

## THEIR VIEW

# Potrillo Mountains ranching: A woman's view of the wilderness

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Recently, the state and federal government have added restrictions to various personnel entering lands along the Mexican border. In Arizona, BLM employees in the San Pedro and Las Cienegas national conservation areas (NCA) will not go south of Highway 92 without an armed escort.

APHIS (USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) will no longer cross the border to inspect cattle entering the U.S. Rather, private contractors will load cattle in sealed containers and bring the cattle to the government employees to perform their inspections.

In New Mexico, employees of the NMDA's Weights and Measures group will no longer enter any areas south of Interstate 10 from Las Cruces to the Arizona border without an

armed escort. When reporting the steps taken for the Weights and Measures, the supervisor stated that it was a relief for those employees "who can now do their jobs without having to look over their shoulders for fear of danger."

In the same meeting, Luna County Sheriff Cobos stated that he, personally, would have second thoughts of approaching a group of illegals without backup even though he was armed.

Months before our ranching colleague Rob Krentz was murdered, his wife Sue wrote letters of warning to her representatives about the danger that the border conflict posed to residents living in rural areas along the border. Her warnings were unheeded and Rob's murder occurred.

Her concerns were not only accurate, they were warranted.

We can only imagine the life she now lives with the knowledge of Rob's death against that skyline that she views each and every day from her

home on that ranch.

As wives of ranchers in the Potrillo corridor, we have been silent long enough in the debate about the danger that this component of the wilderness proposal brings to all of us. Every day our husbands are on lands that will be affected in one way or another by this proposal.

It was interesting witnessing the crowd listening to the Weights and Measures supervisor and Sheriff Cobos as they were informed about the defensive measures being instituted and followed. That group sat there silent and unmoving.

Actions to enhance the safety of federal and state employees were very high priority, and, yet, Mr. Bingaman and Mr. Udall and their staffs have completely and utterly dismissed our plea of the danger of designating border wilderness on our doorsteps with their recent actions to push S.B. 1689 forward with only boundary adjustments on the most dangerous portion of the

package.

We stand here without recourse and without protection in the actions of our senators, and to those who suggest that the Bingaman bill enhances border security, who is paying you to spread such nonsense? Name one border wilderness in Arizona that has experienced increased security regardless how close to the border it is!

The results of 2009 are important. In the El Paso Sector, reduced illegal numbers resulted in apprehensions of 54 illegals per mile of sector border for the year.

Over in the Tucson Sector, a sector that is now fronted by wilderness and de facto wilderness safe havens, the number was about 920 per border mile, or just over 17 times the rate of entry into the El Paso Sector.

Such numbers were not always the case.

Before the flows of illegals found the safe havens of the wilderness and de facto wilderness managed federal lands

there, the Tucson Sector was deemed a sector where not much happened.

That result is now clearly reversed.

Amnesty International claims that 60 percent of females who enter the U.S. in those smuggling corridors are sexually assaulted. Since 2005, the average number of females in the illegal alien population has averaged 17.3 percent. If that is the case, over 100,000 rapes occurred in the Tucson Sector in 2009.

If the trophies, panties and other undergarments that are hung on trees and cactus that have become symbolic of such conquests, the Tucson Sector is a living hell for those women who must pay that price for entry into the U.S.

As women, we are outraged that our local news outlets refuse to discuss that subject and that the proponents of wilderness simply pick and choose the facts.

The Potrillo Mountains corridor wilderness proposal is an

assault on the lives, the investments, and dignity of our little community.

Just as Sue Krentz warned about the dangers of this border, there will be blood on the hands of these elected representatives if they press this environmental madness of the Rewilding Project on our lives and our community. It is not the ranchers that, in the words of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and the Bingaman staff, are angry ... it has become their wives!

The legislation designating the Potrillos wilderness will be cheered by the environmental community and the Juárez and Sinaloa drug cartels.

We will face the harsh realities of what the legislation will mean to people who actually have duties, responsibilities and private property rights in that corridor.

*The above authors all have ranches in the Potrillo Mountains area and would be impacted by passage of S.B. 1689.*