



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

Commissioner

June 18, 2010

Mr. Jerry G. Schickedan
President
People for Preserving Our West
851 Leasburg Drive
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88007

Dear Mr. Schickedan:

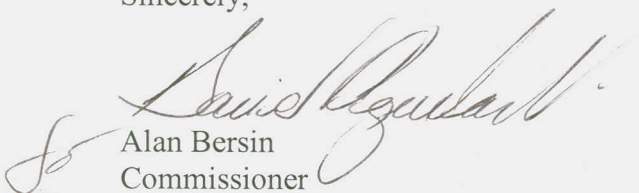
Thank you for your May 15, 2010 letter concerning comments regarding patrolling of wilderness areas that were captured in the Las Cruces Sun-News. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify the position of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) regarding wilderness areas and their impact on our border security operations. Within CBP, the U.S. Border Patrol's primary mission is border security between the ports of entry. CBP is also committed to environmental stewardship and works to minimize the impact of our operations on local communities and natural resources wherever possible.

The U.S. Border Patrol shares with our interagency partners the responsibility of environmental stewardship and supports the creation of wilderness areas where they do not negatively impact the ability to protect America at its borders. However, when wilderness designations are in enforcement areas, they can substantially affect the ability to conduct necessary daily operations and limit the construction of infrastructure. Additionally, CBP is authorized under law to enter designated areas, when necessary, for border security. For both routine and emergency matters, we work closely with the Department of the Interior to ensure we can carry out our security mission while respecting wilderness area concerns.

CBP appreciates the engagement of the People for Preserving Our West and other local community leaders on the issue of wilderness area designation in New Mexico. CBP prides itself on its commitment to both security and environmental commitment and will continue to work to balance both while ensuring we keep our border safe.

Thank you again for your letter and concern. If you have a need for further assistance, please feel free to contact my office at (202) 344-2001.

Sincerely,


Alan Bersin
Commissioner