



Elephant Butte Irrigation District Of New Mexico

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June 11, 2007

Karen G. Perez
Commission Chair
Dona Ana County Commissioner, District 3
845 N. Motel Blvd.
Las Cruces, NM 88005

Re: Designation of Certain Areas as Permanent Wilderness or as a National Conservation Area.

Dear Ms. Perez:

In response to the letter dated March 5, 2007 to Senator Domenici regarding the majority of public support for wilderness protections and the request that the governments of Dona Ana County further assess the desires of the local community for permanent federal wilderness and National Conservation Area (NCA) protections, the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) supports some, but not all of the wilderness designation proposals until further analysis can be made. The need to plan for future flood control and appurtenances in our watershed below Caballo during the summer monsoon season could have a great impact on future wilderness designation sites.

EBID feels that we must first take care to protect the City of Sunland Park and the Villages of Hatch and Mesilla, as well as Dona Ana County from flood events entering the valley floor from the east and west mesas since EBID plays such a vital role in evacuating flood waters back to the river. We could all miss the opportunity to redirect and reuse storm water runoff as a vital resource to recharge our aquifers and diminish the need to drain down our storage reserves if these concerns go unchecked.

The EBID believes that there are many substantive issues remaining to be discussed and resolved before a final legislative proposal can be put forward. The current situation in Dona Ana County is not unique, and yet after the flooding events of 2006, the issues of how to protect life and property have not been resolved. Similar legislation has been proposed for counties in Utah, Idaho and Nevada; however, those proposals occurred only after a much longer timeframe of visiting the proposed sites and discussing substantive issues than has been the case in Dona Ana County.

We sincerely hope that you will decide there is much more work to be done on this proposal and that we should not rush into land use legislation that will have a huge impact on our county based solely on the proposals of wilderness activists without consideration of flood protection and the reuse of storm waters. I have attached a copy of my letter of concern to Carol McCall, Associate Planner for Community Development dated April 25, 2007 for further reference. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Esslinger
Treasurer-Manager

GLE/jln

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Cc:

D. Kent Evans, Commission Vice-Chair, Dona Ana County Commissioner, District 4

Ruben Segura, Mayor, Sunland Park

Judd Nordyke, Mayor, Hatch

Michael Cadena, Mayor, Mesilla

Senator Jeff Bingaman

Senator Pete Domenici

Congressman Steve Pearce

Bill Mattiace, Mayor, City of Las Cruces