

November 23, 2007

Pete Domenici
U.S. Senator, State of NM
New Mexico – District 2
400 Telshor Ste E
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senator, State of NM
Loretto Town Centre
505 S. Main, St. 148
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Stevan Pearce
Member of Congress
New Mexico – District 2
400 Telshor, St. E
Las Cruces, NM 88001

RE: Dona Ana Wilderness; Ranchers are the key to the preservation of open space

Gentlemen:

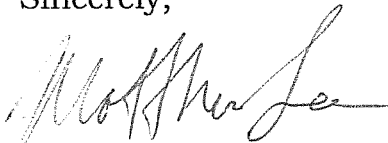
There will be a growing body of knowledge that will eventually magnify the importance of having ranchers on western lands. One such study has been authored recently by Richard Knight of Colorado State University. The study looks at the importance of private lands in the vital maintenance of biodiversity in the American West. "Ranching as a land use supports species of conservation concern and interest more than virtually every land use in the American West, particularly outdoor recreation and residential development," Knight has been quoted. "Private lands are the most biological productive lands in the West."

Here in Dona Ana County, we are being coerced by outsiders who have seen fit to push 300,000 acres of wilderness proposals on us. We know enough about them and their track records of opposing grazing on federal lands that we have no trust in their motives or their broader agenda. Ranchers find themselves having to defend and justify their existence in their opposition to this effort. The NMWA area director has been heard to remind one of our County Commissioners that she needs to remember that there are only 14 ranchers opposing the effort! Let it be known loud and clear there are more than just 14 ranchers who oppose this nonsense. There are a bunch of us city folks who have a very wary eye cast on the NMWA bunch and their broader band of anti civilization advocates that have made our county the most recent target of their wildlands corridor project. We may even actually support wilderness, but not for the agenda that is present here in our county!

So, a dichotomy of events has been at play . . .the wilderness machine and its true agenda and the local effort to head it off and all of their objective expectations. The interesting thing is that these ranchers have come up with something that needs to be considered. This idea of Rangeland Preservation Areas is a sincere attempt to save the integrity of these open spaces and still allow historical uses of these lands. I know that they are still very wary of the United States and any promises that will come out of the legislation, but they have come up with something that Congress has been unable to comprehend and that is a land

designation that doesn't destroy a segment of the society! This is shot across the bow of the Green Machine that people who have duties, responsibilities, and investments on these lands have rights of consideration, too. Where else in this society do you find private citizens who pay the United States to work at their chosen endeavors? Where? More importantly, where do you find private citizens who are sincere enough to permanently set aside open space for perpetuity for the right to continue that endeavor? These people and their brethren are the key to our open space well beyond this wilderness debate. Colorado State's Knight says it best. "To support our full natural heritage will require that substantial amounts of private lands be kept from residential and commercial development. Many of these private lands are in ranching". If we run these guys out of business this will not happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Matthew Lee

Entomologist

Entomology Consultants LLC