



Mesilla Valley Sportsmen's Alliance

August 15, 2011

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3102

RE: S.1024

Dear Senator Bingaman,

The Mesilla Valley Sportsmen's Alliance represents a majority of families in this valley who could be described as your common, everyday folks who work in the agriculture industry, real estate development and construction, local, state and federal government, New Mexico State University, NASA, and White Sands Missile Range or are retired. These families are the hard-working people of Dona Ana County who make this community tick.


These families also play hard. On any given weekend, you will find many of these folks have loaded up their assorted recreational necessities whether its horses, campers, RV's, ATV's, Jeeps or pickups with the appropriate gear and they're off to their favorite public lands area to spend quality time with their families and friends. The key, Mr. Bingaman, is ACCESS.

These families I am referring to do not support your idea of "protecting these lands for future generations" by restricting access to only a few who are able to either walk or go horseback into a "wilderness area". The local Western Heritage group has clearly demonstrated that if the intent is to protect these areas from development, congress has the ability to merely withdraw these lands from disposal without restricting appropriate access for resource management and recreational activities. Why is that not a viable option?

Another point, Mr. Bingaman, is the fact that it is the ranchers and sportsmen who are on these public lands everyday and provide the stewardship and management of these public lands to keep them healthy and clean. If ranchers don't develop and manage water distribution on our public lands for the benefit of their livestock, where do we think wildlife will access water? Ranchers and sportsmen work in concert to establish and maintain a healthy balance in the ecosystem.

Also, Mr. Bingaman, I'm sure that the activities of sportsmen on our public lands, especially those closer to the Mexican border, contribute to border security. Sportsmen play a significant role in the vigilance we must all engage in to keep our country safer. How can you think "wilderness on the border", which locks the public and the Border Patrol out of those areas, to be acceptable?

Finally, Mr. Bingaman, I want to address the importance of family. In every family, there are family members who are either, too old, too young or otherwise incapable of walking or riding horseback, that deserve to have access to recreate on our public lands. Yet you have selected some of the best



recreational areas in Dona Ana County to “protect for future generations”. What are you protecting these lands from? Do you think non-use is the answer? Why do you think it’s alright to limit access to these wonderful areas of our public lands to only those physically capable of walking or riding horseback?

The families represented by Mesilla Valley Sportsmen’s Alliance take great pride in the involvement of their families, especially the youth, in their recreational activities. Please don’t take that away from us in Dona Ana County.

We call on you to withdraw your S.1024 and as such, allow continued recreational access to all of the public lands in Dona Ana County.

Sincerely,

(s) *Ralph Ramos*
Co-Chair, Mesilla Valley Sportsmen’s Alliance
Las Cruces, New Mexico
(575) 642-3219