

June 29, 2007

Pete Domenici  
U.S. Senator, State of New Mexico  
201 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW  
St. 710  
Albuquerque, NE 87102

RE: Dona Ana Wilderness, Attn: Callie G. Gibson

Dear Senator Domenici:

Recently, I have been with some long time Las Cruces area leaders and have become more aware of this effort to push wilderness in Dona Ana County. I had observed a little bit of the progress from reading the newspaper, but I really hadn't been intimate with the details. What I have heard recently, though, concerns me.

It appears that the named stakeholder groups really haven't been fully involved in the process and that much of the front work was done without much widespread knowledge. If that is the case, and I believe that it is, that is dangerous and ill conceived. Furthermore, I am inclining to believe that there are fundamental flaws in the effort. First, are you convinced that the characteristics of these lands fit the letter of the Wilderness Act? I am not . . .and, I believe that others have the same feeling. Second, are you aware of the concern of who these wilderness proponents really are? If they are who I am hearing they are, I wouldn't want to be associated with them politically. Thirdly, there is an argument down here that the security threat these areas pose should disqualify them out of hand. For example, the west Potrillo area component stretches nearly to the border, and could very likely prove to be a national security risk if wilderness status is imposed. There is a Todd Garrison (Sheriff of Dona Ana County) letter on the web page of the local ranchers' web site describing that very thing. It is accompanied by a letter from Richard E. Hays former chief of air operations of the Border Patrol mirroring a similar theme. Mr. Senator, as a long time friend and supporter of you and your office, I think this thing needs to be scrutinized carefully. It is not just a local issue. It has become a national issue with the realization of the border security concern in this post 911 world.

I am confident that your judgment in this matter will prevail and the right steps will be taken.

Sincerely,

  
E.G. (Smokey) Blanton

New Mexico State Representative, retired

Cc: Senator Jeff Bingaman

Congressman Stevan Pearce

*Senator, I appreciate all the good thing you do and have done for NM and the USA but am very concerned about this matter.*  
*Sincerely*  
*Smokey*