

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS.com

Our view: Let's secure border before approval of wilderness bill

Sun-News report

Posted: 07/25/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Las Cruces— While we still have some concerns about border security, we were pleased to see the wilderness bill for Doña Ana County begin to move through the legislative process.

The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act, which would designate nearly 350,000 acres in Doña Ana County as wilderness or conservation areas, was passed unanimously on a voice vote Wednesday out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which Sen. Jeff Bingaman chairs. Bingaman is cosponsor of the bill, along with Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M.

The bill now goes before the full Senate. If passed there, it would move over to the House for consideration. Bingaman had said during an earlier visit to Las Cruces that it was his intent to try to get the bill through this year. If it is not passed by the time the Senate adjourns for the year, it will die and the land in question will remain a wilderness study area, a designation it has held since the 1980s.

Following a U.S. Senate field hearing in Las Cruces during which border security concerns were raised, Bingaman made changes to the bill, expanding a buffer area to three miles and creating a two-mile "Restricted Use Area" that would prohibit motorized access by the general public, but permit the Border Patrol to conduct routine patrols and construct communication and surveillance infrastructure.

We applaud these changes, but are mindful of the continuing violence happening on the other side of the border, and the growing

need for Border Patrol and other law enforcement to have access to land along the border. We encourage Bingaman and Udall to take one final look at the legislation, perhaps even sit down with Border Patrol officials, to ensure that passage of the bill will not hamper law enforcement.

The bill has already been amended once to address border security, and could be again if needed.

Beyond those concerns, we believe a wilderness designation will do a great deal to enhance these special places and ensure that they remain unspoiled for future generations.

Advertisement

Help people in need.
 Donate your car, boat or RV
Free Towing ■ Tax Deductible



FREE
 3 day vacation to over
 80 destinations.

Call Toll-Free
1-877-225-9384



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™