



August 2, 2011

The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chairman
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forest
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

I am writing to you and the committee as President of People for Preserving Our Western Heritage, a coalition of more than 800 businesses, organizations and professionals in Dona Ana County, New Mexico. The mission of People for Preserving Our Western Heritage is "To preserve, promote and protect the farming, ranching and rural heritage of our western lands." We support permanently preserving and protecting the Organ Mountains and the other special areas in our county. We believe there are viable alternatives to federal Wilderness designations that can be used to protect our land, our natural resources, our open space and our western heritage.

We are opposed to the passage of S.1024 as it is currently written because of the highly limited access it creates that affects our community for the following reasons:

Border security as we know it today would be severely compromised. Border Patrol and other law enforcement bodies currently have access in Wilderness Study Areas. The designation of Wilderness will severely limit Border Patrol's ability to carry out its National Security Mission along the International Border and surrounding areas. Border Patrol will not have access into the proposed Wilderness areas for routine patrol.

Control of flood waters is of high importance for those of us who live in a desert environment. The rainfall events are characterized many times by intense thunder storms, followed by flash floods along the arroyos, which cause severe damage. Current knowledge of control and management of flood waters require building of structures further up the watershed instead of at the mouth of the arroyo. Access for construction and maintenance of protective dams must be confirmed in S.1024.

Guaranteed access to livestock and ranch improvements is not spelled out clearly in S.1024. Reference to the grazing guidelines is presented as adequate concession for access to improvements. The BLM District Manager would not commit to how "occasional" access was defined. However, he was certain that the permittees would not have daily or even weekly access for maintaining water developments. This is unacceptable in a hot, dry desert environment.

We are opposed to S.1024 as currently written and request that this letter be made part of the permanent hearing record.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jerry G. Schickedanz', is written over the typed name.

Jerry G. Schickedanz, President
People for Preserving Our Western Heritage