

Rio Grande Soaring Association

5134 Thornton Street

El Paso, TX 79932

(915) 726-2698

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

Dear Senator Wyden,

The Rio Grande Soaring Association is a group of soaring pilots with a membership of approximately 100 who reside in west Texas and New Mexico.

We have been flying the mountains of southern New Mexico for over 30 years. Among our sites are the East and West Potrillo Mountains including Mt. Riley and Mt. Cox.

S. 1024 would drastically affect access to our flying sites. That is, we would effectively lose access to the above sites. For this reason, we are opposed to the bill (S. 1024).

Other than the ranchers who live in Potrillo Mountain ranges, we are probably the next greatest public user of these lands. Have the groups who are promoting this bill ever traveled to the Potrillo Mountains? If so, how often? Once or twice a year?

Furthermore, how is it that this area is being considered as Wilderness in the first place? It hardly meets the criteria of the 1964 Act – it is crisscrossed with roads, mines, fences, quarries, water tanks, and ranches.

If it becomes a wilderness, no one will be able to get in there except on horseback. Does anyone have any idea how barren and dry this area is? I've been going in and out of there for over 30 years and I have never seen ONE person on foot except at the Maars or on Mt. Riley and they got there by car/truck.

In any case, the Rio Grande Soaring Association is opposed to S. 1024 and we wish this letter to be made a permanent part of the hearing record.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Hadley Robinson, Secretary
Rio Grande Soaring Association