



National Association of Conservation Districts

February 28, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Monument Designation

Dear Mr. President and Secretary Jewell,

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts that work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands in the United States.

Thank you for your efforts to bring awareness to the importance and health of our Nation's public lands. We understand the purpose of establishing the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is to designate 498,815 acres as a national monument and wilderness area to conserve and protect the landscape. However, we oppose this effort due to the consequences a designation of this magnitude would pose to the health of our natural resources base.

Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. These districts are legislatively mandated to control and prevent soil erosion, prevent floodwater and sediment damage, and further the conservation and beneficial application of water. A national monument designation will only increase access restrictions to the watershed, prohibiting the implementation and/or construction of soil and water conservation methods and facilities and could prevent maintenance of existing projects.

The creation of new national parks, national monuments and wilderness areas or alteration of existing land-management plans often results in significant changes in allowed uses of these lands. Setting aside large areas of the nation's public lands with restrictive federal land designations has created many problems on the remaining public and private lands. The pressure on the remaining land makes it difficult to meet the nation's array of compatible uses such as livestock grazing, timber harvest and recreation.

We respectfully request that you consider the ramifications of restricting natural resource management on nearly a half-million acres of land resources, including its impact on current users, natural resources, wildlife habitat and surrounding communities. America's long-term homeland security is reliant on many factors, including conservation management of productive natural resources on private and public lands to allow landowners and producers to provide our growing population with an adequate supply of food, feed, fuel, and fiber into the future.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully,

Earl J. Garber
President

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