

National Monument Hearing Comments
1-24-14 Las Cruces NM
Jerry G. Schickedanz, Chairman
Western Heritage Alliance

Thank you for coming to Las Cruces for a listening session on the issues of protection of public lands in Dona Ana County.

My name is Jerry Schickedanz and I am here speaking for the Western Heritage Alliance and the many other organizations and groups who were not afforded the opportunity to speak here today. The Western Heritage Alliance is composed of over 700 businesses in Dona Ana County who are opposed to a large scale national monument.

Madam Secretary, we support protecting the Organ Mountains and I think you will find a great deal of support here today for protecting just the Organ Mountains. There is large scale disagreement on protecting other lands in the county. We feel the Organ Mountains are fitting of a national monument.

For other lands that deserve some type of protection, then we recommend that they be protected under a simple withdrawal in the same manner that the Valle Vidal in northern New Mexico was protected in 2006.

Madam Secretary, I have letters from 16 groups representing a broad variety of organizations across Dona Ana County and the surrounding area in opposition to large national monument and would like to present them to you for your information and study.

These groups have concerns revolving around access for public safety, border security, watershed, flood control, economic viability, and continued livestock ranching.

They are in no particular order:

Southwestern Border Sheriff's Coalition representing 31 border counties
Sheriff of Dona Ana County, Todd Garrison

National Association of Former Border Patrol Officers representing 100's of years of experience and link to their video of their concerns

Elephant Butte Irrigation District which represents several 1000 private landowners in Dona Ana and Sierra Counties

Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce

Las Cruces Hispanic Chamber of Commerce press release

Mesilla Valley Sportsman Alliance

New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts

Dona Ana Soil & Water Conservation District

Hildago County Soil & Water Conservation District

Southwestern County Commission Alliance-Sierra, Grant, Hildago, Catron, Socorro and Luna Counties

Council of Border Conservation Districts- Caballo, Dona Ana, Deming, Hildago, Otero, San Francisco and Luna Districts

New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau 18,000 members

Dona Ana County Farm & Livestock Bureau 2700 members

Farm Credit of New Mexico the 5th largest bank in New Mexico

People for Preserving our Western Heritage 700 business in Dona Ana Co

I know there are other organizations that have expressed their opposition to large national monuments or wilderness. I trust they will relay their concerns to you.

I think as you can see that there is not a general consensus in support of a large scale national monument. I hope that we will be allowed to continue to work with your office and the New Mexico Congressional Delegation for a legislative solution that the local community can support instead of a presidential proclamation.