

MARTIN HEINRICH
FIRST DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO

THE CAPITOL
336 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6316

DOWNTOWN ALBUQUERQUE
505 MARQUETTE AVENUE NW, SUITE 1605
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102
(505) 346-6781

SOUTH VALLEY
3211 COORS BOULEVARD SW, SUITE B3
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87121
(505) 877-4069

March 20, 2012



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS

HEINRICH.HOUSE.GOV

Hon. Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President:

For more than a century, American presidents have used the Antiquities Act to protect our nation's most cherished landscapes. Across the state of New Mexico, we see the benefit of the Antiquities Act—Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, White Sands National Monument, and El Morro National Monument were all originally protected through presidential proclamation.

I ask that you continue this legacy of conservation in New Mexico and designate an Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in Doña Ana County.

This proposed monument includes part of the original route of the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, which took settlers and traders from Mexico City through Las Cruces and continuing north all the way to Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo. For more than 300 years, this road served as the sole route from Mexico City into New Mexico. Some of the most vivid characters in New Mexico's history were active in this area, including Geronimo and Billy the Kid. The Butterfield Stagecoach Route ran right through the Sierra de las Uvas Mountains, which also contain some of the most distinctive Native American petroglyphs and pictographs in the Southwest. The Organ Mountains continue to provide critical cultural resources for the growing Mesilla Valley population.

The mountain ranges in the proposed monument include some of the most important wild game habitat in New Mexico. Mule deer, mountain lion, dove, quail, and many other species call the Sierra de las Uvas home. The Potrillo Mountains are especially significant with their ecological links to northern Mexico, and the Organ Mountains provide critical water resources to local wildlife. Any plan to permanently protect these areas should make access by sportsmen a central part of the region's management in perpetuity.

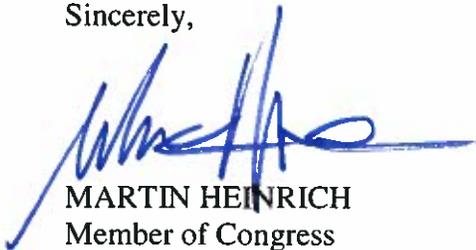
Before I was ever a Member of Congress, I supported efforts to designate the Organ Mountains as wilderness. Over the last year, I have worked with residents and elected officials in Las Cruces and Dona Ana County to permanently protect these southwestern natural treasures. City councilors, county commissioners, and the Mayor of Las Cruces, Ken Miyagishima, have consistently worked toward permanent protection of this area. In addition, organizations as diverse as the Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces, the League of Women Voters, and the Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen all support a comprehensive approach to preserving Dona Ana County's wild lands.

Moreover, protecting these resources will help boost the economy of southern New Mexico. Recent research done by the New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce shows that the state's 10 national monuments established through the Antiquities Act account for 1.3 million annual tourist visits and \$54 million in annual tourist spending that supports 1,061 New Mexico jobs.

Because of their proximity to the fast-growing Las Cruces metro area, these places are threatened by increased development pressures, invasive species, and off-road vehicle abuse. By designating these areas as a new national monument, we can make sure that they are protected for us and future generations of Americans to enjoy.

Thank you for your consideration of an Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument and for your continuing work to protect our nation's natural and cultural treasures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Heinrich', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MARTIN HEINRICH
Member of Congress

MH/mah