



GROUNDWORK
Doña Ana County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 19, 2014

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**Groundwork Doña Ana Applauds Establishment of
Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument**
*Group Looks Forward to More Public Lands Stewardship Opportunities
for Youth in New Monument*

LAS CRUCES, N.M. – [Groundwork Doña Ana County](#) (GWDA), a non-profit youth conservation and education group based in Las Cruces, today applauded the announcement that President Obama will designate the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in Doña Ana County, N.M, this coming Wednesday, May 21.

The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is rich with cultural and historical artifacts, which date back thousands of years to the Archaic Period, from between A.D. 400 to the mid-16th century, and from the time of Spanish occupation in our area.

The establishment of the national monument will help protect these cultural resources from vandalism and development so future generations can continue to enjoy them and learn from them.

According to Angel Peña, an archaeologist from the region and GWDA board member, approximately two hundred-fifty known archeological sites have been studied in the region with many more sites yet to be studied.

In 2013, a GWDA crew of 15 local young people, known as the “Green Team,” worked beside archaeologists and anthropologists to inventory and map hundreds of significant artifacts at dozens of locations within the proposed OMDP National Monument.

The Green Team documented and left in place diverse artifacts including projectile points, petroglyphs and pictographs, ground stone tools, as well as other evidence that is highly suggestive of habitation practices.

The experience provided Green Team members with valuable work skills, a broadened understanding of career paths in cultural and natural resource stewardship, and a greater

appreciation of the rich, cultural history waiting to be discovered on public lands within the new national monument.

Adrian Avila, one of the young people participating as a GWDA Green Team member, was glad to hear about the establishment of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

“These public lands and the artifacts found here tell our story,” Avila said. “We thank President Obama for protecting them so that future generations can understand their roots and their connections to our lands.”

Ceci Vasconcellos, GWDA executive director, applauded the efforts of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich to protect Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. She also expressed optimism that establishment of the new monument would lead to more opportunities for GWDA Green Teams to take part in the stewardship of their public lands.

“Involving young people in public lands stewardship enables them to learn new practical skills and contribute to the well-being of their community. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks provides an excellent setting for these types of win-win projects,” said Vasconcellos.

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