January 24, 2014

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

The Fort Sill Apache Tribe is a federally recognized tribe with a constitution and bylaws approved by the Secretary of the Interior and is recognized as the successor to the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache Tribes. The Chiricahua people resided in Southwest New Mexico, occupying territory that included the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks region before settlement by Europeans and Americans.

As stated in the enclosed resolution, on June 28, 1968 the U.S. Indian Claims Commission found that the Fort Sill Apache is the successor in interest to “those Indian groups which occupied the general geographic areas of this claim,” commonly referred to as the Chiricahua Apaches, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, et. al v. United States, 19 Ind. Cl. Comm. 212 (June 28, 1968). This 1968 Indian Claims Commission finding was reaffirmed again in 1973, 1974 and 1976 United States v. Fort Sill Apache Tribe, 533 F.2d 531 (Ct. Cl. 1976); United States v. Fort Sill Apache Tribe, 490 F.2d 819 (Ct. Cl. 1973); and Fort Sill Apache Tribe v. United States, 477 F.2d 1360, 201 Ct. Cl. 630 (1973), cert. denied, 416 U.S 993 (1974).

As people of the land we strongly believe the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks region should be permanently protected with national monument designation. The Fort Still Apache wish to preserve and protect the valuable tribal cultural resources that originated on these lands. We desire to allow our children and future generations the opportunity to understand and appreciate the bounty and beauty of their cultural heritage and aboriginal territory.

In addition to protecting the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks, the Tribe desires to participate in the management of the monument based on the Tribe’s cultural, historical and modern day connection with the former tribal lands.

This issue is of great importance to our tribal members. We call on your support to help us protect and secure the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks as a National Monument for future generations to experience.

Best Regards,

Jeff Haozous
Tribal Chairman

cc. The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Tom Udall, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Martin Heinrich, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan, U.S. Representative

The Honorable Steve Pearce, U.S. Representative
The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham, U.S. Representative
The Honorable Susana Martinez, Governor of New Mexico

Mountain Spirit Dancer represents the Mountain Spirit Ceremony which is used by the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache. It was given to the Apaches by the Mountain Spirits for blessing, protection, curing and warding off diseases. The Ceremony is still used today.