



May 20, 2014

For immediate release

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New Mexico sportsmen respond to comments by Rep. Pearce regarding Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

LAS CRUCES – New Mexico Wildlife Federation and other New Mexico sportsmen’s organizations refute the comments by Rep. Steve Pearce regarding President Obama’s use of executive authority to designate Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

"Southern New Mexico sportsmen and women appreciate the President using the authority granted by law to establish the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument because Congress failed to act on our behalf," said John Cornell, president of Dona Ana County Associated Sportsmen. "Sportsmen have wanted permanent protection of this entire area for a decade, but the smaller designation offered by Rep. Pearce fell short. It simply did not protect the lands sportsmen most wanted protection for. So after nearly a decade of Congress’ inability to act, we were relieved by the President’s monument designation."

Garrett VeneKlasen, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, said: "Places like the Sierra de Las Uvas and Potrillo Mountains are where we pass down core traditional values and outdoor traditions to our kids and grandkids, which is why hunters have been advocating for permanent protection of these areas for years. Unlike most who rarely visit these areas, sportsmen and other outdoors-oriented folks know what is there, and we know it is worth protecting, not for just us, but for all."

[Polling has shown](#) that more than 80 percent of Doña Ana County voters supported a national monument that included the Sierra de las Uvas, Robledo and Potrillo Mountains. A significant majority specifically wanted a larger national monument than one offered by Pearce that protected less land and failed to protect lands near Las Cruces most in need of permanent protection.

Hundreds of local community members, including sportsmen and business owners, attended a listening session last January with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich. A show of hands at the event found overwhelming support for the full-sized monument in the Senators’ legislation and now the President’s designation.

It is not surprising that Rep. Pearce prefers to protect less public land given his anti-public land stances in the past, but the sportsmen of New Mexico understand how valuable these lands are to our economy and our way of life.

And claims that the new monument designation will not benefit the southern New Mexico economy do not hold up. The actual experience of the communities around the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, established in 2013, have been [positive](#): a 40 percent increase in visitors in the first year and significant increases in gross receipts and tax revenue from visitors.

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