



May 19, 2014

For immediate release

Contact: John Cornell, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, (575) 740-1759

Southern NM sportsmen, businesses applaud Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks National Monument announcement

President Barack Obama's decision today to designate the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks National Monument marks the culmination of years of efforts by southern New Mexico sportsmen and women to protect important lands around Las Cruces for future generations to enjoy.

Hunters and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts began partnering with local businesses and residents years ago to encourage permanent protection for the natural resources of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region and draw visitors to the area. From the dramatic and iconic Organ Mountains to the wildlife-rich wilderness areas west of Las Cruces, the lands included in our newest national monument are important to sustaining both the local economy and longstanding outdoor traditions, said John Cornell of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

Eventually more than 300 businesses, veterans groups, faith leaders, elected officials, Native American tribes, ranchers and other community organizations joined sportsmen in expressing support for a national monument encompassing these public lands an easy drive from Las Cruces.

"We've been working on this for more than a decade," Cornell said. "Sportsmen, many of whom own local businesses, have been diligently reaching out to community leaders and elected officials to make permanent protection of these important lands a reality. We have all been committed because of what these lands and wildlife mean to us and will one day mean to our kids' outdoor opportunity and potential livelihood."

Lifelong Las Cruces sportsman Jim Bates added, "To many, this national monument effort has mainly been about protecting the iconic view Las Cruces residents and visitors enjoy on a daily basis. But for hunters and outdoorsmen like me, much more was at stake. We knew how much we stood to lose if the Potrillos, Robledos or Sierra de Las Uvas were covered in wind turbines or big box stores."

Sportsmen applauded the work of New Mexico's two senators, Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, who last year introduced a bill to designate the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (S. 1805). But with Congress so divided, supporters of the monument were hopeful that President Obama would act. A visit by Secretary Jewell earlier this year was a welcome sign and sportsman turnout at the public meeting was high.

Judging by the example of Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, the Las Cruces economy including sportsman-oriented businesses can expect to see an economic boost from this designation. "Permanent protection of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks will help ensure that my business has a strong foundation into the future," said Jacob Ellis, a taxidermist and owner of the Archery Hut in Las Cruces. "Today's designation will benefit not just businesses like mine, but the entire local economy by protecting hunting as well as grazing, historical sites and cultural treasures that everyone can enjoy."

For more information, contact:

John Cornell, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, (575) 740-1759

Joel Gay, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, (505) 573-4191

###