



The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
328 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

July 20, 2006

Dear Senator Domenici,

We are writing to you on behalf of the New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance (NMOHVA) and the BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) regarding your proposal to designate a new National Monument near Las Cruces, New Mexico.

NMOHVA is a statewide alliance of motorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts that promotes responsible OHV recreation through education, safety training, land conservation and access. NMOHVA works in cooperation with public and private interests to ensure a positive future for OHV recreation in New Mexico.

BRC is a national recreation group that champions responsible use of public and private lands, and encourages individual environmental stewardship. It represents over 10,000 individual members and 1,200 organization and business members, for a combined total of over 600,000 recreationists nationwide.

NMOHVA and BRC supports appropriate protection for the resources on public lands, including the prehistoric trackways found in the Robledo Mountains area near Las Cruces. The recently introduced bill, S.3599, seeking to establish the Pre-Historic Trackways National Monument, is not appropriate protection.

NMOHVA and BRC strongly urge you to re-consider the concept of a National Monument for the following reasons:

- The current Research Natural Area (RNA) provides adequate protection for the trackways.
- A Monument designation would jeopardize continuation of existing recreation use of the area including the Chile Canyon trail system by motorized recreation.
- The bill proposes increasing the 720 acre current Research Natural Area to a 5367 acre Monument. There is no justification for this 700% increase.
- The 1994 study does not propose Monument status as a requirement or even a recommendation for protection for either natural or human threats to the trackways.
- The proposal provides no funding for the BLM to staff or operate a Monument.
- The Monument proposal would remove or greatly diminish the influence of local New Mexicans and the local BLM agency's options for managing for the area.

- The area of the proposed 5367 acre Monument is no different from any other lands around Las Cruces. There is nothing special here which justifies making it a national Monument. The trackways area itself includes an open strip mine. It is anything but scenic. Making this a national Monument cheapens and degrades the concept of a Monument.
- Running a National Monument takes BLM money away from higher priority commitments. The Las Cruces BLM has to deal with problems much more important to local New Mexicans; illegal migrants dying on it ' s desert lands, meth labs, drug dealers, stolen cars etc. The entire New Mexico BLM has only 9 law enforcement officers to patrol over 11 million acres. Only a couple of those are in the Las Cruces office. The New Mexico BLM ' s budget has been reduced over 15% for each of the past 2 years.

The RNA management direction contained in the Mimbres Resource Management Plan mandates the BLM “ manage to protect, research, and interpret paleontological values. ” The language in the bill to establish the Monument states its purpose to be “ to conserve, protect, and enhance the unique and nationally important paleontological, scientific, educational, scenic, and recreational resources and values.” More words, probably more restrictions, but not a lot more protection. Both the current RNA and proposed Monument would be managed by the same federal land management agency. The bill establishing the Monument provides no funding for operations, staff or facilities.

The 1994 study report proposed a wide range of protection alternatives from both natural and human threats to the trackways. Not a single one of them proposed National Monument status or a dramatic increase to the protected area.

S3599 will certainly receive vigorous opposition from New Mexico residents, the motorized recreation and others who currently use the Robledo Mountains. The legislation is seen as a thinly veiled attempt, once again, by special interest groups to remove access to, and recreation on, lands historically used and enjoyed by the public. The New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance is actively engaged in efforts to preserve the historical recreational uses of the Robledo Mountains and the surrounding area and will vigorously oppose unfounded and ill-advised efforts to curtail those uses.

The failure to acknowledge the significance of the recreational resources in the area proposed for Monument designation reflects a disturbing lack of knowledge about existing uses and values of the area. This area is home to world class off-highway vehicle resources, including but not limited to routes designated and is permitted for Four Wheel Drive challenge events.

We look forward to meeting with your staff to discuss these concerns.

for

Joanne Spivack President, New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance 13170-B Central Ave, SE PMB #322 Albuquerque, NM 87123 505-238-5493

Brian Hawthorne Public Lands Director BlueRibbon Coalition 4555 Burley Dr., Suite A Pocatello, ID 83202 208-237-1008 ext 102