

Michael M. Cadena
Mayor

Nora L. Barraza
Mayor Pro Tem



Town of Mesilla, New Mexico

Carlos Arzabal
Trustee

Sam Bernal
Trustee

Jesus M. Caro, Jr.
Trustee

February 12, 2010

EMAIL COVER SHEET FOR

Testimony of Michael M. Cadena, Mayor, Town of Mesilla, New Mexico,
on S. 1689, the Organ Mountains- Desert Peaks Wilderness Act.

TO: testimony@energy.senate.gov
David_Brooks@energy.senate.gov
Dara_Parker@bingaman.senate.gov

FROM: mcadena@comcast.net

SUBJECT: Testimony of Michael M. Cadena, Mayor, Town of Mesilla, New Mexico,
on S. 1689, the Organ Mountains- Desert Peaks Wilderness Act presented
at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
held on February 15, 2010, in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Included herein are the following:

- Mayor Cadena's Statement.
- Letter, dated January 10, 2006, to Senator Domenici from Mayor Michael M. Cadena, regarding Wilderness Designation.
- Resolution 2006-07, Supporting Federal Legislation to Designate Permanent Wilderness Areas . . . in Dona Ana County. . . , adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Town of Mesilla on February 13, 2006.
- Resolution 2009-26, Endorsing the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act, adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Town of Mesilla on September 28, 2009.

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February 15, 2010

Senators Bingaman and Udall, other distinguished legislators and guests
My name is Michael Cadena, and I am the Mayor of the Town of Mesilla.

Mesilla has a solid history of support for preservation of open-space. For example, our citizen-driven 2004 Comprehensive Plan includes cluster housing design for new subdivisions on farmland, a concept which was later put into an ordinance. The Master Plan also calls for regional planning with local governments and private organizations to conserve agriculture and to establish an interconnected trail system, planning work which Mesilla continues today by participating in our local Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The Town's first direct involvement in what is now called "The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act" was a meeting in November 2005, with a federal congressional delegation, led by former Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico. The talk was about a proposal to designate permanent wilderness areas in Dona Ana County. A January 10, 2006, letter signed by the Mayor and a Resolution, dated February 13, 2006, followed the November meeting. They describe Mesilla's position in support of the initial proposal and include the request that Broad Canyon and the East Potrillo Mountains be included.

Mesilla's involvement continued in a series of meetings, facilitated by City of Las Cruces' staff, with all interested parties present. These meetings began the process of bringing together the proponents and the opponents of federal wilderness legislation. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act, introduced into the United States Senate on September 17, 2009, is the culmination of over four years of meetings and hard work by a lot of people to bring all parties to the table and to emerge with appropriate and reasonable compromises. Mesilla's Resolution, 2009-26, adopted on September 28, 2009, endorses the Act. It praises the foresight in moving to preserve natural and ecological values for our families, including watershed and air quality protection. It goes on to recognize the potential economic benefits for our community in the form of tourism dollars invested in recreational activities.

Throughout the four and a half years of consideration of Wilderness and National Conservation Area designations in Dona Ana County, Senators Bingaman and Udall have taken extraordinary measures to gather and incorporate the views and needs of those on both sides of Wilderness designation; and there has been no lack of community participation. It is time now to act, to move forward and pass The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Wilderness Act.

Thank you.

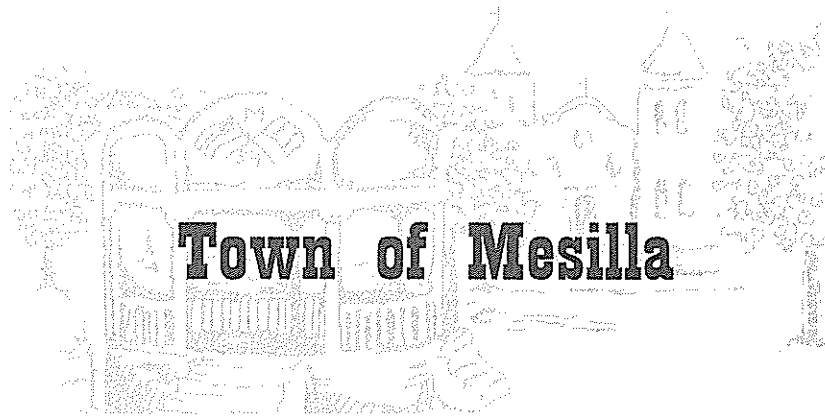
Mayor Michael M. Cadena



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Michael Cadena
Mayor



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January 10, 2006

Senator Pete Domenici
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Domenici,

The Board of Trustees of the Town of Mesilla is pleased to know that your office is interested in the designation of permanent Wilderness lands and a National Conservation Area in Dona Ana County, and we would like to share with you our thoughts from a community perspective. Your proposed legislation comes at an opportune time following the public release just last year of a "Vision for Countywide Open Space and Trail System" by the Citizens Task Force for Open Space Preservation, a document that was very well received. Then starting in October of 2005, and continuing on into the present, the Open Space and Trail Network has been at work selecting projects outlined in the "Vision" to implement. So the requests that follow are made with the goal in mind of linking your proposed legislation with existing efforts in Dona Ana County.

WILDERNESS DESIGNATION COMPONENT:

The residents of Dona Ana County can only benefit from the designation of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) as permanent Wilderness areas and we understand the rationale for releasing certain BLM lands that abut the US/Mexico border from the WSA designation. However, this will result in a net loss of wilderness lands in our County. To address this loss and to further the preservation goals of open space as outlined in the "Vision," we propose that the two areas listed below be included in the areas to be designated as permanent Wilderness. Both areas contain wilderness quality lands and are adjacent to the existing WSAs that you are considering moving to permanent Wilderness status.

1. The area identified on the attached map as "Broad Canyon area," and marked with the most northerly red arrow. The rationale here is to provide open space and trail connectivity between the Robledo and Las Uvas Mountains; and
2. The East Potrillo Mountains indicated on the attached map by the most southerly arrow. These mountains, with a different geology than the adjacent volcanic WSA, provide a variety of scenic and natural open space.

Again, using the "Vision" as a guide, we would also like to propose additional open space and trail preservation components for inclusion in the legislation. Regarding the

area composed of the Organ and Franklin Mountains currently designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and proposed for designation as a National Conservation Area (NCA) anchored by the Organ Mountains, we would like to see the following lands included in the NCA designation:

1. The expanded Organ Mountains Recreation Area along the western portion of the Organ Mountains,
2. The San Andres Foothills,
3. The Tortugas Corridor, and
4. The Dona Ana Mountains.

Each of these areas, marked on the attached map by the four red arrows to the east of the Rio Grande Valley, has significant scenic and educational value as well as providing connectivity and buffer protection. Another thought regarding buffer protection, we would like to see the boundary for the Organ Mountains NCA extended west from Baylor Pass Road to Weisner Road; otherwise a busy roadway will sit right at the edge of the foothills with no open space between the traffic and the natural habitat.

BLM LAND DISPOSAL COMPONENT:

Regarding the proposed BLM land disposal procedure in the legislation, we would ask that the time limit be removed and that the selection of lands to be disposed of be determined by and through the Resource Management Plan process already under way here in Dona Ana, Sierra and Otero Counties. This process works well to provide public education and outreach right here in the community of Dona Ana County.

Susan Krueger, the Deputy Town Clerk for the Town of Mesilla, is our contact person for this matter and she attended the meeting in November 2005, with Ron Dunton, Deputy State Director for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Dick Bouts from your Washington DC office, who received a copy of the "Vision" referred to above at this meeting. Please send along any pertinent information to Susan and she will share it with me. Finally, we thank you for providing us an opportunity to further the protection of open space in our community and we look forward to participating in a public dialogue on all the components of the proposed legislation.

Sincerely,



Mayor Michael M. Cadena

cc: Senator Jeff Bingaman
Representative Steve Pearce
Representative Heather Wilson
Representative Tom Udall

RESOLUTION 2006-07, A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO DESIGNATE PERMANENT WILDERNESS AREAS AND TO CREATE A NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA IN DONA ANA COUNTY AND TO USE THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN PROCESS FOR THE SELECTION AND DISPOSAL OF BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT LANDS

WHEREAS, The Town of Mesilla has a history of actions taken in support of having an interconnected open space and trail system in Dona Ana County such as, for example, passing Resolution 2005-10 in February 2005, recognizing "The Vision for a County-wide Open Space and Trail System" as a long-range regional planning tool and further, for example, by working with the Open Space and Trail Network to bring a Groundwork Trust to Dona Ana County to begin implementation of open space and trail projects identified in the "Vision"; and

WHEREAS, In the Town of Mesilla 2004 Comprehensive Plan goals, the Town addressed the need for designating open space areas within the Town limits both through zoning and through the use of cluster design in new subdivisions; and

WHEREAS, Also in the Town of Mesilla 2004 Comprehensive Plan goals, the Town committed to establishing partnerships with private organizations whose aim is open space and agricultural preservation as well as to discussing land use and development in Dona Ana County with the County and other local governments; and

WHEREAS, As follow up to Land Use Goal I g. in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, regarding discussions with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the preservation of land around Mesilla as open space, a letter was sent to the BLM during the public scoping period for the amendment of its 1993 Mimbres Regional Management Plan requesting consideration of a lease under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (RPPA) or annexation of particular BLM land immediately west of the Town of Mesilla; and

WHEREAS, A representative from the Town of Mesilla met with a representative of the federal Congressional delegation in November 2005, regarding proposed federal legislation to designate permanent wilderness areas and to dispose of BLM land in Dona Ana County; and

WHEREAS, At a regularly scheduled meeting on January 9, 2006, the Board of Trustees of the Town of Mesilla reviewed a letter to be sent to the Congressional delegation following up on that meeting, which contained several requests regarding the proposed federal legislation, including that new additional wilderness areas be added to the designation, that there be an increase to the area being considered for a National Conservation Area (NCA) around the Organ Mountains and that any disposal procedure for BLM lands included in any federal legislation follow the BLM Resource Management Plan process; and

WHEREAS, The County of Dona Ana, the City of Las Cruces, and the City of Sunland Park have recently taken public comment and passed resolutions regarding the need for public input and regional comprehensive planning prior to the introduction of federal legislation dealing with wilderness and NCA designations and BLM land disposal.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Trustees of the Town of Mesilla that:

We request that the federal Congressional delegation join together with the Town of Mesilla, the County of Dona Ana, the City of Las Cruces, the City of Sunland Park, the Village of Hatch and all other interested parties in a collaborative effort to consider and come to consensus on which lands to designate as wilderness and which lands to include in the National Conservation Area around the Organ Mountains before federal legislation is introduced; and

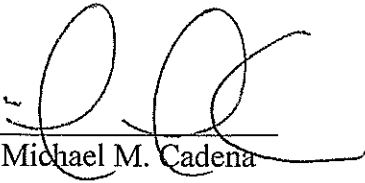
Further, since the disposal process would be more orderly if, prior to disposal, BLM lands in Dona Ana County were master planned in accordance with the existing County and ETZ Comprehensive Plans, we request that a stipulation be added to any federal legislation that this comprehensive planning process shall take place prior to the selection of BLM lands for disposal and prior to any disposal action; and

Further, in the interests of responsible growth that will enhance the quality of life for the residents of Dona Ana County and foster sustainable economic development, we request that the process defined in any federal legislation for the disposal of BLM lands in Dona Ana County be in strict accordance with the existing BLM Resource Management Plan process and sections 202 and 203 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) 43 USC 1712, 1713; and

Further, because the opportunity to designate wilderness lands does not happen often, we request that the Broad Canyon area, and the East Potrillo Mountains, both of which are wilderness quality areas and both of which are adjacent to the eight existing Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) currently being considered for permanent wilderness status, also be designated as permanent wilderness (these areas are mapped on Exhibit A, attached hereto and made a part of this Resolution); and

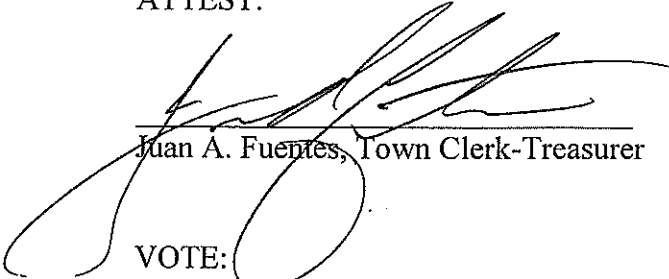
Further, in the interest of an expanded National Conservation Area (NCA) that will provide important natural and ecological values to our families and community, we request that the Organ Mountain Recreation Area along the west side of the Mountain, the San Andres Foothills, the Tortugas Corridor and the Dona Ana Mountains be included in the NCA designation (these areas are mapped on Exhibit A, attached hereto and made a part of this Resolution).

Resolved and approved this 13th day of February 2006.



Mayor Michael M. Cadena

ATTEST:



Juan A. Fuentes, Town Clerk-Treasurer

VOTE:

Mayor pro tem Alvillar: aye

Trustee Caro: aye

Trustee Dixon: aye

Trustee Pirtle: nay

Motion to approved carried.

RESOLUTION NO. 2009-26

**A RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE ORGAN MOUNTAINS – DESERT PEAKS
WILDERNESS ACT**

- WHEREAS**, Dona Ana County is fortunate to have a diversity of federal public lands within its boundary that are prized by our community for the quality of life they bestow; and
- WHEREAS**, these land provide significant economic benefit to our community in the form of tourism, influx of new residents and businesses and activities directly related to their use and enjoyment; and
- WHEREAS**, these lands provide high quality recreation and scenic view sheds, key to the identity and lifestyle enjoyed by residents of Dona Ana County; and
- WHEREAS**, these lands help provide many natural benefits including watershed protection, air quality protection and ecosystem balance; and
- WHEREAS**, a diversity of citizens, elected officials and community leaders believe that these lands are in need of federal protections to ensure they remain in their natural state in perpetuity; and
- WHEREAS**, protection of these lands will help ensure the long term quality of life for community residents, as well as the enhancement of our economy as a tourist destination and desirable location to live and operate a business; and
- WHEREAS**, in 2006, the communities of Las Cruces, Mesilla, Sunland Park and Dona Ana County endorsed the Citizens Wilderness and National Conservation proposal to protect these lands as federal Wilderness Areas, including a National Conservation Area in and around the Organ Mountains; and
- WHEREAS**, there has been extensive community discussion and compromises achieved to ensure that enactment of the Citizens Wilderness and National Conservation Area proposal would enable effective access, utilization and enjoyment of these public lands when protected as well as safeguard the ability of the livestock industry to operate leases within these public lands; and
- WHEREAS**, on September 17, 2009, senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall introduced The Organ Mountains – Desert Peaks Wilderness Act in Congress; and
- WHEREAS**, The Organ Mountains – Desert Peaks Wilderness Act seeks to secure federal protections for much of the Organ Mountains, the Portillo Mountains, the Sierra de Las Uvas Mountains, Broad Canyon and the Robledo Mountains as

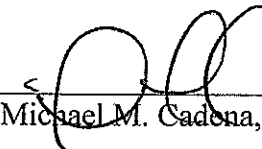
federal Wilderness Areas and the foothills of the Organ Mountains, the Dona Ana Mountains and parts of Broad Canyon as a National Conservation Area; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Mesilla strongly supports The Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks Wilderness Act and all of its components; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Mesilla greatly appreciates the leadership of Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall in working to secure the natural legacy of these prized public lands within Dona Ana County and for securing, along with that legacy, the identity, spirit and lifestyle that is critically important to current and future generations.

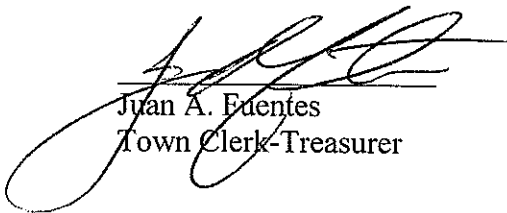
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees of the Town of Mesilla, New Mexico, to endorse The Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks Wilderness Act and to encourage all Members of the United States Congress and the New Mexico Congressional Delegation to support this legislation and to urge the President of the United States to sign it into law.

SO RESOLVED this 28th day of September, 2009.



Michael M. Cadena, Mayor

ATTEST:



Juan A. Fuentes
Town Clerk-Treasurer

VOTE:
Mayor pro tem Barraza: AYE
Trustee Caro AYE
Trustee Arzabal AYE
Trustee Bernal AYE