

Letter to the Editor of the Las Cruces Sun News

April 4, 2020

In the past year or longer, New Mexico Senators Heinrich and Udall conducted secret meetings to which only selected stakeholders in the *Wild and Scenic River Act Amendment* were invited, but we are all stakeholders. The amendment focuses on the Gila and San Francisco rivers, but also includes the Mimbres River and Las Animas Creek. The latter two are on the other side of the *Continental Divide*. Most of these rivers are in Wilderness areas and **are already protected**.

This *W&SR Act* amendment will begin kicking ranchers, farmers, **and miners** off river 'corridors' despite the promises to the contrary. Property owners will not be able to stay in business, because use of their property and water rights will be severely restricted. **Private land downstream is no barrier to enforcing this Act**. If Federal agents or managers decide that something on private property is affecting or may affect the W&S segments, the use of land within one-quarter mile of the high water mark on either side of river reaches and tributaries '**above and below**' designated segments will be regulated.

The resulting required **River Management Plan** and its **Plan Manager**, in addition to application of the *Endangered Species Act* will have the authority to restrict all commerce the entire length of named rivers and creeks and any tributaries connected to them **above or below** designated segments.

Working with the Forest Service from 1977 to 2014, I saw many examples of established criteria and regulations being disregarded in designating wild and scenic rivers, and roadless or wilderness areas. More regulations on public land will increase costs; requiring Forest Service personnel to prepare plans and enforce regulations. This will increase their paperwork load, cost millions of dollars and continue to keep them out of the woods and in their offices.

Environmentalists believe in Preservation – that living things and geology can remain in a constant, static condition. This is not possible, because all creation begins life, grows, ages, and dies. Even rocks change through wind and water action.

So, Preservation is not the answer - Conservation is. Forest Service policy was and should be based on Conservation, but with the influx of environmentalists among employees, it is changing to a **Preservationist ideology**. **The FS has pushed the *Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River* acts to back this false ideology keeping traditional users off the land and authorizing more restrictions on multiple uses. Currently, it is obvious that the Gila National Forest, has chosen one preferred use – recreation.**

This W&SR Amendment and its resulting Management Plan and Plan Manager will likely pull thousands of acres out of production. Recently, environmentalists went after the mines in Grant County. I believe mines, existing and proposed, are targeted by this Wild and Scenic River Act Amendment and could be shut down. In my opinion, evidence shows that our U.S. Senators and the U.S. Forest Service cannot be trusted. It is obvious they do not represent or respect their conservative constituents or those who traditionally work the land.

Respectfully,

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