



Mimbres Local
Farm & Livestock Bureau

April 16, 2020

Forest Supervisor
Gila National Forest
3005 E Camino Del Bosque
Silver City, New Mexico 88061

Dear Sir,

Attached are Petitions opposing the Wild and Scenic River inclusions and addition of more Wilderness on the Gila National Forest.

As signatories, these individuals asked me to respond to Forest Service requests for Forest Plan input. **We unequivocally oppose** the move that would designate more Forest Lands of the Gila National Forest as **Wilderness**. **We also oppose** designating the Gila River or any other waterway in the surrounding Counties that are impacted by Gila National Forest Lands as **Wild and Scenic Rivers**.

The reasons for our insistence that additional Wilderness is not desired are as follows:

1. Restricts Forest access of Wilderness acres to only those citizens who are athletic enough to hike or well-off enough to own horses.
2. Takes land out of production and effectively eliminates multiple use. Costs of running cattle in Wilderness is prohibitive.
3. Does not comply with the Healthy Forests Initiative promoted by Region 3 and nationwide by the U.S. Forest Service.
4. Changes resource management from conservation to preservation, which is not scientifically sustainable.
5. Will negatively affect our watersheds
 - a. Lack of thinning, logging, and grazing will encourage wildfire, causing more sedimentation in our streams and rivers
 - b. More sedimentation will harm aquatic life
6. Will negatively affect vegetative resources
 - a. Fuel and duff buildup ensure natural and man-caused fires will burn more intensely, sterilizing the soil to the detriment of grass, brush, and tree regeneration.
 - b. Resulting catastrophic wildfire endangers wildlife and people living in proximity to the area.
 - c. Unmanaged timber growth will increase density far beyond the normal several dozen stems per acre to 400 to 800 stems per acre, which dries up springs and lowers groundwater levels.
 - d. Large wildfires will increase in unmanaged wilderness and will invite increases in weedy species including juniper. Super-heated soils will become sterile, increasing run-off and sedimentation.



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7. Establishes unsustainable regulations that hamper small business owners, especially those who operate agricultural operations with narrow to no profit margins.
8. Puts small business owners and agricultural concerns like ranchers, loggers, and miners out of business – removes their source of income and livelihood.
9. Permanently changes the historic Hispanic and ranching culture of living off the land, by eradicating:
 - a. fuelwood harvesting to heat homes,
 - b. cutting of posts and poles for use in fencing
 - c. ability to access remote areas to hunt deer and elk or furbearing animals,
 - d. gathering of herbs and forest products for home, craft use, and other traditional uses.
 - e. grazing, by eliminating the ability to maintain dispersed water sources
 - f. wildlife, because they also use the tanks, springs and other water sources that ranchers have traditionally maintained.

The reasons we oppose Wild and Scenic Rivers are as follows:

1. Restricts the use of the waterway and surrounding land
2. Eliminates multiple use of waterway and surrounding land.
3. Establishes unsustainable regulations that hamper small business owners, especially those who operate agricultural operations with narrow to zero profit margins.
4. Puts small business owners and agricultural concerns like ranchers, loggers, and miners out of business – removes their source of income and livelihood.
5. This system results in management challenges for land managers that are unacceptable.

As noted, we oppose all alternatives because they negatively impact grazing, timber harvest, and mining with the addition of Wild and Scenic River rules and more Wilderness. These Alternatives will also have far reaching effects to private lands adjacent to the Forest and downstream.

Sincerely,

/s/ Don Luhrsen

Don Luhrsen
President
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