



The Honorable Secretary Ryan Zinke  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

July 24, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke,

As Hispanic elected and community leaders, we await your visit to beautiful Doña Ana County and southern New Mexico, a land immersed in culture, tradition, and Hispanic and Native history.

In Doña Ana County, you will find yourself traveling among the ancient homelands of the Jornada Mogollon, a prehistoric Native culture who inhabited a wide stretch of what is known as the Jornada del Muerto, one of the deadliest and harshest stretches of the ancient trading route, the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. On this humbling but beautiful terrain, the Mogollon thrived from 200 A.D. to 1500 A.D. by hunting elk, deer, turkey, small game, collecting wild plants and berries, and eventually, through primitive agriculture. The remnants of these prehistoric people live and breathe in the crevices, valleys, arroyos, mesas, mountaintops and canyons of the Robledo, Potrillo, Las Uvas, and Doña Ana mountains – otherwise known as the Desert Peaks. This history is evident in the hundreds of archaeological sites found in these mountain ranges – petroglyphs, pottery sherds, projectile points, pre-historic trails, and other priceless artifacts we now get to re-discover and experience.

Following the outward migration of the Mogollon, the Jornada del Muerto was subsequently inhabited by the Apache, Pueblo, and Piro-Manso-Tiwa people, who too sustained their cultures among the land and wildlife that the Chihuahuan Desert could provide. Among this harsh terrain, hard-fought battles were had for territorial control among Native tribes and eventually, among the Spanish and Native people. The tumultuous arrival of the Don Juan de Oñate expedition along the upper Rio Grande and the subsequent colonization of Native people throughout New Mexico and West Texas forged the creation of the Modern American Mestizo and melded two cultures that form our identity today.

Carrying with us the traditions of our family, our ancestors and the people who came before us, it is our responsibility today to protect these lands – the key to our history – for future generations. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument protects our history and honors our past. With this monument, we are able to tell and preserve our story for the next

generation, generate economic benefit for our communities, and instill pride in the communities we represent.

In a county where our families often struggle economically, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is a constant reminder of the resiliency of our ancestors and is a strong source of cultural pride for us as Hispanic people. We collectively represent those whose history still lives in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

We hope that you will agree with us that protecting every acre of Hispanic and Native history that lives in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is indeed a worthy and just cause, not just for us, but for all Americans.

Signed,

**Angelica Rubio**

New Mexico State Representative  
District 35  
Las Cruces, NM

**Diana Murillo-Trujillo**

Mayor  
Anthony, NM

**Nora Barraza**

Mayor  
Town of Mesilla  
Mesilla, NM

**Nayomi Valdez**

OLE New Mexico  
Las Cruces, NM

**Olga Pedroza**

City Councilor, District 3  
City of Las Cruces  
Las Cruces, NM

**Sarah Silva**

Executive Director  
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Las Cruces, NM

**Kasandra Gandara**

City Councilor, District 1  
City of Las Cruces  
Las Cruces, NM

**Maite Arce**

Founder, CEO & President  
Hispanic Access Foundation

**Gabe Vasquez**

Founder, NM Coordinator  
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project, Latino  
Outdoors  
Las Cruces, NM

**Isabella Solis**

County Commissioner and Chair, District 4  
Doña Ana County  
Las Cruces, NM

**Angel Peña**

Rio Bravo Regional Director  
Conservation Lands Foundation  
Las Cruces, NM

**John Vasquez**

County Commissioner and Vice Chair,  
District 5  
Doña Ana County  
Las Cruces, NM

**Eric L. Rodriguez**

Treasurer  
Doña Ana County  
Las Cruces, NM

**Javier Perea**

Mayor  
City of Sunland Park  
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**Mary Carter**

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**Norma Hartell**

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**Nicole Martinez**

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**Frank Rene Lopez**

Executive Director  
Ngage New Mexico  
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**Fernando Clemente**

President  
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