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Faith Community Praises Designation of Newest National Monument

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Permanently Protected

Washington, D.C. and Albuquerque – Faith communities around the country are celebrating the designation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks as the newest national monument announced by President Obama yesterday. This monument follows proposed legislation from New Mexico senators Heinrich and Udall late last year. Protection for this piece of creation was recently praised in a letter signed by seven regional faith leaders, and local, state, and national faith bodies applauded the announcement.

For years, southern New Mexicans have worked tirelessly to protect this beautiful landscape and ensure it is available for future generations to enjoy. Monument designation is a victory for those who cherish the area and those whose ancestry is rooted here. The faith community is only part of a large group of local and regional supporters including Native and Hispanic communities, businesses, sportsmen, and conservationists. Along with these community leaders, a recent poll found that 83 percent of Dona Ana County citizens supported a monument designation.

Rev. Donna McNeil, Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference of Churches stated, "The New Mexico Conference of Churches is grateful for the establishment of the Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks national monument by President Obama. Generations to come will be able to explore this region and stand in awe at God's work of creation. Additionally, the development of environmentally sustainable tourism is an important step in alleviating the deep poverty within the state."

Local pastor, Reverend Linda Mervine rejoiced in thanksgiving and celebration at the news, "Thank you President Obama for hearing the pleas of the locals here in New Mexico. We, our children, and generations to come will enjoy the Desert Peaks with thanksgiving on our lips and joy in our hearts."

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks national monument consists of four distinct mountain ranges which lay in Dona Ana County. The monument site also includes numerous historical and cultural sites encompassing the stories of many Americans from Prehistoric peoples to Native populations, and early pioneers to Hispanic settlers. President Obama will host a signing ceremony tomorrow.

For more information on the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and the faith community's response visit www.creationjustice.org