

December 16, 2013
Senator Tom Udall and Senator Martin Heinrich
Senate of the United States
110 & 702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall and Senator Heinrich:

As senior religious leaders serving New Mexico and religious organizations working with communities in the Land of Enchantment, we would like to thank you for your proposed legislation to protect the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region of New Mexico. As people of faith, we believe that God has granted us use of Creation, but along with this gift comes the responsibility to tend and care for the land. We must recognize that we are merely tenants on this planet, and we have been called to care for Creation so that future generations can live, thrive, and enjoy it just as we do. By protecting this area, we are ensuring this piece of God's gift will exist for many years to come.

Outdoor spaces have been central to religion and spiritual practices for generations, and the Organ Mountains region is no different. Few landscapes evoke a comparable sense of awe and wonder like mountains. Divine presence is often felt in these settings by countless pilgrims. Not only are these mountain ranges mammoth embodiments of God's power and love, but they provide a retreat from day to day distractions. Protection is necessary to promise peace-seekers from near and far a wonderful piece of terrain in which to pray, reflect, meditate, and rejoice.

This enchanting region exemplifies the best of what New Mexico has to offer: raw natural beauty, historical and cultural significance, and recreation opportunities for all. This land is rugged, unspoiled, and wondrous, all qualities that make New Mexicans proud and draw visitors to witness. The uniqueness of this area should be reason enough for protection.

We want to commend you for your dedication to New Mexico, Creation, and future generations as you continue to support the protection of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region. We sincerely appreciate the support you have shown and promise to continue the work to preserve this piece of God's gift right in New Mexico's backyard.

Thank you again and we look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Most Rev. Oscar Cantú, *Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces*

Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, *United Church of Christ Southwest Conference Minister*

Rev. Jim Gonia, *Bishop Rocky Mountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

The Right Rev'd Michael L. Vono, D.D., *Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande*

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, *Bishop of The New Mexico Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church*

Rev. Charlotte J. Hoppe, *Area Minister for Transition Tres Rios Area and Central Area of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest*

Bruce Darrington, *President of the Rio Grande Mission, Community of Christ*
Creation Justice Ministries
New Mexico Conference of Churches
Comunidades en Acción y de Fé (CAFé)