

Hispano Chamber of Commerce Endorses Wilderness

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A hot-button issue awaiting a stamp of approval from Congress is the topic of the Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces' new television advertisement. Known to many locals as simply, the "wilderness act," the Desert Peaks-Organ Mountains Wilderness Act seeks permanent federal protection for more than 340,000 acres of land in Doña Ana County. The Hispano chamber fully endorses this legislation.

The bill would create wilderness conservation areas in the county, including Broad Canyon, Robledo Mountains, Whitehorn, Cinder Cone, Alden Lava Flow, Potrillo

Mountains and Sierra de las Uvas.

Such preservation, the chamber believes, will continue to attract people from the state, country and world to enjoy the natural beauty of southern New Mexico. Some may come to partake in outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting and fishing, while others, such as bird watchers, will simply come to marvel at the area's wildlife. These attractions, coupled with existing activities such as ranching and grazing, will contribute to new economic activity, said chamber Vice President John Muñoz. "This protects our identity in southern New Mexico, and in the future, it will provide economic opportunity for small and merchant businesses to bring economic prosperity that revolves around tourism," he said. "The chamber

examined this issue carefully to make sure it provided a good balance, and this is the right thing for business."

The chamber's new one-minute commercial, being aired on various Comcast Cable channels including ESPN and CNN, features various scenic attractions in the area and a local family partaking in outdoor activities. It showcases some of the areas that would be protected from further development and heavy-road use under the new federal designations.

Rep. Jeff Steinborn, southern New Mexico director of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, said he's pleased with the new commercial.

"I think it's a well-done piece and

will hopefully go far in explaining why wilderness (designation) is important to our area," he said. "It really is about keeping things the way they are now."

For nature lovers looking to explore the sights and sounds of Doña Ana County's natural spaces, or those looking to volunteer for the cause, a local wilderness coalition offers various opportunities. At www.donanawild.org, visitors can sign up for the organization's newsletter or learn of upcoming events, get connected to regional and state legislators or voice their support or learn more about the proposed legislation.