



Dona Ana Soil and Water Conservation District

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May 8, 2013

Rob Bishop, Chairman
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environment
United States House of Representatives

RE: Support HR 995

Dear Congressman Bishop:

On behalf of Dona Ana Soil and Water Conservation District, the district most affected by federal land designations in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, please recognize that HR 995, introduced by New Mexico's District 2 Congressional Representative, Steve Pearce, protects the all-important customs and cultures of our community. In the years of debate leading up to this bill, this all-important aspect of the debate has been given lip service, and, yet, it is vital to the character and the continuity of matters that affect our soil and water resources.

Your committee must first recognize the current impact of the federal government in matters directly affecting our economy. Government, in all forms, owns and controls 87% of the footprint of our county. Our community is forced to live in a narrow corridor largely within the flood plain of the Rio Grande. That creates several things including most expensive residential alternatives (matters of flood plain construction), attrition of our farmland base, and elevated restrictions on upslope watershed management.

Implicit in all these land designation debates, the citizenry is facing increasing costs of living (highest cost grading and infrastructure installations), increased threat of matters of health and public safety, the loss of customs and culture (through the loss of the farming base), and absolute unknowns in terms of ability to manage upslope flood control measures. Only the Pearce bill recognizes the impact of yet more elevated access restrictions on federal lands.

The United States government is underwriting the loss of our resource base. We have no ability to relieve the pressure on farmland sales to residential development because we must live on an island within a sea of federal lands. We are also trying to conceptualize the capture of floodwaters (from the water settlement with Texas) and that requires upslope infrastructure installations. HR 995 supports that need.

Congressman Bishop, we know you recognize our plight. It is a model that is repeated across the West. We find ourselves constantly defending ourselves rather than building and creating a model that assures any future that reflects our past. We now have a 17% recruitment success for next generation stewards. We cannot create paths that alter that travesty. Our efforts should be devoted to multiple use opportunities rather than preservation obstacles that will do nothing to accomplish unattainable goals.

In summary, we are especially supportive of **Section 3. Water Rights.** and the language in **Section 6.** which allows motorized vehicle use for the "construction, maintenance, operation, or management of flood control or water conservation systems."

We urge the passage of HR 995 and appreciate this opportunity to comment.

Joe Delk, Chairman