

November 22, 2023

BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Allie Bettinger

Las Cruces District Office

Bureau of Land Management

1800 Marquess Street

Las Cruces, NM 88005-3371

Re: NEPA #: DOI-BLM-NM-L000-2022-0015-EA, Gila Lower Box Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP)

Dear Ms Bettinger:

We are writing you on behalf of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Aldo's Silver City Broadband, a non-profit, all-volunteer organization focusing on education about, and advocacy for public lands, especially wilderness. We are based in the heart of the Gila/Aldo Wilderness regions, and are an affiliated chapter of a national organization headquartered in Durango, CO, with over forty chapters nationwide. Our grassroots organization, led by women, works to preserve and protect wilderness and wild lands.

Aldo Silver City Broadband currently partners with the Gila National Forest to monitor exclosures along the major river systems for trespass cattle. We file survey reports with the Forest Service on our monitoring activities and follow up when action is needed by the Forest Service. We know that Land Management Agencies don’t always have the staff and funding to conduct all of the necessary monitoring on the lands that they are responsible for. We would like to meet with you sometime soon to share strategies and ideas based on our experiences with grazing monitoring.

We are writing to thank you for the opportunity to provide early input into the creation of a Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) to better help manage the recreation resources in the Gila Lower Box area. The draft Environmental Assessment provides a good overview of the recreational and environmental resources in the area, and the three action alternatives you have developed.

After reading through the draft EA, we think that Alternative B (Proposed RAMP) provides additional primitive recreation development that could decrease impacts from uncontrolled dispersed camping, and protects natural resources, especially the Gila’s immensely important riparian corridors.

The EA details all the actions that the BLM could take to implement a successful management plan for the area. What is essential to the success is the commitment of the BLM to carry out the plan, including enforcement of motor vehicle prohibitions, and keeping fences functional to reduce trespass cattle grazing. The management plan should include specific annual tasks to accomplish timely and meaningful management activities and monitoring, tied to the annual budget, so that a year or more does not go by without attention to problems and issues.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Denise Smith and Marcia Stout
Aldo's Silver City Broadband Leaders
aldosgob@gmail.com