

Statement for the Record
Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior

House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

H.R. 491, To Modify the Boundary of the Cibola National Forest

February 3, 2012

The Department of the Interior appreciates the opportunity to present its views on H.R. 491, a bill that would expand the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico by transferring administrative jurisdiction to the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) of a parcel of land, called the Crest of Montezuma, currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Department of the Interior supports the legislation's transfer of administrative jurisdiction.

Background

At an elevation of approximately 7,000 feet above sea level, the 917-acre parcel known as the Crest of Montezuma is adjacent to the northern boundary of the Cibola National Forest. The area has high scenic qualities and offers recreational opportunities for the growing population of north-central New Mexico. The BLM's Rio Puerco Field Office currently manages this parcel for recreational uses such as hiking and bird watching.

The New Mexico offices of the BLM and the Forest Service periodically discuss opportunities to adjust boundaries to improve the management of Federal land in order to manage parcels more effectively and efficiently on the ground. Through these discussions, the Crest of Montezuma was identified as a parcel that would fit efficiently under Forest Service administration. We look forward to continuing our work with the Forest Service to explore opportunities to provide for more efficient and effective management of BLM and Forest Service lands.

During the 111th Congress, the House Natural Resources Committee favorably reported legislation (H.R. 5388) after adopting an amendment in the nature of a substitute that addressed concerns raised by the Department of the Interior about the introduced bill. H.R. 491 is identical to the relevant provisions of H.R. 5388, as reported by the Committee.

H.R. 491

H.R. 491 directs the Secretary of the Interior to transfer to the Forest Service administrative jurisdiction of the Crest of Montezuma, which is adjacent to Forest Service-managed National Forest System lands (the Cibola National Forest) but isolated from other BLM-managed lands. The BLM supports this transfer.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of the transfer of administrative jurisdiction under H.R. 491.