



Albuquerque Road Runners Club

P.O. Box 20011

Albuquerque, NM 87154

abqroadrunners.com

A 501(c)3 organization as an affiliate of Road Runners Club of America

January 30, 2021

Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Debra Haaland
United States House of Representatives
1421 Longworth HOB
Washington DC 20515

Re: Restore The La Luz Trail Run - Sandia Mountain Wilderness

Dear Senator Heinrich and Representative Haaland:

I write for myself, joined by Kurt Coonrod, President of Albuquerque Road Runners Club ("ARR"), to request your advice and assistance to restore the La Luz Trail Run ("LLTR") to its historic place among America's great trail runs and in the life and lore of New Mexico.

On May 1, 2020, the Sandia Ranger District ("District") of the Cibola National Forest sent a letter to Jeffrey Williams, the Race Director of ARR's La Luz Trail Run. This letter denied a permit request submitted by Mr. Williams on behalf of ARR to conduct the 2020 LLTR, a permit that had been routinely granted by the District for *fifty-four* years, including for *forty-one* years since creation of the Sandia Mountain Wilderness ("SMW").

We fully understand and appreciate that there are far greater problems involving the pandemic and its horrific effects on the country that rightly command your attention. Some day, in what we all hope will be the not too distant future, a more normal life will return. When it does, we urge that the great tradition of this healthy and life affirming event should be part of what restores and revitalizes our community and our State. It is in this spirit and with this hope that we write to you now.

The District explained its decision: despite routinely issuing a permit for forty-one years to cross the SMW, it felt it could not do so in 2020 without legislation because the LLTR was inconsistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964 (“Act”) as it is (1) a commercial activity, and (2) a competitive event. A copy of its letter is attached as Exhibit 1.

The District cited no adverse impact to the SMW nor did it cite any adverse impact to any other users. There has been no adverse impact in forty-one years of the LLTR in the SMW.

District personnel have been unfailingly professional, courteous and cordial. They told ARR that they would like to find a way forward which allows LLTR to continue but believe they are limited by their understanding of the Act and its regulations. We include the Acting Forest Supervisor and the District Ranger for copies of this letter and materials and pledge our cooperation to find a way forward.

If legislation is necessary to restore the LLTR, we respectfully request that you introduce it in the Congress and urge your colleagues to pass it.

We believe, however, that the LLTR complies with and promotes the intent and spirit of the Act and that the Run can be resumed and conducted across SMW under existing law and regulations:

1. The LLTR is a permitted “existing use and activity” under legislation settling the Sandia Pueblo land dispute, the 2003 T’uf Shur Bien Preservation Act.
2. Assuming the LLTR is a commercial activity, which stretches the ordinary meaning of the term, commercial activities are not prohibited in Wilderness by the Act or regulations. They are permitted so long as they are proper for realizing the *recreational* or other wilderness purposes. The Act properly prohibits commercial *enterprises*. No one wants a commercial vending operation permanently located in a Wilderness. Commercial *activities*, however, occur in Wilderness throughout the United States all the time; and
3. Nothing in the Act or the Code of Federal Regulations prohibits competitive events in Wilderness. The prohibition appears only in Forest Management Plans. Competitive events, including the LLTR have been deemed compatible with the intent and spirit of the Act and have occurred in Wilderness for decades.

For your convenience, we have set forth additional information in a detailed Appendix A attached, A History of the La Luz Trail Run - An “Existing Use and Activity” That Promotes the Intent and Spirit of the Wilderness Act In The Sandia Mountain Wilderness.

As we emerge from this perilous time, our State and our entire country need healthy, positive, life-affirming events to refresh our souls and to help us to a brighter future. Restoring the historic LLTR will give our area a much-needed boost.

We are eager to provide you with additional information and assistance as you may request.

We respectfully urge you to advise us and to take the lead in bringing the La Luz Trail Run back to its long time place in the life and culture of this area.

Respectfully,

Norm Gagne
1007 Ridgecrest Dr SE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87108
(505) 480-4374
nlgagne1@gmail.com

Kurt Coonrod
President, Albuquerque Road Runners Club
PO Box 20011
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87154
(505) 239-9010
president@abqroadrunners.com

cc: Bradley Tuberville, Acting Forest Supervisor
Crystal Powell, District Ranger, Sandia District
Cibola National Forest
2113 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113

Additional cc:
Senator Heinrich
400 Gold Avenue SW
Suite 1080
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

Representative Haaland
100 Gold Avenue SW
Suite 206
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102