

Current uses in or near the monument will face constant court challenges.

Monument proponents make their position clear in what they want with this statement from their website:

Increasing population numbers, paired with the growth of off-road vehicles (ORV's) as a hobby have become threats to the preservation of Southern New Mexico's wild places.

Notice that they do not address the trackway issue, just New Mexico's wild places. This is exactly the same rhetoric that the land closure advocates are using to justify trying to lock up over a half a million acres of Doña Ana County as wilderness.

- They will engage the BLM in court battles before the ink is dry after passage of this bill to close all trails in the monument as they did with the monuments created by President Clinton.
- They also want to shut down the rock quarry, which led to these discoveries.

They will use every legal trick in their arsenal to close these trails.

What Can You Do?

Senators Bingaman and Domenici have refused to listen to or review the evidence that this is nothing but a land grab. Maybe a flood of letters, emails, or calls will convince them to investigate what the bill really is.

If we cannot get our message to the Senators, our best shot is to keep a similar bill out of the House of Representatives. You must contact Congressman Steve Pearce (R-NM) and ask him to not support a House equivalent of S.275. Tell him **you do not feel that any monument is needed**, but if he feels that he must introduce a monument bill in the House, that it should only encompass the discovery site and no more than several hundred acres around that site. Also, ask him to ensure that the presently operating quarry continues to operate.

Senator Domenici: <http://domenici.senate.gov/> (website email contact.)
Senator Bingaman: <http://bingaman.senate.gov/> (website email contact.)

Congressman Steve Pearce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6316 Fax: (202) 225-4975
Email him through his website at:
<http://pearce.house.gov/>

ALSO, contact the Senators from your state and ask them to vote against S275! Let them know that you treasure this area as it is.

Proposed National Monument Threatens the Chile Challenge!

The Chile Challenge trail system is threatened with closure by Senate bill 275 that Senator Bingaman (D-NM) recently introduced. This bill will create a new 5,300 acre National Monument that completely encompasses the trails in the Robledo Mountains. In 1987, an amateur fossil collector excavated and removed tons of pre-dinosaur trackways discovered about a mile north of the Chile Challenge Trails.



The trackways are not from big dinosaurs. they are typically hard to see, tiny tracks. Do these micro tracks justify a national monument?

On the surface, the bill is to protect the fossilized tracks. You decide if that is really the case or just a massive land grab:

- All the discovered trackways have been removed to various museums across the country.
- Digging stopped because it became impossible to continue.
- Twenty years of continuous research has failed to discover any new trackways of that significance.
- Only small insect and lizard like trackways have been found since 1987.
- The discovery site was less than one acre, yet the bill calls for 5,300 times that amount of land. There is no justification for this increase.
- Huge amounts of taxpayer money will be wasted trying to remove hundreds of feet of overburden to excavate more speculated trackways.

Who is this area significant to?

A 248 page report done under contract with the Smithsonian Institution in 1994 made one single statement referring to the trackway discovery site as... “one of the most scientifically significant Early Permian tracksites in the world.”

- The report also clarified that it was only talking about the discovery area when that statement was made.
- Although monument proponents insist this is a world-class fossil find, only four researchers have come to investigate the site since 1994.
- The BLM's own paleontologists haven't even investigated the potential sites listed in the 1994 report.

Apparently it's not all that significant to the rest of the world!

Is monument protection needed?

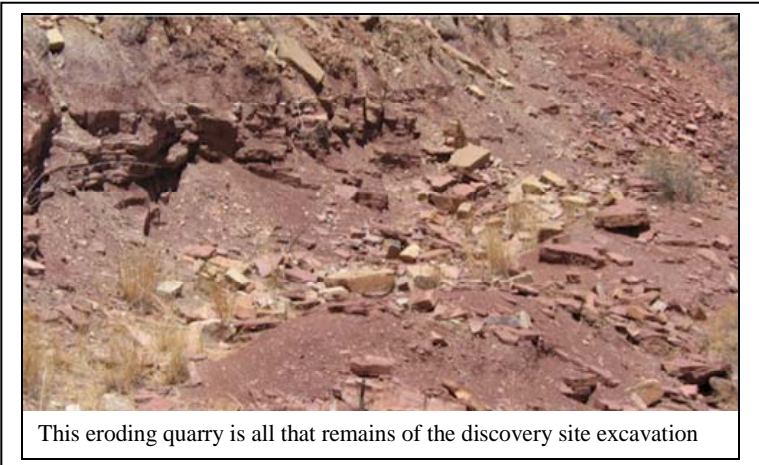
Proponents claim that these “buried treasures” need protection from OHV's, theft, vandals, and the nearby quarry.

- The 1994 report recommended protection, but not national monument designation.
 - The BLM is currently protecting the site with a Research Natural Area (RNA) designation.
 - Current Federal law also prohibits the removal of any tracks.
- The Department of Interior recently recommended against monument designation.
- As “buried treasures”, any speculated, buried trackways are already protected by being buried under hundreds of feet of rock and can only be exposed through excavation.
 - Exposure to the elements destroys the tracks, so they must be removed once they are uncovered.
- Is it protection or exploitation that is being sought?



Support for this bill is marginal at best.

During the week of August 14 – 19, 2006, the Las Cruces Sun News ran an informal poll asking readers if they supported the proposed national monument. Over 3000 people responded with 74.5% voting against it.



This eroding quarry is all that remains of the discovery site excavation