



My Turn

Dear potential heroes of Taos

MANDY STAPLEFORD

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As we residents know, Taos is special. It's so special in fact, that millions of people from all over the world have traveled here to enjoy our exceptional, unspoiled landscapes. This means millions of much needed dollars that flow into our town and our state.

Imagine if we as a community consistently ban together as a "residential task force" of sorts and demand protection of this beautiful part of the country. Organizations like Taos Friends United and The Taos Land Trust are essential for this kind of preservation.

Imagine if, because of the success of our efforts, we end up being one of the few remaining communities in America that has been thoughtfully developed with the environment as a priority. This will only lead to millions of more tourists wanting to experience what we protected and perhaps their communities did not.

This is about intelligent, long-term planning for all of us.

A healthy environment is good for plants, animals, people, real estate values and the fiscal bottom line in general. Unlike the addition of another big box store, open land and healthy forests are part of what makes Taos unique and worth visiting.

Currently there is legislation on the table to permanently protect 46,000 acres of the Columbine Hondo Area Wilderness. It is the headwaters of the Hondo River and Red River.

When you hike the Italianos trail, you are in this wilderness. When you admire the river flowing as you are going to the Taos Ski Valley, this wilderness makes that possible.

This is an important watershed area as well as a beloved recreational area and the home to countless wild plants, trees and wildlife.

You can contact Sen. Jeff Bingaman: (202) 224-5521 and U.S.

Rep. Ben Ray Luján: (202) 225-6190 with your thoughts on this issue.

Let's be honest, permanently protecting this area and others like it is also just the right thing to do. Period. Not protecting the world we live in is criminal in nature. We need clean air, clean water and a connection to nature to live healthy lives. Once it's gone, it's gone forever.

Mandy Stapleford is a resident of Arroyo Seco.