

## My Turn

### **‘Nothing to celebrate about national monument’**

A.M. Martinez

*The Taos News*, 6/27/2013

The June 20 edition of *The Taos News* ran a story on the recent visit to Taos by Sierra Club director Michael Brune. The story was about Brune “celebrating” the establishment of the so-called El Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

I noted several statements attributed to Brune and Questa Mayor Esther Garcia. I write to rebut and clarify some of their comments and to offer a Hispanic perspective from someone who is from Taos County and who is from a Hispanic Land Grant community.

*The Taos News* quoted Mayor Garcia as saying, “The Land Grant people were behind it.” With all due respect to Mayor Garcia, I strongly disagree with her assertion.

A majority of Hispano Land Grant community members — including me — were and are against this so-called national monument. There are many reasons, but among the most important are because the environmentalists and their liberal politician friends who were pushing this pet project of the environmentalists did not include most of the Hispanic Land Grants —and they did not include most of the Hispanic citizens of Taos County and Northern New Mexico — during their campaign to have this area designated as a monument.

Most of the Hispanic people of Northern New Mexico — those who belong to the land grants and those who do not — were left out of the discussion process prior to this area being designated a monument. The majority of the Hispano people of Northern New Mexico were not even asked our opinions and frankly, I don’t think the environmentalists and their politician friends wanted to hear from us anyway.

Maybe a few land grant members supported it, but a majority of the Hispano Land Grant community members in Northern New Mexico did not support this project. The most important reason that a majority were against this project is because the politicians in Washington, D.C., still have not returned even one acre to the Hispano Land Grants in Northern New Mexico even though the U.S. Constitution and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo protect the lands of the Hispano Land Grant communities of New Mexico.

It is wrong for liberal politicians like Sen. Tom Udall, who supposedly “represents” New Mexico in the Senate, to be pushing these pet projects of the environmentalists here in Northern New Mexico while the Hispanic people of Northern New Mexico still have not had any of our land grant lands returned to us.

Tom Udall has not helped the Hispanic families and communities of Taos County and Northern New Mexico one bit. Sen. Udall has not tried to help the Hispanic people of Taos County and Northern New Mexico in regaining even one acre of our Hispano Land Grant lands since he's been in the Senate. In my opinion, Sen. Udall should resign from the Senate and become a full-time lobbyist for the environmentalist movement, because he's basically doing that already, except on the taxpayers' dime.

Sen. Udall is up for reelection next year and I hope the Hispanic people of Northern New Mexico will remember he has not helped our Hispanic families and communities — including the Hispano Land Grant communities — one bit.

I don't care if you are a Democrat (which I used to be) or a Republican or an Independent, I strongly urge the Hispanic people of Northern New Mexico to vote against Tom Udall because we will never get ahead with liberal politicians like him "representing" New Mexico.

Finally, as to Michael Brune's comments, the Sierra Club director said that he was "celebrating" this new monument called the "el Rio Grande del Norte." My response to Brune and to all environmentalists is simple: remember that you and your organizations are hurting local small town communities across America with your extremist environmental agendas.

Many of these small towns are made up of small ethnic communities with their own unique and distinct cultures and histories — communities such as the Hispanos of New Mexico who have lived here in Northern New Mexico for more than 400 years. Mr. Brune, you might be celebrating but what you and your organization are doing is hurting small local communities across America, including here in northern New Mexico.

There is nothing to celebrate about the "El Rio Grande del Norte." It will go down in history as a monument to special interest politics, a monument to the anti-Hispanic agenda of some environmentalists and liberal politicians and a monument to bigger government and more government waste.

*A.M. Martinez, of Taos, is the editor and publisher of [HispanoNewMexico.com](http://HispanoNewMexico.com) .*