

My Turn

Preserving what we have

John MacArthur

The Taos News, 2/11/2016

Ever since moving to Taos 45 years ago, I have been drawn to the high places. For many years my wife Pam and I have ridden our horses on the trails of the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests, and particularly in the Pecos Wilderness.

We are always affected by the quietness, solitude, stunning grandeur, and wildness of our public lands. If we have any spiritual connections, they are here in the high mountain forests and ridgelines.

Pam and I spend a lot of time just knocking about on our horses, exploring new places and vistas. Other people like hiking, hunting and fishing. We all gather firewood, pinon, herbs, vigas, etc. One of my particular attractions is for the old trails, many of which are pre-historic trails or just game trails from time out of mind. I am fascinated by how first animals, and then man have found the most efficient ways through the rugged and forbidding topography. We, and the horses, also really enjoy and appreciate all the little streams that run out of the high cirque valleys and almost every canyon, all contributing to the watersheds that become the Canadian, Pecos, and Rio Grande rivers. These streams are the foundations of all life in the mountains, as well as the communities in the valleys below. There is something incredibly special here for all of us.

I have always taken the National Forests and Wilderness's existence more or less for granted, and appreciate very much the executive and legislative efforts it took to create them over the last 100 years. As such, I have been appalled and angered by the recent attempts to take control of them from the federal government, and hand our public lands over to individual state land offices. That is why I have joined my neighbors to support the efforts to safeguard these areas as Wilderness and Special Management Areas (Nov. 17, 2015 *The Taos News* article re: the Pecos Wilderness). The Pecos Wilderness clearly needs to be expanded to include more of the high fragile valleys and stream headwaters that are not currently within its boundaries, as well as to have a protective Special Management Area surrounding it, that would include other traditional and recreational uses.

It is time to come together and agree how best to preserve what we have.

John MacArthur has lived and worked in the Taos area for 45 years. He is involved with the Acequia del Monte del R'o Chiquito in Talpa, where he lives.