



Graphic by Chris Borden

SAVE OTERO!

www.saveotero.org

Friends of Otero
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SECTION OF OTERO CANYON TRAILS CLOSED

Mountain bikers in the Otero Canyon area, west of Albuquerque, discovered a Kirtland Air Force Base trail closure sign on the morning of November 10, 2003. The sign states, “Danger: Live Weapons Firing Ranges. Do not enter without permission of the installation commander. Violators will be prosecuted.” This sign, erected at the beginning of a trail built within the last 5 years with US Forest Service knowledge, is located at the intersection of the trail and Forest Road 530.

This trail closure has effectively closed the door on the public’s alternative fence proposal in whole despite its endorsement by Congresswoman Heather Wilson, Congressman Tom Udall, Senator Jeff Bingaman, Bernalillo County, The City of Albuquerque, The Village of Tijeras, and over 1800 individuals who have signed the Friends of Otero online petition. This marks the first response from KAFB since the Public Meeting on June 23rd and the closure of the public comment period on July 16th. Based on this response, Friends of Otero is questioning the base’s willingness to work with the public on this issue that has proven to be of great interest to residents of and tourists to New Mexico.

KAFB claims that this portion of land is located in the remote reaches of their M-60 Firing Range. Previously KAFB had claimed a need for closure of this land due to Homeland Security issues, and more recently Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). However, KAFB had not addressed any safety precautions with

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recreationists in Otero Canyon up until the June 23rd, 2003 Public Hearing in which nearly 600 Otero

Canyon supporters attended. KAFB had worked with the public in the early 1990's and subsequently dropped any attempts to close off this land at that time. The previous attempts by KAFB did not address the newfound safety concerns stemming from the M-60 Firing Range.

This section of trail is nationally recognized and a valued part of the Otero Canyon Trail System. Tourist visits to this trail network contribute to the community of Tijeras, NM and its closure could impact the village's economy. The trail leads to a popular view at the former US Forest Service fire tower, which has been in existence since the 1930's and is considered the crown jewel of the Otero Canyon Trail System. Access to the fire tower is now prohibited because of this action by KAFB.

A photograph of the sign is included below:



For more information on the Otero Canyon issue, please visit www.saveotero.org.

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