

Whites Peak Editorial

This letter is in reference to the land swap (swindle) being carried out by our New Mexico Land Commissioner Pat Lyons and four ranchers in the Ocate Whites Peak area. These lands have been used for hunting, fishing, hiking, wood gathering, family gatherings, recreation and survival by Hispano and Native American families for hundreds if not thousands of years.

Based on our review of the documentation we have read and we also heard the transcripts of the meeting held in the Attorney General's office on January 7th, 2010, it is clear to us that this is a land swap that is being carried out in bad faith against our Hispano and Native American communities that surround Whites Peak and that also make up the large majority of the population that surround this part of our State.

It is clear that this land swap (swindle) is being conducted in a very secretive, private and discrete manner between Commissioner Lyons, the UU Bar Express Ranches, the Stanley Ranch, the CS Cattle Co, and the Bill Galloway Ranch. This land swap is designed only to benefit these ranchers who already own the majority of the lands in Ocate, their associates and business partners and who knows who else in this transaction is benefitting greatly from this SWEET HEART land deal being arranged for these ranchers.

It is exactly this kind of conduct that has the majority in our state questioning the ethical and moral conduct of our elected officials and we demand that this back door deal be stopped immediately!! This land swap (swindle) has not been conducted in a public manner with regard to the majority population that is our Hispano and Native American communities that surround these lands for well over 200 miles.

You are exchanging over 14,000+ State of New Mexico beautiful and pristine public trust lands in exchange for 9,650 acres of flat mostly barren land from these four private ranches. This is outrageous!!!!

This land swindle is reminiscent of the Santa Fe Ring operation that is responsible for stealing millions of acres of lands, land grants, ranches and homes from Hispano families since New Mexico became a U.S. Territory in 1848. This operation continued when New Mexico became a State in 1912 and unbelievably, this continues to this day obviously. These swindles are in direct violation of the Treaty of Guadalupe - Hidalgo signed in 1848.

We believe that anyone and everyone should be able to access these public lands and use them as a means of survival as we always have for thousands of generations before us, at the present time and for many, many future generations. This philosophy is fundamental and central to our culture and our community. In short, these lands are a gem of beauty and survival for all to appreciate God's country.

As I was listening to the transcripts of your briefing to the Attorney General's office as well as a few folks from the Ocate area, you often commented "This land swap makes these ranches more valuable....

Then one of the residents of Ocate asked a question about the validity of what you were presenting and you told him "We don't need any Wise Asses around here....can somebody call the police on this guy".

Land Commissioner Lyons, is this the way you conduct business with our taxpayer dollars? Is this conduct your classification of an "open door policy" you continuously referred to during this briefing?

Commissioner Lyons, we will not sit and allow this land swindle to be carried out by you, your office and these ranchers. You will be challenged to the fullest extent of the law and be held fully accountable for these acts.

We DEMAND that you stop these land swaps (swindle) immediately in the name of public law and fiduciary management of our lands. This is malfeasance of our public lands at the highest levels of our State government. This conduct and these land swaps will be challenged to the fullest extent of the law.

Ralph Arellanes

Chairman, Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico

NM LULAC District 1 Director

National LULAC Civil Rights Commission

Honorable Gary King
Attorney General of New Mexico

December 10th, 2009

Dear Attorney General King,

First of all I want to wish you and your family a happy, safe and blessed New Year in 2010. As we turn the page to a new year in 2010, I want to thank you and your family for all the wonderful years of public service you and your family have dedicated to New Mexico and particularly to New Mexico's Hispano Community.

I attended the Memorial services in Moriarty for your father held in November and it was a very moving and memorable service. Your parents lifetime of public service is something we all will cherish and appreciate as a strong sense of pride for our entire state, for many, many years to come. We will all miss Bruce and Alice King for many years to come.

As you are aware, I am the Chairman of the Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico, I also serve as the District 1 Director for LULAC and I am a member of the National LULAC Civil Rights Commission. The Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico is a coalition of over 50 Hispano organizations across New Mexico to include local, State and National organizations including LULAC. Collectively, we represent over 50,000 New Mexicans in our membership and thousands more from our National organizations across the country.

Dr. King, I am writing you to express our complete outrage and anger at the prospect of this land swap between the State of New Mexico and 4 wealthy ranchers in Northern New Mexico - the Stanley Ranch and the UU Bar Ranch making up 2 of the 4 in this deal.

We are grateful for your leadership and the leadership of your Chief Deputy Attorney General Albert Lama for stepping up and holding back this so called land swap (more like a land swindle of the highest order) until more clarification about these "Appraisals" are provided.

There is no question that State Land Commissioner Pat Lyons has been working hand in glove and extremely close with these 4 ranch owners and not at all with the broader communities that surround these lands. This is the kind of political underhanded and back door activity that leaves the public to highly question the intention of our political leaders.

Land Commissioner Pat Lyons has negotiated a "deal" with these ranchers to hand over 14,000+ acres of prime New Mexico Trust Lands in exchange for 9,650 acres of ranch property. This first exchange would give the ranchers 7,206 acres and New Mexico would get 3,336 acres. The ranchers would get prime hunting and fishing land that they will surely profit from in the future and New Mexico will get flat lands that certainly do not have the same value or potential as Ocate Whites Peak lands have.

Just looking at this land swindle from a mathematical standpoint is bad enough but we also have to consider the kind of land New Mexico is giving up to these ranchers.

Ocate and Whites Peak have served as a sacred hunting, fishing, wood gathering and sight seeing site for New Mexican's for centuries. The land is rich with elk, deer, wild turkey and various other wildlife. It has served as a refuge for northern New Mexico's Hispano and Native American families long before these lands were part of the United States of America.

I grew up in Las Vegas, New Mexico. I remember these lands playing an instrumental role for families and has fed thousands of people for many, many generations. Hunting in the great Ocate mountains for northern New Mexico is more than a sport, it is as much a part of our cultural fabric as our language, our music, our names and our identity.

I remember many families, my family included, that would not have had a roast on the table or hamburger meat in the refrigerator had it not been for the elk or deer we were lucky enough to catch during hunting season. Hunting in Ocate very often meant, and still means whether or not a family will have meat in their freezer for the winter and most of the year.

Ocate and Whites peak are surrounded by Hispano families and Native American families. I would easily say that 85% - 90% of the population surrounding this land for a radius of 200 miles is Hispano and Native American. Whites peak is the Epi-Center, the heartland of hunting and fishing for northern New Mexico's families.

The median income for a full time working Hispano in New Mexico is \$14,800 per year. Northern New Mexico very much represents this reality. The counties surrounding Whites peak are some of the poorest counties in the country. When one is trying to feed a family on this kind of income, believe me, hunting is much more than a sport. It is really survival.

To allow this land to be exchanged to these wealthy 4 ranchers will be equivalent to robbing the stakeholder community, New Mexico's Hispano and Native American families and our culture away from us. This is an outrage of the highest order and will affect northern New Mexico's cultural fabric for generations to come.

How can State Land Commissioner Pat Lyons even begin to see the equity here? Has he gone out and actually discussed this with the public and held public meetings on this matter? Is he really doing what is best for Northern New Mexico and New Mexico as a whole or simply doing what is best for Pat Lyons and these 4 wealthy ranchers?

We are talking about what is in the best interest for thousands of New Mexico families to include past and future generations versus what is in the best interest of 4 wealthy ranchers. This is an unbelievable land swap (swindle) that is reflective of the Santa Fe

Ring operation that stole millions of acres from Hispano families after New Mexico became a U.S. Territory in 1848.

It's obvious what these 4 wealthy ranchers are planning to do with this land rich in wildlife. Once they gain possession of these lands, they are simply going to run a hunting outfitter business and sell elk hunting licenses to other wealthy people for \$20,000 - \$30,000 a piece. They will be profiting from our New Mexico lands and wildlife that we have worked and hunted for generations. I hardly call this a fair trade or a fair deal.

Dr. King, we demand that you intercede and stop this land swap and this outrageous land deal immediately. For the sake of our generations past, our families today and the thousands of people and future generations, we request that you work with the people of New Mexico and the communities that surround Whites peak and stop this land swap from progressing.

There are very few people if any, who better understand the meaning and the connection New Mexicans have to our land than you do. Our land is our culture, our culture is our State and our State is our beautiful New Mexico. Thank you for your time
Dr. King.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Ralph Arellanes
Chairman, Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico
NM LULAC District 1 Director
National LULAC Civil Rights Commission

Attorney General of New Mexico

GARY K. KING
Attorney General



February 24, 2010

Ralph,

Thank you for including my wife and me at The Hispanic Roundtable Legislative Dinner. It was a terrific event, and I was very honored to have the opportunity to speak about the White Peak case.

I also wanted to thank you for the plaque and award. I worked extremely hard on the White Peak litigation in the Supreme Court, and it is nice to have that work recognized.

Keep up your outstanding work on behalf of the Hispanic community.

Regards,

Seth Cohen

Mr. Pat Lyons,

January 17, 2010

This letter is in reference to the land swap you are currently carrying out with four ranchers in the Ocate Whites Peak area. These lands have been used for hunting, fishing, hiking, wood gathering, family gatherings and recreation by Hispano and Native American families for hundreds if not thousands of years.

My name is Ralph Arellanes and I am the Chairman of the Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico, I am the District 1 Director for NM LULAC and I am a member of the National LULAC Civil Rights Commission.

LULAC is our Nation's oldest and largest Hispanic Civil rights organization established in 1929 to address education, employment, and civil rights issues for Hispanic Americans. We have thousands of LULAC Councils across the country and our Headquarters is in Washington D.C. The Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico is a coalition of over 50 Hispano organizations and over 50,000 members Statewide. Our statewide membership includes LULAC, the American GI Forum, MANA, The Hispanic Bar Association, Hispanic Teachers Association, Hispanic Doctors Association, NM MESA, MAES, the AFL-CIO, AFSCME and a host of other Hispano organizations.

Based on our review of the documentation we have read and we also heard the transcripts of the meeting held in the Attorney General's office held January 7th, 2010, it is clear to us that this is a land swap that is being carried out in bad faith against our Hispano and Native American communities that surround Whites Peak and that also make up the large majority of the population that surround this part of our State.

It is clear that this land swap is being conducted in a very secretive, private and discrete manner between you, your office, the UU Bar Express Ranches, the Stanley Ranch, the CS Cattle Co, and the Bill Galloway Ranch. This land swap is designed only to benefit these ranchers who already own the majority of the lands in Ocate, their associates and business partners and who knows who else in this transaction is benefitting greatly from this SWEET HEART land deal you have arranged for these ranchers.

It is exactly this kind of conduct that has the majority in our state questioning the ethical and moral conduct of our elected officials and we demand that this back door deal be stopped immediately!! This land swap (swindle) has not been conducted in a public manner with regard to the majority population that is our Hispano and Native American communities that surround these lands for well over 200 miles.

This land swindle that you are carrying out includes encroaching on land within the Mora Land Grant, encroaching on privately held lands and revoking several current leases between numerous Hispano families and the State of New Mexico. You are exchanging over 14,000+ State of New Mexico public trust lands in exchange for 9,650 acres from these four private ranches. This is outrageous!!!!

As our State Land Commissioner, you are charged with managing New Mexico public lands in the most effective and efficient manner and care for the benefit of ALL New Mexicans and the taxpayers of New Mexico. It is not to be interpreted to say "To manage New Mexico Public Lands in the best interest of your buddies for their maximum consumption and profit".

Right now that is what this land swindle is - a foundational move for the benefit and profit of these already large profit making ventures. Once this land swindle is carried out, these large ranchers will now monopolize the entire Ocate and Whites Peak lands and the only people that will be able to hunt and fish these lands are those that will be able to cough up \$25,000 - \$30,000 for a hunting permit on these properties.

This land swindle is reminiscent of the Santa Fe Ring operation that is responsible for stealing millions of acres of lands, land grants, ranches and homes from Hispano families since New Mexico became a U.S. Territory in 1848. This operation continued when New Mexico became a State in 1912 and unbelievably, this continues to this day obviously.

We will not sit back and allow you to continue to erode our land holdings, our land trusts, our land leases and our Land Grants, which has been a central mission for you and your staff during your term as New Mexico Land Commissioner.

Clearly there is a fundamental difference between your thinking, the thinking of your business associates and the thinking of the New Mexican Hispano and Native American community. You see Mr. Lyons, as Hispanos, we would NEVER carry out this kind of a land swap (swindle) and call it good for New Mexico. This kind of thinking doesn't even cross our mind. We believe that these lands and the wildlife and natural habitat that exists and live there should be there for all to enjoy and in many ways, survive from. We believe that these lands are sacred and have been a central part of New Mexican life and living for hundreds and thousands of years.

We believe that anyone and everyone should be able to access these public lands and use them as a means of survival as we always have for thousands of generations before us, at the present time and for many, many future generations. This philosophy is fundamental and central to our culture and our community. In short, these lands are a gem of beauty and survival for all to appreciate God's country.

Obviously in your eyes and in the eyes of your business associates, the meaning of these lands is to outright own every spec of it, fence it off and only if one can afford \$25,000 - \$30,000 for a hunting license, that is the ONLY way you can access it. Is this your version of good, responsible and fair government??

These fundamental differences in thinking is why so many old New Mexico Hispano and Native American families have lost generations of lands, homes and ranches. It is exactly this kind of greedy thinking that has violated and continues to violate the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed in 1848 between Mexico and the United States of America until this very day in 2010!!

As I was listening to the transcripts of your briefing to the Attorney General's office as well as a few folks from the Ocate area, you often commented "This land swap makes these ranches more valuable.... Then one of the residents of Ocate asked a question about the validity of what you were presenting and you told him **"We don't need any Wise Asses around here....can somebody call the police on this guy"**.

Land Commissioner Lyons, is this the way you conduct business with our taxpayer dollars? Is this conduct your classification of an "open door policy" you continuously referred to during this briefing?

Commissioner Lyons, we will not sit and allow this land swindle to be carried out by you, your office and these ranchers. You will be challenged to the fullest extent of the law and be held fully accountable for these acts. This is malfeasance of our public lands at the highest levels of our State government.

We DEMAND that you stop these land swaps immediately in the name of public law and fiduciary management of our lands. This conduct and these land swaps are not in the best interest of our State or the residents and citizenry of New Mexico.

Ralph Arellanes

Chairman, Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico

Nm LULAC District 1 Director

National LULAC Civil Rights Commission