



Native Plant Society of New Mexico

P. O. Box 35388

Albuquerque, NM 87176-5388

December 13, 2022

Re: Gila Wilderness Livestock Removal

Dear Gila National Forest:

NPSNM is a non-profit organization with more than 800 members in seven chapters around the state and in El Paso, Texas. Our mission is to educate the public about native plants by promoting knowledge of plant identification, ecology, and uses; foster plant conservation and the preservation of natural habitats; support botanical research; and encourage the appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land, and wildlife.

We write in support of the removal of unauthorized cattle from the Gila Wilderness, as detailed in your November 22, 2022, new release. The effects of excessive cattle grazing are well documented and include forest floor and streambank erosion, degraded water quality, introduction of noxious weeds, and the reduction of herbaceous vegetation. Whether they are termed "feral" or "stray", "unauthorized" or "trespass", these animals cause serious ecosystem damage and frustrate your efforts to manage Gila NF grazing in a sustainable manner.

We are very pleased that the Forest Service is taking the destructiveness of unauthorized cattle seriously and has invited the public's input. The Gila was the world's first Wilderness, designated in 1964, and it should continue to be managed with the goal of providing a shining example of ecosystem health as well as a valued recreational resource.

Sincerely,

Rachel Jankowitz

Rachel Jankowitz, Conservation Chair
Native Plant Society of New Mexico