

RESOLUTION NO. 09-048**A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PERMANENT PROTECTION OF OTERO MESA'S LAND, WILDLIFE, AND WATER RESOURCE FROM OIL AND NATURAL GAS DRILLING.**

The City Council is informed that:

WHEREAS, Otero Mesa contains one of the largest intact grasslands remaining in the Chihuahuan Desert, and provides important habitat for many plant and animal species, including pronghorn, mule deer, mountain lions, prairie dogs, the endangered Aplomado Falcon, and more than 200 other bird species; and

WHEREAS, the Salt Basin aquifer lying underneath Otero Mesa is estimated to be one of the largest untapped fresh water aquifers in the region and may contain as much as 57 million acre feet of water according to the U.S. Geological Survey; and

WHEREAS, the Salt Basin is a potential future source of drinking water for communities in the region; and

WHEREAS, Otero Mesa's public lands provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, birdwatching, hunting and other types of outdoor recreation for the citizens of the region; and

WHEREAS, Otero Mesa's grasslands, wildlife, and water are potentially threatened by natural gas and oil development; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division has documented 1400 incidents of groundwater contamination caused by oil and gas activities since 1990; and

WHEREAS, the Dona Ana and Sierra County Commissions have passed resolutions supporting a moratorium on oil or natural gas drilling until a detailed study of the Salt Basin aquifer can be completed; and

WHEREAS, Otero Mesa's reserves of natural gas are unproven and not likely to be significant; the Bureau of Land Management has estimated the possible gas reserves in and around Otero Mesa and the Salt Basin aquifer to be low to moderate and significantly less than in other parts of the region with commercially viable reserves; and

NOW THEREFORE, Be it resolved by the governing body of the City of Las Cruces that:

(I)

THAT the City of Las Cruces would like to support the protection of Otero Mesa's land, wildlife, and water resource from oil and natural gas drilling.

(II)

THAT the City calls on the United States Congress to introduce legislation that will provide permanent protection for Otero Mesa.

(III)

THAT the City work together to protect the unique and irreplaceable grasslands, wildlife and water from oil and natural gas exploration.

DONE AND APPROVED THIS _____ day of _____, 2008

Ken Miyagishima, Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk (SEAL)

VOTE:

Mayor Miyagishima: _____

Councillor Silva: _____

Councillor Connor: _____

Councillor Archuleta: _____

Councillor Small: _____

Councillor Jones: _____

Councillor Thomas: _____

Moved by: _____

Seconded by: _____

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney