



Catholic Pastoral Center

Diocese of El Paso

June 6, 2008

*Office of
the Bishop*

El Paso City Council and
County Commissioners

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I write to express a concern regarding an issue confronting El Paso, and to ask for your support in protecting our regions future resources.

I have been informed about the public debate over whether the publicly owned land known as Otero Mesa should be leased for the purpose of natural gas and oil exploration. I am aware of the significant history and precious resources this area contains such as ancient archeological sites, wildlife, and freshwater, and I must express my deepest concern and support for a long-term conservation focused plan that will sustain the resources that the Southwest is so fortunate to enjoy.

From my understanding of the activities envisioned in the proposal to extract fossil fuels from Otero Mesa, it is my belief that such activities would not serve the best interest of El Pasoans, or properly reflect the lessons of stewardship. Of particular concern is the sacrifice on long-term sustainability for the short-term control of the limited gas and oil resources of Otero Mesa.

The ongoing controversy regarding environmental issues in general, and public lands in particular, is an issue of which I'm acutely aware, and I doubt such controversy will recede in the near future. However, I reiterate that we all must be better stewards of the land, for the future generations of the planet. With that said, let it be known that I support efforts for the protection and preservation of Otero Mesa.

Sincerely,

The Most Reverend Armando X. Ochoa, D.D.
Bishop of El Paso