

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 28, 2021

Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

We are writing to express great concern over border wall construction in certain rural or rugged areas of Arizona. In some cases, the border wall construction destroyed natural border defenses, leaving the border more vulnerable to smugglers, and creating new environmental hazards for border communities. In our state of Arizona, border walls have been constructed in areas such as Guadalupe Canyon, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and historically significant lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation. Proper analysis of border security impact and mitigation strategies for these areas were never completed before construction.

We have learned of the alarming environmental conditions created by border wall construction in Guadalupe Canyon, Cochise County, Arizona. Through visits and ongoing conversations with our teams, ranchers and residents whose property abuts the Guadalupe Canyon made clear that border wall-related road construction, including new switchback roads up the mountain, has significantly changed the topography of the area. Photos of Guadalupe Canyon and Creek are included for your awareness. Unfortunately, this construction removed natural dams and leaves a clear path for water during the upcoming monsoon season. These rains will begin in the next six to eight weeks, and local residents worry about flood damage to their property.

We contacted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to request that they divert funding to prevent flooding, using money from existing border wall construction contracts. However, the U.S. Army Corps Administrator for the South Pacific Border District, Colonel Antoinette Gant, advised us that any funding decision to repair or mitigate damage must be approved by the Secretary of Homeland Security. We understand the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has already approved funding to remediate damage and prevent flooding brought by border wall construction in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Given that residents and ranchers of Guadalupe Canyon and Creek are in a similar situation, we request your immediate assistance in providing funding and assistance to address their situation before the monsoon season.

The ranchers and local residents of Guadalupe Canyon, as well as other environmentally and culturally sensitive areas in Arizona where border wall construction occurred, deeply value the cultural and environmental resources around them. Restoration of these lands should be done only after close consultation with these key stakeholders, whose land and livelihoods have been directly affected by decisions made without complete mitigation planning. Additionally, an analysis of the impact to border security should be done before changes to existing border infrastructure are made.

Thank you for your attention to our urgent concern regarding Guadalupe Canyon. We request a response to our request for funding and your plans for remediation efforts in this environmentally sensitive area by June 11, 2021.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mark Kelly in blue ink.

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Kyrsten Sinema in blue ink.

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Photos of Guadalupe Canyon and Creek



