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Rep. John Salazar **Sen. Ken Salazar**

Rep. Salazar seeks support on Pinon Canyon

One person he hopes will lend his backing is his brother, Sen. Ken Salazar.

By **PETER ROPER**
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Rep. John Salazar remains "hopeful" that his brother, Colorado Sen. Ken Salazar, will ultimately decide to support a yearlong moratorium on the Army's plans to expand the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site when Congress resumes work in September.

"He hasn't told me 'no' and I am hopeful that he will ultimately support our legislation," John Salazar, the 3rd District Democrat, said Monday. "Believe me, I intend to keep working on him. Ken is still hoping there is a middle ground, but I don't think there is."

The legislation is the 2008 military construction appropriations bill, which the House approved in June, including an amendment from John Salazar and Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., to block the Army from spending any money on the expansion next year, including money for preliminary studies. The 238,000-acre Pinon Canyon site is located in Las Animas County northeast of Trinidad, within the 3rd District. The Army intends to add 414,000 acres to the site, most of it coming from Las Animas County.

A coalition of area ranchers and other opponents of the expansion want Ken Salazar to support that same amendment when the Senate takes up the military construction bill next month. Unless Salazar or Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., do that, the House amendment will almost certainly be removed when House and Senate members negotiate a final bill in conference.

Allard, who is not running for re-election in 2008, has already signaled that he wants the Army to go forward with its initial expansion studies next year - meaning he is not interested in protecting the Musgrave-Salazar amendment.

"It would be very hard to keep the amendment alive without Senate support," John

Salazar acknowledged - essentially meaning his brother's help.

When Ken Salazar met with county officials and ranching opponents on Aug. 7, he disappointed them by declining to give a simple endorsement of the ban. Saying he needed to balance the protection of the ranch economy against the Army's claim of needing more training space, the senator said he still wanted to hear what economic assistance the Army can offer the region as part of the expansion. He also repeated his opposition to having any ranch land taken through eminent domain.

"Senator Salazar has not made a final decision on the (Musgrave-Salazar) amendment," his spokesman, Cody Wertz, said Monday. "He has said he will not support any expansion that harms the local economy and he is still waiting to hear the Army's justification for the expansion and what it can offer in terms of economic aid."

Wertz said some of Salazar's comments in Trinidad were misunderstood, that when he said he could not stop the Army, he was referring to the Pentagon's plans to expand Fort Carson and base more troops there.

"He was not talking about the question of expanding Pinon Canyon," Wertz said. "That's a different issue."

The Pinon Canyon Expansion Opposition Coalition is hoping Ken Salazar will ultimately decide there is no "win-win" scenario that allows the Army to expand the training area that does not force ranchers to give up their lands and livelihoods. News reports that either Ken Salazar or Allard are considering legislation to prevent the Army from using eminent domain in the process offer little protection to ranchers who do not want to be forced off their land, according to Lon Robertson, president of the coalition.

"That's just an empty gesture," Robertson said. "Once the expansion process begins, sooner or later the Army is going to have to resort to eminent domain to acquire the land they want and what is Congress going to do then? We don't think they'll stop the Army then."

John Salazar said he is scheduled to meet with coalition ranchers on Saturday.

Robertson said the coalition hopes to bring Rep. Mark Udall, D-Colo., and a candidate for Allard's Senate seat, to the area in the near future.

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