

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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MORA COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 2017 - 99

A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS TO MORA COUNTY and CONTINUED PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

WHEREAS, national public lands in Mora County have a long history in the settlement patterns of the traditional, agricultural communities of the area and have their origin in the establishment of the La Merced de Santa Gertrudis de lo de Mora (a.k.a. the Mora Land Grant) and various subgrants subsequent to the original land grant and, prior to land grant settlement, present-day public lands were the aboriginal lands of the indigenous people of the area,

WHEREAS, Mora County is home to vibrant traditions on public lands related to farming and ranching, hunting, wildcrafting of foods and herbs, forest harvesting, recreation, wood cutting, logging, and grazing which support cultural traditions, lifeways, and land-based livelihoods,

WHEREAS, national public lands in Mora County encompass a significant part of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, which are the headwaters for rivers and acequias, which provide sustenance for agricultural livelihoods and habitat for numerous wildlife species,

WHEREAS, national public lands in Mora County are an integral part of the land-based economy and culture of Mora County including traditions of logging, grazing, and acequia agriculture,

WHEREAS, national public lands in New Mexico encompass vast tracts of grasslands, mountain landscapes, riparian habitats and desert ecosystems that collectively contain a diverse array of fauna and flora, as well as valuable natural resources; and

WHEREAS, many of the watersheds and irrigation systems essential to healthy wildlife, sustained economic activity and resilient communities originate on these lands; and

WHEREAS, national public lands are generally managed under a multiple-use mandate that requires collaborative stakeholder input at the local level, while encouraging volunteer activity and fostering intra-governmental collaboration; and

WHEREAS, access to and stewardship of national lands in New Mexico is important for Native American religious and cultural practices, as well as basic economic activities such as ranching, mining, forestry, many forms of outdoor recreation and traditional subsistence activities; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation on national public lands in New Mexico generates more than \$6 billion in estimated consumer spending each year, while employing more than 68,000 people; and

WHEREAS, almost 202,000 sportsmen participate in hunting, fishing and trapping, spending in excess of \$613 million annually in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, almost 2,400 Mora County sportsmen participate in hunting, fishing and trapping, spending \$3.5 million annually in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, on an annual basis hunting, fishing and trapping contribute more than 69 jobs, almost \$1.2 million in labor income, \$2.7 million in gross domestic product, over \$270,000 in federal tax revenues and over \$427,000 in state and local tax revenues to Mora County; and

WHEREAS, national public lands support grazing activities in Mora County which in turn support the agricultural economy which was estimated at contributing \$12 million in market value to the local economy according to the 2012 Agricultural Census,

WHEREAS, proposals are being circulated among New Mexico counties favoring the transfer of national public lands to state government; and

WHEREAS, should national public lands be transferred to state ownership, New Mexico taxpayers would be liable for rehabilitating 3,989 abandoned mines at an estimated cost of up to \$842 million, as well as the cost of fighting wildfires in these areas—an amount in excess of \$240 million in FY 2011-12; and

WHEREAS, Mora County residents share in all of the benefits of national public lands located within Mora County and the State of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Mora County is home to the Mora National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center, whose mission is preservation of endangered fish species, and the Mora Research Center, a New Mexico State University Research Center for forest genetics and conservation, the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mora County Board of Commissioners:

- Supports continued national ownership and management of existing national public lands in Mora County, as well as in New Mexico and the United States generally, because of their irreplaceable value to our economy, quality of life and national heritage;
- Does not favor transfer of national public lands to the state because of the financial burden such a transfer would impose on New Mexico residents, as well as the increased risk of environmental degradation, profiteering and loss of public access to traditionally open areas; and
- Does strongly promote greater collaboration between federal land management agencies and local government including more opportunities for county government to be involved in developing forest management plans,
- Does strongly endorse a more extensive effort to improve the health of watersheds and forest through restoration and thinning in a way that improves forest health while providing economic opportunity for local businesses,
- Does strongly endorse greater support by federal land management agencies of traditional logging and grazing activities,
- Does strongly endorse activities that expand public access to national public lands including retaining existing roads, preventing future road closures, and maintaining existing public lands accessibility rather than imposing restrictions through wilderness designations,
- Does strongly endorse robust public-private partnerships and active dialog between stakeholders and federal agencies in all aspects of national public lands management; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution shall be distributed to the New Mexico Congressional delegation, New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez, members of the State Legislature and the New Mexico Association of Counties.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of September, 2017, by the Board of County Commissioners of Mora County, State of New Mexico.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
MORA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO**



Paula Garcia, Chair

George Trujillo, Vice Chair



Alfonso Griego, Member





Carlos Arellano
County Clerk