

March 14, 2025

Melanie Barnes, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico State Office
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508

**RE: Comments Supporting Proposed Administrative Mineral Withdrawal for
Upper Pecos River Watershed Protection Area**

Dear State Director Barnes:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (New Mexico Wild), Upper Pecos Watershed Association, Molino de la Isla Organics LLC, New Mexico Acequia Association, Santa Fe Watershed Association, American Rivers, Amigos Bravos, Hispanics Enjoying Camping Hunting and the Outdoors (HECHO), The Wilderness Society, National Parks Conservation Association, the Forest Trust, and Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, in response to the *Notice of Proposed Withdrawal and Public Meeting, Upper Pecos River Watershed Protection Area Withdrawal, New Mexico*.¹ On behalf of our collective memberships, and for reasons detailed below, our organizations strongly support the proposed mineral withdrawal of approximately 164,810 acres of land in the Upper Pecos River Watershed, as shown on the map enclosed as Attachment A.² These comments are timely submitted on or before March 17, 2025.

As a preliminary matter, we are disappointed and concerned that the agencies postponed the public meeting that had been scheduled for February 26, 2025, in the Village of Pecos, New Mexico.³ We were notified of the postponement on February 19, 2025, and a new date has not

¹ Notice of Proposed Withdrawal and Public Meeting, Upper Pecos River Watershed Protection Area Withdrawal, New Mexico, 89 Fed. Reg. 101621 (Dec. 16, 2024) [hereinafter Notice of Withdrawal].

² **Attachment A**, Map, Pecos Administrative Mineral Withdrawal.

³ Notice of Withdrawal, 89 Fed. Reg. at 101621.

yet been advertised. We urge the agencies to promptly reschedule and conduct the public meeting to ensure that members of the public have an opportunity to be heard regarding this important proposal,⁴ and that the agencies timely complete the necessary environmental reviews. Additionally, we request to receive all future notices and analyses concerning this proposal. We also reserve the right to submit additional comments in the future as the administrative process progresses. Finally, all previous comments and materials submitted by our organizations to the United States Department of Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) encouraging a mineral withdrawal are hereby incorporated into the administrative record. A copy of these submissions is included in the Protect the Pecos Support Book, enclosed as Attachment B.⁵ Additional supporting documents are also attached.

I. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the BLM and the USFS, the DOI proposes to withdraw 163,483 acres of National Forest System lands and 1,327.16 acres of public lands managed by the BLM from location and entry under the United States mining laws and leasing under the mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights.⁶ The lands would remain open to disposals under the mineral materials laws.⁷ The withdrawal is proposed for a 20-year term to protect the Upper Pecos River Watershed area for its water and air quality, cultural resources, scenic integrity, critical fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational values.⁸

The area proposed for withdrawal encompasses the headwaters of the Pecos River, a critical water resource for the State of New Mexico. New Mexico does not have a lot of water, and as a result, New Mexicans share a deep understanding of how critical clean, safe, reliable water is to the security of our people and communities. There is no other resource that is more important to our state, culturally or economically. The Upper Pecos River Watershed is a special place where the community knows that the river is at the heart of the valley and the community, and that water is definitively the most important thing we can protect and pass on to future generations. The proposed withdrawal is the culmination of years of local community engagement in the effort to protect the Upper Pecos River Watershed from mineral development. This letter is submitted on behalf of the following signatories.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (New Mexico Wild) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued enjoyment of New Mexico's wildlands, wilderness areas, and wildlife, with over 14,000 members and supporters across the state. New Mexico

⁴ See 43 C.F.R. 2310.3-1(b)(2)(v), (c)(2) (requiring that a public meeting "shall be held at a time and place convenient to the interested public, the applicant and the authorized officer" and that a "notice stating the time and place of the meeting, shall be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER and in at least one newspaper having a general circulation in the vicinity of lands involved in the requested action, at least 30 days before the scheduled date of the meeting").

⁵ **Attachment B**, Protect the Pecos Support Book.

⁶ Notice of Withdrawal, 89 Fed. Reg. at 101621.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.* at 101622.

Wild was an active participant in the recent Santa Fe National Forest land management plan revision process and has been engaged in advocacy to protect natural and cultural resources of the Upper Pecos River Watershed through a variety of legislative, administrative, policy, and stewardship initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels.

Upper Pecos Watershed Association (UPWA) is a community-based grass-roots organization with a common interest in protecting, maintaining and improving the health of both the watershed and the local economy and cultures. UPWA was a petitioner to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

Molino de la Isla Organics LLC is an organic farm created to promote and to protect the acequias of Nuevo Mexico through organic agriculture, regional marketing and consumer education for the socio-economic benefit of the community. Molino de las Isla Organics grows crops that are irrigated by water from the Pecos River. The farm serves as only one example of many that rely on the clean water the Pecos River Watershed provides. Molino de la Isla was a petitioner to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

New Mexico Acequia Association (NMAA) is a statewide, membership-based organization of acequias dedicated to protecting water and revitalizing agricultural traditions. NMAA's mission is to protect water and our acequias, to grow healthy food for our families and communities, and to honor our cultural heritage. Since 2019, NMAA has been providing stakeholder education to dozens of downstream acequias likely to be impacted by proposed exploratory drilling in the Upper Pecos River Watershed. NMAA was a petitioner to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

The Santa Fe Watershed Association (SFWA) is a community-based nonprofit that works to build a thriving, resilient Santa Fe River Watershed through collaboration, stewardship, and education. Since 1997, SFWA has been a key partner to the USFS, City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, and numerous other stakeholders in developing a management plan for the Upper municipal watershed, restoring sections of the urban Santa Fe River, championing green stormwater infrastructure, advocating for environmental flows in the Santa Fe River, and leading outdoor education opportunities for Santa Fe students. The Santa Fe watershed shares the same ecology, hydrology, and geology as the adjacent Upper Pecos Watershed, as well as the same risks of wildfire, erosion, and water contamination. For these reasons SFWA has been supportive of the numerous efforts by other partners to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed.

American Rivers is the only national organization dedicated entirely to protecting and restoring the rivers on which all life depends. Since our founding over 50 years ago, we have worked with partners across the country to safeguard our most outstanding rivers. Our Southwest River Protection Program focuses on the most culturally and ecologically important rivers in our region and, as such, we are committed to ensuring the Pecos River is permanently protected.

Amigos Bravos is a statewide water quality protection and restoration organization (based in Taos, NM) guided by social justice principles and dedicated to preserving and restoring the ecological and cultural integrity of New Mexico's water and the communities that depend on it.

Hispanics Enjoying Camping Hunting and the Outdoors (HECHO) was founded in 2013 with a mission to mobilize Hispanic leaders to engage their communities in the conservation of our public lands and waters. There is no plan B or other alternative should this precious waterway get compromised more than it already has. There are too many New Mexicans who depend on this vital water resource for survival. This should not be a partisan issue, and the area and waterway deserve protection at the highest level.

The Wilderness Society is dedicated to uniting people to protect America's wild places. We see a future where people and wild nature flourish together, meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing planet. To accomplish that vision, we work to ensure that public lands are a solution to the climate and extinction crises and that all people benefit equitably from public lands. We focus our work in landscapes across the country that we have identified as the most biologically rich, large-scale landscapes to protect and connect, working in partnership with communities, tribes, state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and many others to advance habitat conservation, connectivity, ecological resilience, and equitable access to nature.

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Since 1919, the nonpartisan NPCA has been the leading voice in safeguarding our national parks. With the backing of a dedicated community of more than 1.6 million members and supporters, NPCA serves as the steadfast advocate for our national parks, preserving their history and culture. NPCA identifies and responds to threats both in and beyond park boundaries to achieve landscape-level resilience, support gateway communities, and maintain the integrity of the park experience for all who visit.

The Forest Trust has been protecting forests and supporting rural communities in Northern New Mexico since 1984.

Sierra Club was founded in 1892 and is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club has approximately 3.8 million members and supporters nationwide, and is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the environment. The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth. The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club is a volunteer-led organization representing more than 35,000 members and supporters in New Mexico and West Texas.

II. BENEFITS FROM PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed withdrawal would protect and enhance critical water resources, wildlife, cultural resources, recreation, the local economy, scenery, public health and safety, and wildfire risk mitigation. Each of these categories is addressed below.

A. Water Resources

The proposed withdrawal would help sustain New Mexico's scarce water resources. New Mexico has a dry climate, receiving an average of only 13.9 inches of precipitation a year. The area proposed for withdrawal encompasses the headwaters of the Pecos River, the second longest river in our arid state, which flows 926 miles from its headwaters in northern New Mexico to the Rio Grande in Texas.

Every drop of water matters in New Mexico. In 2024, all of New Mexico's rivers and streams were identified as America's "Most Endangered Rivers" because recent changes in the law left approximately 96% of New Mexico's streams without protection under the Clean Water Act (CWA).⁹ Also in 2024, the State of New Mexico finalized a 50-Year Water Action Plan, reflecting that in 50 years, New Mexico will have approximately 25% less water available in rivers and aquifers (as compared to today) and will face a significant shortage of water to meet existing needs.¹⁰ The 50-Year Water Action Plan recognizes that New Mexico must employ a combination of strategies to meet the challenge of continuing to provide clean, reliable, safe water supplies to communities.

A primary concern raised by mining development in the proposed withdrawal area involves the contamination and depletion of groundwater and surface waters that ultimately discharge into the Pecos River, which could contaminate and deplete the drinking water source of the Village of Pecos and multiple communities downstream that are on or near the river, including Santa Rosa, Fort Sumner, Roswell, and Carlsbad, New Mexico; and Pecos, Texas.

In addition to the Pecos River, the canyons within the segregated area host numerous perennial and seasonal streams and wetlands. Prominent canyons and drainages include Dalton Canyon, Macho Canyon, Sawyer Creek, Wild Horse Creek, Indian Creek, Doctor Creek, Windsor Creek, Rio Mora, and Willow Creek. These headwaters hold tremendous value for surrounding towns, local businesses, Pueblos and Tribes, acequias, mercedes (land grants), ranchers, farmers, anglers, hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts. The Village of Pecos and other small communities within the watershed are home to low-income families, Hispanic communities, and other historically marginalized groups that rely on the Pecos River for clean, reliable, and safe drinking water.

The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. As further described below, the area has already suffered significant impacts from previous mining, with local communities and New Mexico taxpayers paying the price. In 2019, the Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd, through its Colorado-based subsidiary Comexico LLC, acquired 20 mining claims in the Jones Hill area near Tererro,

⁹ Clean Water Act (CWA), 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.; see also American Rivers, America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2024, available at <https://www.americanrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AmericasMostEndangeredRivers@of2024Report.pdf>.

¹⁰ **Attachment C**, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, 50-Year Water Action Plan, p. 3 (2024), available at <https://www.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/New-Mexico-50-Year-WaterAction-Plan.pdf> (last visited Feb. 13, 2025).

New Mexico, and applied for permits to conduct exploratory drilling for heavy metals. The foreign mining corporation subsequently gained ownership of hundreds of mining claims that, if developed, would impact the entire Pecos watershed and possibly the Santa Fe municipal watershed.¹¹ Due to its importance and vulnerability, as well as imminent hardrock mining threats, the Pecos River was specifically identified as one of America’s “Most Endangered Rivers” in 2021.¹²

The proposed mineral withdrawal would protect the area’s crucial watersheds and groundwater as further described below.

1. Outstanding National Resource Waters

The proposed withdrawal area encompasses a collection of rivers, streams, and wetlands that the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC), part of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), has designated as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs).¹³ ONRWs are streams, lakes and wetlands that receive enhanced protection against water quality degradation under the State of New Mexico’s Water Quality Standards and the federal CWA. Waters that have been designated as ONRWs receive the highest level of protection against degradation available under New Mexico’s Water Quality Standards, as set forth in the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC).¹⁴

In April 2020, a group of petitioners, including San Miguel County, the Village of Pecos, the New Mexico Acequia Association, Molino de la Isla Organics LLC, and the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, submitted a petition to the WQCC,¹⁵ nominating streams and wetlands within the Upper Pecos River watershed for designation as ONRWs under the CWA and the New Mexico Water Quality Act.¹⁶

In August 2022, the WQCC granted the petition following a public hearing process.¹⁷ The WQCC designated as ONRWs a portion of the Pecos River, 16 named tributaries to the Pecos River, and 96 unnamed tributaries, constituting in total nearly 180 miles of rivers and streams;

¹¹ See **Attachment A**, Map (showing active mining claims on east side of ridge dividing Upper Pecos River Watershed from Santa Fe Municipal Watershed).

¹² **Attachment D**, American Rivers, America’s Most Endangered Rivers, #5 Pecos River (2021).

¹³ See N.M. Environment Dep’t, Outstanding National Resource Waters, <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/onrws/#:~:text=Outstanding%20National%20Resource%20Waters%20>.

¹⁴ Standards for Interstate and Intrastate Surface Waters, New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission, 20.6.4 NMAC (10/12/2000, as amended through 09/24/2022).

¹⁵ **Attachment E**, Nomination of the Waters of the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters (Apr. 2020) [hereinafter ONRW Petition].

¹⁶ New Mexico Water Quality Act, NMSA 1978, §§ 74-6-1 to -17 (1967, as amended through 2019).

¹⁷ **Attachment F**, State of N.M., Before the Water Quality Control Commission, In the Matter of the Petition for Proposed Amendments to 20.6.4.9 NMAC, Designation of Waters of the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters, No. WQCC 21-51(R), Hearing Officer’s Report (June 21, 2022) [hereinafter ONRW Hearing Officer’s Report].

as well as 16 wetlands, comprising nearly 43 acres. The following streams within the headwaters of the Pecos River watershed are included in the ONRW designation:¹⁸

- The Pecos River from Dalton Canyon Creek to the Pecos Wilderness boundary;
- In the Dry Gulch-Pecos River subwatershed, Dalton Canyon Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the headwaters, Wild Horse Creek from Dalton Canyon Creek upstream to the headwaters, Macho Canyon Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the headwaters, and Sawyer Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the headwaters;
- In the Indian Creek-Pecos River subwatershed, Indian Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the headwaters, Holy Ghost Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary, Doctor Creek from Holy Ghost Creek upstream to the headwaters, Davis Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the headwaters, and Willow Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the headwaters;
- In the Rio Mora subwatershed, Rio Mora from the Pecos River upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary and Bear Creek from the Rio Mora upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary;
- In the Rio Mora-Pecos River subwatershed, Carpenter Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary, Winsor Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary, and Jack's Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary; and
- In the Panchuela Creek subwatershed, Panchuela Creek from the Pecos River upstream to the Pecos Wilderness boundary.¹⁹

The 2022 ONRW designation also includes unnamed tributaries and wetlands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed, as shown on the *Maps and Lists for Unnamed Tributaries to Perennial Waters and Wetlands in the Headwaters Pecos River Watershed*, published at the New Mexico state library and available on the NMED website.²⁰ Additionally, on December 10, 2024, the WQCC voted in favor of a subsequent petition to designate the Pecos River as an ONRW within the Pecos National Historical Park, downstream of the area proposed for withdrawal.²¹ The 2024 designation is expected to be finalized and take effect in 2025.²²

The proposed administrative withdrawal will help uphold the water quality standards applicable to these ONRWs, thereby supporting many water uses within the proposed withdrawal area and downstream.

2. Pecos Wild and Scenic River

The proposed withdrawal area encompasses portions of the Pecos Wild and Scenic River, one of just four wild and scenic rivers in New Mexico. In 1990, Congress designated 20.5 miles of

¹⁸ See **Attachment A**, Map (showing 2022 ONRWs in green).

¹⁹ 20.6.4.9(D)(4)(a)-(f) NMAC.

²⁰ 20.6.4.9(D)(4)(g), (h) NMAC.

²¹ N.M. Environment Dep't, 2024 ONRW Designation Nominations, <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/2024onrw/>.

²² See **Attachment A**, Map (showing 2024 ONRWs in orange).

the Pecos as a Wild and Scenic River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act,²³ including a 13.5-mile “wild” segment located entirely within the Pecos Wilderness and a 7-mile “recreational” segment that runs through the middle of the area proposed for withdrawal.²⁴ The outstandingly remarkable values for which the Pecos River was congressionally designated include scenic values, recreational values, and cultural/historic values.²⁵ Wild and Scenic designation is the highest level of federal protection available for rivers, requiring that outstandingly remarkable values be “maintained or enhanced.” As such, the proposed mineral withdrawal complements requirements under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

3. Acequias and Agriculture

For centuries, the greater Pecos River Valley has been home to traditional Hispanic communities and other farmers who practice acequia agriculture. An acequia is a local government entity or political subdivision under New Mexico law in which water rights owners govern shared neighborhood irrigation ditches. Many of New Mexico’s acequia associations have been in existence since the Spanish colonization period of the 17th and 18th centuries.²⁶ In fact, some of the acequias in the vicinity of the withdrawal area have been in use even longer, utilized by Pueblo people before the Spanish arrived. Historically, acequias have been a principal local government unit for the distribution and use of surface water. New Mexico's acequias still function as a tool to preserve and share scarce water in our arid state.

The waters of the Upper Pecos River Watershed are the lifeblood of the region’s acequia systems, sustaining and enriching centuries-old acequias and farming and ranching traditions that depend upon clean water. These acequias depend upon clean water from the Pecos River both to irrigate traditional crops and to sustain vital cultural traditions. Downstream of the area proposed for withdrawal, New Mexicans depend on the Pecos River headwaters to irrigate agricultural operations that stretch all the way down to Texas.²⁷ These operations include approximately 28 different acequias stretching from Pecos, New Mexico in the north, down to Dilia, New Mexico in the south.

4. Remediation of Past Mining Activities

Contamination from past mining and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. Historic mining activities in the Upper Pecos River Watershed have

²³ Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1271 et seq.

²⁴ Public Law 101-306, 104 Stat. 260 (101st Cong.) (June 6, 1990).

²⁵ **Attachment G**, USDA Forest Service, Comprehensive River Management Plan, Pecos Wild & Scenic River, pp. 6-7 (July 2003) [hereinafter Pecos Wild & Scenic River CRMP].

²⁶ N.M. Office of the State Engineer, Acequia del Caño, <https://www.ose.nm.gov/NMAC/Acequia-del-Cano/acequia.html#:~:text=An%20acequia%20is%20a%20local,political%20subdivisions%20of%20the%20state> (last visited Mar. 8, 2025).

²⁷ USDA Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest Land Management Plan, at 234 (July 2022), available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1046331.pdf (last visited Mar. 11, 2025) [hereinafter 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan].

caused significant impacts to water quality and stream ecosystems, affecting the local community and costing New Mexico taxpayers millions of dollars to address acid mine drainage.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the American Metal Company of New Mexico mined for lead and zinc at the confluence of Willow Creek and the Pecos River, about sixteen miles north of the Village of Pecos (“Pecos Mine” or “Tererro Mine”).²⁸ The operation produced approximately 2,200,000 tons of lead-zinc ore.²⁹ The ore was crushed at the Pecos Mine site, and a large volume of waste rock, an estimated 66,151 to 72,630 cubic meters of material, was deposited in piles at Willow Creek and the Pecos River floodplain.³⁰ The remaining ore was transported for processing via a twelve-mile aerial tramway to the mill site (“El Molino”),³¹ located in Alamos Canyon, an intermittent stream that flows through the Village of Pecos before reaching the Pecos River.³² Following the removal of valuable metals at the El Molino mill site, the remaining tailings were deposited in several impoundments.³³ The Pecos Mine and El Molino were closed in 1939, and both the surface and mineral estate were transferred to Pecos Estates, Inc.³⁴

In 1950, the State of New Mexico acquired title to the surface estate but not the mineral rights.³⁵ Since then, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) has owned the land where the Pecos Mine, El Molino, and the Lisboa Springs fish hatchery are located.³⁶ At various times until the 1970s, mine waste was “removed from the mine and mill areas for use as construction or maintenance material for roads, pads, campsites and the Lisboa Springs fish hatchery.”³⁷

In the 1980s, the New Mexico Environment Department (and its predecessor agency) started investigating the area and detected elevated amounts of metals.³⁸ In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities entered the Pecos River, contaminating community water

²⁸ **Attachment H**, N.M. Environment Dep’t, In the Matter of: AMAX Resource Conservation Co., A Division of AMAX, Inc., & The State of NM, Respondents, Administrative Order on Consent, p. 1 (Dec. 2, 1992) [hereinafter 1992 Order on Consent].

²⁹ **Attachment I**, Wm. Paul Robinson, Southwest Research & Information Center, Innovative Administrative, Technical, and Public Involvement Approaches to Environmental Restoration at an Inactive Lead-Zinc Mining and Milling Complex near Pecos, New Mexico (Mar. 1995), available at <http://www.sric.org/mining/docs/pecos.php> [hereinafter 1995 Robinson Report].

³⁰ **Attachment J**, LeMore et al., A preliminary summary of multidisciplinary studies in the upper Pecos River area, Santa Fe and San Miguel Counties, New Mexico, p. 333 (1995), available at https://nmgs.nmt.edu/publications/guidebooks/downloads/46/46_p0331_p0338.pdf [hereinafter 1995 LeMore Study Paper].

³¹ See **Attachment H**, 1992 Order on Consent, supra, at 1; see also **Attachment K**, N.M. Environment Dep’t Chief Scientist Dennis McQuillan, Tererro Mine and El Molino Mill Cleanup, Briefing Report for the N.M. Legislature Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee (Nov. 12, 2015) [hereinafter 2015 NMED Briefing Report].

³² **Attachment I**, 1995 Robinson Report, p. 3.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ **Attachment H**, 1992 Order on Consent, p. 2.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*; see also **Attachment K**, 2015 NMED Briefing Report, p. 12.

³⁸ **Attachment H**, 1992 Order on Consent, pp. 2-3.

supplies, causing a massive fish kill, and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn.³⁹ In 1991, more than 90,000 trout were killed at the Lisboa Fish Hatchery alone. Community stakeholders, industry, and government discussed how to achieve the necessary cleanup.⁴⁰

The parties that could potentially be responsible for the mining contamination, including federal, state, and industry actors, negotiated an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) and work plan that established a remediation process similar to the cleanup of Superfund sites under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act.⁴¹ Under the cost sharing agreement of the AOC, the State of New Mexico is responsible for 20% of the total cost of investigation, remediation, and natural resource damages for the mine and mill.⁴² The mining company that now owns the mineral rights is responsible for the remaining 80%.⁴³ Although USFS was not a party to the AOC, the USFS did allocate \$1.2 million to remove or cap the mining waste that had been used as fill material for roads and campgrounds.⁴⁴

By 2004, the cleanup efforts had achieved many of the goals in the work plan,⁴⁵ and the concentration of metal in the sediment in the Pecos River had decreased.⁴⁶ Despite the completion of the initial reclamation work for the Pecos Mine site, however, four groundwater monitoring wells continued to exceed water quality limits, and in 2018, NMED took the extraordinary step of granting a water quality variance for contaminants including barium, cadmium, total dissolved solids, and other metals.⁴⁷ No drinking water wells can be constructed within the shallow and regional aquifers where the variance applies.⁴⁸ Local residents near the El Molino site have also experienced water quality issues with drinking water wells and have had to drill new, deeper wells to access clean water. Today, the 1992 AOC remains in effect, and inspections, repairs, and necessary corrective actions are ongoing at both the Pecos Mine and El Molino sites. New Mexico taxpayers have spent millions of dollars in reclamation and cleanup costs.

The good news is that, as a result of these extensive cleanup efforts, the surface waters in the area proposed for withdrawal have been restored to a high level of water quality. As demonstrated by the ONRW proceedings, the mainstem of the Pecos River and most of the named tributaries have water quality equal to or better than the standards specified in the New

³⁹ **Attachment K**, 2015 NMED Briefing Report, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 16.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.* at 17.

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ **Attachment L**, N.M. Environment Dep't, Tererro Mine Project Presentation to BLM (Oct. 16, 2012).

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 16.

⁴⁷ **Attachment M**, State of N.M. Water Quality Control Commission, In the Matter of the Petition for a Variance to Approve Alternative Abatement Standards for the Pecos Mine Operable Unit, WQCC 18-03(V), Decision and Order Granting Alternative Abatement Standards (Nov. 21, 2018) [hereinafter Water Quality Variance Decision].

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 7.

Mexico Administrative Code.⁴⁹ In addition, the designated waters are of exceptional recreational and ecological significance and possess significant attributes.⁵⁰

The proposed administrative withdrawal will prevent a recurrence of contamination in an area that is still being rehabilitated and restored. As NMED found, the source of previous surface water and groundwater impacts at the Pecos Mine was precipitation through and runoff from mining waste rocks, which contain multiple metals and acid-generating minerals.⁵¹ New mining operations in the area proposed for withdrawal would occur in similar geologic formations as the previous mine and would pose a similar risk of acid mine drainage, renewing the serious threat to water quality and aquatic life, and impacting communities that have already suffered disproportionate impacts from past mining activities. While hardrock mining plays an important role in our country's economic prosperity, the threat of impairment to New Mexico's crucial water supplies in these sensitive headwaters poses an unacceptable risk to local and regional water security.

5. Consumptive Use of Water Resources

The Santa Fe National Forest generates a significant amount of water from precipitation and snowpack accumulation, which creates the headwaters of the Pecos River. These water supplies allow the Upper Pecos River Watershed to provide critical water resources to municipal, domestic, and agricultural users. Numerous downstream communities rely on the water originating from these headwaters. Maintaining existing water supplies is critical in New Mexico because most of New Mexico's surface water and a significant portion of its groundwater supply are considered fully or over-appropriated, meaning that the available water is largely allocated, and water rights permits for new uses are generally not available, except for transfers or some new uses of water imported from outside the state.

Mining activities require a significant amount of water for the extraction and processing of ore during operations. Furthermore, consumptive use can continue long after active mining operations cease for uses like tailings pond management and preventing contamination. Withdrawing the proposed area from appropriation for mining activities would protect the critical surface water and groundwater resources in the Pecos River, both in the headwaters and for hundreds of miles downstream.

6. Groundwater Depletion

Much of the proposed withdrawal area overlies a poorly constrained, fractured bedrock aquifer. The proposed withdrawal would prevent mining projects that involve deep drilling, which could have significant effects on the aquifer, especially at greater depths. There are unknowns regarding the orientation and connectivity of geologic fractures (and the storage of water therein). Punching holes in the bedrock creates new connections and removes barriers between

⁴⁹ **Attachment E**, ONRW Petition, pp. 11-14, 19; **Attachment F**, ONRW Hearing Officer's Report.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ **Attachment M**, Water Quality Variance Decision, pp. 5-6.

layers of the aquifer, which can change how water is stored. There is reasonable potential for drilling and mining activities to change where water is stored within the aquifer, especially if there are perched aquifers.⁵² Water could drain down to a deeper depth or move between fractures.

Unintended consequences of drilling in the area proposed for withdrawal could include impacts to springs, wetlands, and other surface waters that rely on and connect to the shallow aquifer. Springs, wetlands, and areas with shallow aquifers provide a number of important services, such as reducing the risk of wildland fires by increasing soil moisture in a broader area, providing refuge to plants and animals when fires do occur; providing habitat and forage for wildlife, and supporting biodiversity. If drilling or mining activities cause groundwater to recede, the springs and multiple related values will be negatively impacted. The area will lose value for biodiversity and will become less resilient to disturbance and wildfire.

7. Santa Fe Watershed

The City of Santa Fe, New Mexico's capital, is home to a population of approximately 90,000 residents. The Santa Fe Municipal Watershed consists of 17,200 acres within the upper Santa Fe River Watershed and is located within the public lands of the Santa Fe National Forest, part of which is designated as the Pecos Wilderness. Santa Fe obtains 30-50% of its municipal water supply from the Santa Fe River, which constitutes the City's cleanest and cheapest water source. In 2022 and 2025, the City of Santa Fe used Santa Fe River water to provide supplemental water to the neighboring City of Las Vegas, New Mexico, home to about 15,000 residents. In 2022, Las Vegas experienced municipal water shortages because flooding on the burn scar from the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon wildfire overwhelmed the city's water treatment infrastructure. In 2025, a major water leak in Las Vegas left many residents without water and triggered a city-wide boil-water advisory. Santa Fe's Municipal Watershed provided a critical source of supplemental drinking water during these events in Las Vegas.

The area proposed for administrative mineral withdrawal lies just east of and adjacent to the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed. A forested ridgeline divides the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed to the west from the Upper Pecos River Watershed to the east. The full geologic connection between the Santa Fe and Pecos sides has not been comprehensively studied, but there are many springs and seeps on both sides that are likely connected. New mining claims have been made (but not explored) just east of the ridge.⁵³ The proposed administrative withdrawal would address threats to water quality on both sides of the divide and mitigate the risk of heavy metal contamination of critical water resources for the City of Santa Fe and neighboring communities. As further discussed below, the withdrawal would also reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on the Santa Fe National Forest, preventing damage to the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed.

⁵² A perched aquifer, also known as a perched water table, is a small body of water that occurs above the regional water table. A perched aquifer is created when there is an impermeable layer of rock or sediment above the main water table, but below the land surface. Perched aquifers are a type of unconfined aquifer and are usually found at a higher elevation than a regionally extensive aquifer.

⁵³ See **Attachment A**, Map (showing mining claims just east of the ridge between the two watersheds).

B. Wildlife and Plant Diversity

New Mexico is one of the most biodiverse states in the nation. The Upper Pecos River Watershed, located at the southern extent of the Rocky Mountains in a primarily arid, desert state, is home to an especially rare and fragile ecosystem. The area provides critically important wildlife habitat and resilient connected wildlife corridors,⁵⁴ giving refuge to a diversity of species. In the face of climate change and increased human pressure, this landscape provides a large, diverse, and healthy stronghold for wildlife, connecting ecologically varied habitats. The withdrawal area includes a diversity of habitats – from riparian canyons and wetlands to aspen and conifer forests. Because this valuable resource is threatened by new mining development, protection of these public lands through the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal would ensure that wildlife and ecosystems thrive into the future.

Observant visitors to the area can see signs of a diverse array of wildlife, including black bear, mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, coyote, wild turkey, dusky grouse, fox, weasel, bobcat, mountain lion, ring-tailed cat, pacific marten, skunk, raccoon, beaver, golden-mantled ground squirrel, Abert's squirrel, red squirrel, chipmunk, and cottontail rabbit.⁵⁵

An abundance of bird species can be found in the area, including golden and bald eagles; northern goshawk; peregrine falcon; northern saw-whet, ferruginous, great-horned, Mexican spotted, northern pygmy, and flammulated owls; redbelt, sharp-shinned, ferruginous, and Cooper's hawks; turkey vulture; flycatchers, including western wood pewee and Hammond's and cordilleran flycatchers; raven; band-tailed pigeon; Clark's nutcracker; western tanager; white-breasted, red-breasted, and pygmy nuthatches; mountain chickadee; American dipper; American robin; hermit thrush; Townsend's solitaire; brown creeper; Steller's jay; red crossbill; woodpeckers including red-naped and Williamson's sapsuckers, northern flicker, and hairy woodpecker; evening and black-headed grosbeaks; broad-tailed, rufous, and black-chinned hummingbirds; pine siskin; chipping sparrow; and yellow-rumped, orange-crowned, Grace's, and Virginia's warblers, to name a few.⁵⁶

Endangered, threatened, and other potentially imperiled species also call the area home. The Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) is listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and has designated critical habitat and identified protected activity centers within the area proposed for withdrawal.⁵⁷ The endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax*

⁵⁴ **Attachment N**, Habitat Connectivity Map for Upper Pecos River Watershed (showing habitat connectivity in the area proposed for withdrawal).

⁵⁵ See generally N.M. Dep't of Game and Fish, Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M), available at <https://bison-m.org/> (last visited Mar. 8, 2025); NatureServe Explorer, available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org/> (last visited Mar. 8, 2025).

⁵⁶ Cornell Lab of Ornithology, All About Birds, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/> (last visited Mar. 8, 2025).

⁵⁷ USFWS, Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS), Mexican spotted owl, available at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8196> (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

traillii extimus)⁵⁸ and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius luteus*)⁵⁹ may also occur in the area.

The Holy Ghost ipomopsis (*Ipomopsis sancti-spiritus*)⁶⁰ is a federally listed endangered plant endemic to the proposed withdrawal area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Holy Ghost as endangered in 1994. At the time, the plant's distribution was limited to a two-mile section of Holy Ghost Canyon, and it was extremely susceptible to extinction as a result. To combat this threat, recovery efforts have included establishing experimental planning sites along additional creeks in the area proposed for withdrawal, including Winsor Creek, Panchuela Creek and Indian Creek, in addition to new sites along Holy Ghost Creek. Efforts to recover the species have demonstrated positive results and have enjoyed significant community support.⁶¹

The Upper Pecos River Watershed provides fresh water downstream for hundreds of miles, contributing to high-quality aquatic habitat for native fish, and supports the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery, which produces about 136,000 catchable rainbow trout each year. The Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery was built in 1921 and is the oldest of New Mexico's six fish hatcheries. The hatchery is located about one mile north of the Village of Pecos and lies downstream of the area proposed for administrative withdrawal.

Tributaries to the Pecos River host Rio Grande cutthroat, brown, and rainbow trout. Rio Grande cutthroat trout (RGCT), New Mexico's state fish, require clean, cold water and ample, diverse riparian cover to survive.⁶² Today, RCGT occupy only about 12% of their historic range. RGCT need multiple resilient populations in order to recover and avoid extinction. Important conservation populations of RGCT live in Macho Creek and Dalton Creek, within the area proposed for withdrawal, and in an area where new mining claims have been staked. The geographic isolation of the Macho and Dalton Creek populations prevents hybridization with nonnative trout species, which has been identified as the biggest factor leading to the decline of RGCT in New Mexico.⁶³

Approximately 80% of New Mexico's wildlife species depend on riparian habitat and ecosystems at some point in their life cycle. Mining activities can cause the long-term disruption of aquatic habitats and riparian ecosystems due to water and air pollution, road construction, and other

⁵⁸ USFWS, Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS), southwestern willow flycatcher, available at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6749> (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

⁵⁹ USFWS, Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS), New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse, available at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7965> (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

⁶⁰ USDA, Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed (TEP) Plant Profile, Holy Ghost ipomopsis, available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/Rare_Plants/profiles/TEP/ipomopsis_sancti-spiritus/index.shtml (last visited Mar. 8, 2025); see also N.M. Rare Plants, Ipomopsis sancti-spiritus (Holy Ghost Ipomopsis), <https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/node/105> (last visited Mar. 8, 2025).

⁶¹ ONRW Petition, p. 9.

⁶² N.M. Department of Game and Fish, <https://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/fishing/native-new-mexico-fish/rio-grande-cutthroat-trout>.

⁶³ USFWS, Species Status Assessment for the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout, available at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/920> (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

development.⁶⁴ By protecting headwater streams and riparian habitat, the proposed withdrawal will prevent the potential negative impacts of mining on sensitive fisheries, wildlife habitat, imperiled plant and animal species, and ecosystems in the Upper Pecos River Watershed.

C. Cultural Resources

The Upper Pecos River Watershed holds great cultural value to New Mexico's diverse communities. Lands in and around the area proposed for withdrawal, including the Santa Fe National Forest and the Pecos National Historical Park, contain evidence of continuous human occupation and use of the Pecos River Valley for the past 12,000 years.⁶⁵ Indigenous people have relied on the natural resources in this area since time immemorial. Additionally, traditional Hispanic communities have occupied and used the area for over 400 years.⁶⁶

Evidence of humans in the area proposed for withdrawal dates to at least 11,500 BCE, when "Paleoindian and Archaic hunter-gatherers lived in the Upper Pecos Valley. The Paleoindians hunted now-extinct, large animals such as mastodon and giant ground sloths. Archaic hunter-gatherers began supplementing their diet with agricultural foods like corn, beans, and squash beginning circa 3500 BCE."⁶⁷

Over time, more people began to settle and farm in the area, and by the mid-1100s, Puebloan peoples had established multi-family pueblos or villages along the Pecos River and nearby water sources.⁶⁸ By around 1450, many pueblos (50-100+) began to consolidate into one larger settlement at P'ækilâ, or Pecos Pueblo, which was a center of trade, agriculture, and ceremony.⁶⁹ For generations, the Pecos River (T ó ç qk'ò P'æægi, Corn Cob River) supported the Pecos Pueblo people. In 1541, a Spanish exploration led by Francisco Vazquez de Coronado encountered the great Pueblo of P'ækilâ and described the Pueblo of more than 2,000 people as the largest of the Pueblos. Unfortunately, the encounter with the Spanish was the beginning of the decline for Pecos Pueblo, and in 1838, the remaining inhabitants moved out of the valley and joined kin at Jemez Pueblo. The headwaters of the Pecos River remain culturally significant to the descendants of Pecos Pueblo, including those who live at Jemez Pueblo. Many Pueblos and Tribes, including Jemez Pueblo and Tesuque Pueblo, maintain an

⁶⁴ Lynn B. Starnes and Don C. Gasper, Effects of Surface Mining on Aquatic Resources in North America (Revised). American Fisheries Society (AFS) Policy Statement #13. Available at <https://fisheries.org/policy-media/policy-statements/afs-policy-statement13/#:~:text=However%2C%20even%20with%20current%20regulations.and%20aquifers%20with%20toxic%20chemicals>.

⁶⁵ USDA Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest Land Management Plan, Final EIS, Vol. 1, p. 385 (July 2022), available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1046327.pdf (last visited Mar. 12, 2025).

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ National Park Service, Pecos National Historical Park, History & Culture, <https://www.nps.gov/peco/learn/historyculture/index.htm> (last visited Mar. 9, 2025).

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *Id.*

ongoing connection to the land and waters of the Upper Pecos River Watershed and continue to utilize the area for hunting, fishing, gathering, and ceremonial practices.⁷⁰

Descendants of Spanish settlers likewise have a long history in the Pecos Valley. Starting in the mid-16th century, groups of Spanish settlers arrived in the area and established mercedes (land grants).⁷¹ The descendants of these settlers still live in the area today, including members of the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant and Anton Chico Land Grant, which are recognized as political subdivisions of the State of New Mexico.⁷² The Upper Pecos River Watershed supports these mercedes by providing clean water for daily living, growing crops, raising livestock, and conducting other longstanding traditional land use practices.

D. Recreation

The Upper Pecos River Watershed is one of New Mexico's most popular outdoor recreation destinations, prized by residents and tourists alike. The Pecos River is paralleled by a narrow arterial road, Highway 63, that leads locals and visitors up the canyon, with access to the river and numerous tributary drainages.⁷³ The area lies approximately 20 miles east of Santa Fe, the state capital, and is home to a growing recreation and amenity-based economy that centers on the Pecos River and surrounding lands managed by the Santa Fe National Forest. A 2008 study conducted by USFS counted 3,700 vehicles in the canyon in one day during the summer, with average daily traffic of more than 700 vehicles passing Terrero.⁷⁴ These numbers are undoubtedly much higher today, given that outdoor recreation has experienced a surge in popularity in recent years.

The proposed withdrawal area supports a broad range of recreational activities that provide significant revenue for this region, as discussed further in the section below. Annually, thousands of people visit day-use areas and campgrounds within and adjacent to the area proposed for withdrawal. The stunning natural beauty of Pecos Canyon attracts people who engage in a diverse array of recreational activities including angling, hunting, hiking, camping, swimming, horseback riding, backpacking, sightseeing, and photography.⁷⁵ The Pecos River is one of New Mexico's best trout fishing streams,⁷⁶ and anglers come from near and far to access this important trout habitat. Robust populations of elk, mule deer, black bear, and turkey attract

⁷⁰ See **Attachment B**, Protect the Pecos Support Book, Statement from Pueblo of Jemez 2nd Lt. Governor Darly Lucero and Letter of Pueblo of Tesuque Governor Milton Herrera.

⁷¹ 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 234.

⁷² N.M. Dep't of Justice, New Mexico Land Grant-Mercedes, <https://nmdoj.gov/about-the-office/civil-affairs/land-grant-merced-digital-repository/land-grant-merced/> (last visited Mar. 9, 2025).

⁷³ 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 233.

⁷⁴ **Attachment O**, N.M. Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Dep't, State Parks Division, Pecos Canyon State Park Management Plan, p. 54 (Mar. 2024), available at https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/spd/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/PCSP-MP-2024spreadslow-res_signed.pdf [hereinafter Pecos Canyon State Park Management Plan].

⁷⁵ **Attachment G**, Pecos Wild & Scenic CRMP, p. 7.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 6-7.

hunters. The river is also a popular place for multigenerational families to enjoy gatherings near the river.⁷⁷

Developed recreational opportunities exist on the federal public lands stewarded by the Santa Fe National Forest. The USFS manages an array of recreation sites within Pecos Canyon, including campground camping (7 sites); picnicking (13 sites); day hiking (17 sites/trailheads); group camping (2 sites); backcountry access (11 sites); river and stream fishing (10 sites); and pond fishing (1 site).⁷⁸

The Santa Fe National Forest also offers undeveloped recreation. The area proposed for withdrawal lies just downstream from the 221,796-acre Pecos Wilderness, which Congress designated in 1964 and expanded in 1980. The Pecos Wilderness is part of the National Wilderness Preservation System created by the Wilderness Act of 1964,⁷⁹ which Congress passed to preserve natural conditions, provide opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and protect cultural, ecological, and historical values. The Pecos Wilderness is characterized by deep and narrow canyons, long and broad mesa tops, heavily forested slopes, and rugged ridges with peaks and lakes above timberline. The Wilderness offers an array of opportunities for primitive recreation, such as hunting, fishing, mountain climbing, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and waterfall and wildflower viewing. Much of the wilderness is easily accessible from Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and surrounding towns. Most hikers come during the summer months to explore the extensive system of trails and escape the heat of the desert below.

The State of New Mexico also manages recreational sites in Pecos Canyon. The area proposed for withdrawal surrounds Pecos Canyon State Park, located in San Miguel County. New Mexico established the 378-acre state park in 2019. The park is located on land owned by the New Mexico State Game Commission and is managed by the State Parks Division of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. In 2019, the New Mexico Legislature passed Senate Bill 280,⁸⁰ which appropriated \$2,100,000 to fund improvements to visitor services and administrative facilities within the park. “Seven recreation areas are designated within the Park, including three campgrounds/day-use areas and an additional four day-use areas.”⁸¹

The National Park Service stewards additional public land resources within Pecos Canyon. The area proposed for withdrawal is just upstream from Pecos National Historical Park, which was first designated as a state monument in 1935. It became Pecos National Monument in 1965 and was greatly enlarged and renamed the Pecos National Historical Park in 1990. The park hosts

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 7.

⁷⁸ **Attachment O**, Pecos Canyon State Park Management Plan, p. 11.

⁷⁹ Wilderness Act of 1964, 16 USC § § 1131-1136.

⁸⁰ New Mexico Senate Bill 280, Section 22(1) (2019) (relating to capital expenditures and making appropriations from the general fund), *available at* <https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/19%20Regular/final/SB0280.pdf>.

⁸¹ **Attachment O**, Pecos Canyon State Park Management Plan, p. 1.

tens of thousands of visitors each year and preserves more than 12,000 years of history and culture. The park offers amenities such as interpretive hikes, guided tours, picnicking, and fishing. The Pecos River flows through the Historical Park.

Federal and state agencies, as well as local organizations and volunteers, have dedicated a significant amount of work and resources to restoring and maintaining the recreational values of the Upper Pecos River Watershed. The proposed administrative withdrawal will protect these investments and ensure that incompatible industry and development, such as mines, processing facilities, mining roads, ore trucks, drill rigs, and heavy machinery and vehicle traffic, do not fundamentally change the character of the public lands in and around Pecos Canyon or impact recreational access to the surrounding Santa Fe National Forest and Pecos Wilderness.

E. Economic Impact

As discussed throughout these comments, the local economy in the Pecos region depends on the clean water of the Upper Pecos River Watershed to support farming, ranching, recreation-based economic activities, native plant and animal life, and downstream users, including municipalities. In addition to agriculture, the lower reaches of Pecos Canyon support both high-use recreation and traditional uses, such as small cattle grazing operations that support local livelihoods and cultural traditions.⁸²

New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy is growing. In November 2024, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis released new economic data demonstrating outdoor recreation's positive economic impact on the state.⁸³ The report found that outdoor recreation created "\$3.2 billion in value added for New Mexico, accounting for 2.4% of New Mexico GDP and 29,182 jobs in 2023."⁸⁴ The number of people using New Mexico's State Parks has been rising and currently averages about five million visitors a year.⁸⁵ Like other well-known destinations in New Mexico, "[r]ecreation has become increasingly popular in the lower portion of the Pecos River Canyon."⁸⁶ For example, a recent National Park Service report showed that in 2023, Pecos National Historical Park alone hosted 50,709 visitors who spent \$3.4 million in

⁸² 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 234.

⁸³ U.S. Dep't of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, News Release, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (Nov. 20, 2024), *available at* https://www.bea.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/orsa1124_0.pdf (last visited Mar. 8, 2025).

⁸⁴ N.M. Outdoor Recreation Division Press Release, From Trails to Jobs: Outdoor Recreation Drives \$3.2 billion economic impact in New Mexico (Nov. 18, 2024), *available at* <https://nmoutside.com/from-trails-to-jobs-outdoor-recreation-drives-3-2-billion-economic-impact-in-new-mexico/> (last visited Mar. 8, 2025).

⁸⁵ KRQE News, Tourism to New Mexico state parks on the rise (Aug. 21, 2024), <https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/tourism-to-new-mexico-state-parks-on-the-rise/>.

⁸⁶ 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 234.

communities near the park.⁸⁷ Non-local visitors contributed 95.6% of that spending,⁸⁸ which supported 47 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$4.5 million.”⁸⁹

In its Forest Plan, the Santa Fe National Forest recognized that the “Pecos River is an integral part of life for local communities and provides the foundation for the local economy, especially recreation-based businesses that rely on recreation activities in the canyon.”⁹⁰ The Pecos Business Association promotes local businesses and provides opportunities to recreate and enjoy natural, historical, and cultural resources within and around the area proposed for withdrawal.⁹¹

Recreational and traditional uses with an economic nexus include gathering forest products like herbs, Christmas trees, piñon, and fuelwood; and dispersed camping. Special uses are also common, varying from family reunions and large recreation events to commercial filming of blockbuster westerns. The Pecos River Canyon supports the local economy within and outside the forest by raising revenue from recreation, providing forest products, and providing land for grazing, all of which are integral to traditional culture and livelihoods, and support local tourism through frequent visitation.

The regional tourism economy is reliant on the continued integrity of the area within the proposed mineral withdrawal. The environmental, recreational, and scenic values discussed above together form a significant portion of the local economy.

F. Scenic Values

The area proposed for withdrawal is located at the southern tip of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, which comprise the southern end of the great Rocky Mountain chain, which runs all the way up into Canada. This scenic landscape consists of wild and rugged high mountain peaks, alpine lakes, riparian canyons that feed the Pecos River, heavily forested slopes, and intact ecosystems that support biodiversity and the needs of local communities.

⁸⁷ Flyr, M., and L. Koontz. 2024. 2023 national park visitor spending effects: Economic contributions to local communities, states, and the nation. Science Report NPS/SR—2024/174. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado. <https://doi.org/10.36967/2305351>; also available at https://www.nps.gov/nature/customcf/NPS_Data_Visualization/docs/NPS_2023_Visitor_Spending_Effects.pdf (last visited Mar. 9, 2025).

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 48.

⁸⁹ National Park Service, News Release, Tourism to Pecos National Historical Park contributes 4.5 million to local economy in 2023, available at <https://www.nps.gov/peco/learn/news/tourism-to-pecos-national-historical-park-contributes-4-5-million-to-local-economy-in-2023.htm#:~:text=Pecos%2C%20N.M.%20%E2%80%93%20A%20new%20National,local%20economy%20of%20%244.5%20million>. (last visited Mar. 9, 2025).

⁹⁰ 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 233.

⁹¹ New Mexico True, Pecos Business Association, <https://www.newmexico.org/listing/pecos-business-association/5814/#:~:text=Pecos%20Business%20Association%20promotes%20the,beautiful%20area%20has%20to%20offer>.

The verdant creeks, canyons, and wetlands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed are bounded by high-elevation peaks and ridgelines. Dominant peaks within the area proposed for withdrawal include 10,554-foot Thompson Peak and the western slope of Glorieta Baldy. Lake Peak and Penitente Peak lie just north of the proposed withdrawal area, within the Pecos Wilderness. Elevations range from 7,884 feet at the confluence of Dalton and Wild Horse Canyons, up to 12,100 feet at the northwestern ridgeline of the existing Pecos Wilderness boundary, just south of Penitente Peak. The area's high points afford panoramic views of the greater Pecos River Valley and its essential riparian areas, in addition to expansive views of the surrounding Pecos Wilderness and southern Rocky Mountains.

Mining can be a highly visible land use change, eliminating vegetation, reshaping mountain topography, and requiring significant infrastructure. A large part of what makes the Pecos Valley attractive to visitors and locals alike is the picturesque landscapes. Mines and mining developments in the segregated area would potentially be visible from the Village of Pecos, City of Santa Fe, and surrounding communities and wilderness areas.

G. Public Health and Safety

The proposed withdrawal will prevent negative public health and safety impacts that would result from new mineral development in the Upper Pecos River Watershed, including industrial development, increased traffic volume, and impaired water and air quality associated with drilling, mining, and milling.

First, the area proposed for withdrawal lacks the transportation infrastructure required for mining activities, especially large, heavy mining vehicles and equipment. As noted above, people access the area proposed for withdrawal via a narrow two-lane highway, N.M. 63, which snakes through the forested canyon parallel to the Pecos River. Residents and tourists use this beautiful roadway for daily living and recreational pursuits. However, many locals consider this roadway dangerous because multiple fatal vehicle accidents have occurred on the highway's tight and blind curves. Because the canyon is narrow, vehicles involved in these accidents, including a school bus, have ended up in the Pecos River. The proposed administrative withdrawal will prevent additional accidents and hazardous material spills that would inevitably occur if Highway 63 were used for new mining development and traffic. Moreover, Highway 63 is not designed to accommodate heavy vehicles and increased traffic for mining operations, especially equipment like drill rigs and massive mining haul trucks. Even without these impacts, sections of the highway are often in poor condition and require frequent maintenance due to precipitation events and heavy visitor usage.

Second, the area proposed for withdrawal typically has good air quality. In fact, the air quality in and around the Santa Fe National Forest is often some of the best in the country, exceeding regulatory requirements.⁹² It is anticipated that several factors may have a negative impact on air quality in the future, including development, climate change, and drought, which contribute to

⁹² 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 97.

windblown and fugitive dust; and wildfires, which produce particulate matter.⁹³ Activities associated with mineral exploration and development, such as drilling, mining, hauling, and milling, create dust that would contribute to a decline in local air quality. Additionally, hydrocarbon emissions from vehicles, drill rigs, diesel generators, pumps, and other machinery could further reduce visibility, increase ground-level ozone pollution, and stress ecosystems. Finally, as further explained below, mineral development could increase the risk of catastrophic wildfires, which cause significant short-term degradation of air quality. The proposed withdrawal will prevent these potential adverse impacts on air quality.

Third, as described above, past mining and milling activities in and around the area proposed for withdrawal have caused significant adverse impacts on water quality, and there is a very real potential for new mining to cause additional contamination of surface and groundwater sources. The withdrawal will protect human health by reducing accumulation of additional heavy metal contaminants in the waters of the Pecos Valley and downstream communities, which have already suffered disproportionate health impacts from past mining. Cumulative health risks and impacts can result from multiple or cumulative pollutant exposures and can be compounded by structural, social, and economic inequities. As compared to the United States or even the State of New Mexico, the communities in and around the Pecos Valley have lower median incomes and a higher percentage of persons who identify as Hispanic/Latino, as shown in this table.⁹⁴

	Population	Median Household Income	Percentage Hispanic/Latino
United States	331,449,281	\$67,521	18.7%
New Mexico	2,117,522	\$51,243	47.7%
San Miguel County	27,201	\$32,310	75.3%
Village of Pecos	1,392	\$35,771	79.7%

Finally, mining pollution can have health impacts on hunters and anglers who rely on the health of stream ecosystems to ensure that fish and game are safe to eat. After entering aquatic ecosystems, heavy metals accumulate in aquatic tissues and then move up the food chain. Effects of heavy metals in the environment can include “a decrease in aquatic reproductive capacity, respiratory and neurological problems, etc., and also due to its accumulation in the body (bioaccumulation) and their transmission to subsequent consumers, including humans, can have side effects.”⁹⁵

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ **Attachment O**, Pecos Canyon State Park Management Plan, p. 10 (providing statistics from the 2020 U.S. Census).

⁹⁵ 6 Vajargah MF. A review on the effects of heavy metals on aquatic animals. J Fish Res 2021; 5(5):22-26.

In sum, the proposed withdrawal would support human health by preventing traffic accidents, hazardous materials spills, degradation of air and water quality, and impacts to ecological systems that provide food and subsistence to families and communities. The withdrawal would also prevent past social injustices from being repeated and compounded, and would protect clean, safe, reliable drinking water for current and future generations of New Mexicans.

H. Wildfire Risk Mitigation

In recent decades, wildfires in and around Pecos Canyon have affected the landscape and impacted local communities, both economically and socially.⁹⁶ Within and adjacent to Pecos Canyon, the Viveash (2000), Dalton (2002), Tres Lagunas (2013), and Jaroso (2013) fires caused officials to close the canyon intermittently over the course of 15 years, “each time impacting the social fabric and economic viability of local communities.”⁹⁷

More recently, in April 2022, the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire burned 341,735 acres (over 500 square miles) of land on and near the Santa Fe National Forest, near the area proposed for withdrawal. The fire was the largest in New Mexico history and burned over 900 structures. Small communities in and around the area are still recovering from the significant impact of the disaster and continue to be at risk of massive and devastating flooding, especially when monsoon season rains fall on the burn scar. An independent actuarial report prepared in 2024 calculated a cost of over \$5 billion in liability for losses suffered in the fire.⁹⁸

Mineral exploration and development would significantly increase wildfire risk due to deforestation and increased access and motorized equipment in remote forested areas, which lead to human-caused ignitions. These impacts would be worsened if drilling and mining activities dry up creeks, springs, and wetlands in the Upper Pecos River Watershed.

The proposed withdrawal is a necessary step toward supporting wildfire risk mitigation in and around the Upper Pecos River Watershed.

III. SUPPORT FOR THE MINERAL WITHDRAWAL

The proposal to protect the Upper Pecos River Watershed from mining enjoys broad public support. This support has been expressed at all levels of government, by state and local elected officials as well as Congress. The withdrawal also has the support of sovereign tribal governments, mercedes, acequias, and a broad number of community groups. Local residents and New Mexicans from across the state have weighed in with unequivocal enthusiasm to request that the withdrawal proposal move forward. This support is summarized below and

⁹⁶ 2022 Santa Fe Forest Plan, p. 233.

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ Strategic Technology Institute, Inc., Hermit’s Peak/Calf Canyon Fires 2024 Actuarial Report of the Claim Liability Forecast Estimate (Oct. 16, 2025), *available at* https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_hpcc_actuarial-report-of-hpcc-liability.pdf (last visited Mar. 9, 2025).

demonstrated in detail in the enclosed Protect the Pecos Support Book.⁹⁹ The approximately 360 individual supporters reflected in the Support Book signed a petition in support of protecting the Pecos between 2022-2044, before DOI initiated the current 90-day comment period commenced by the December 2024 Notice of Withdrawal. Public comments gathered by our organizations during the formal 90-day period will be submitted separately.

A. **Federal Legislation**

Multiple legislative attempts have been made to enact a permanent mineral withdrawal to protect clean water and other resources in the Upper Pecos River Watershed. The Pecos Watershed Protection Act was introduced in the 116th,¹⁰⁰ 117th,¹⁰¹ and 118th¹⁰² Congress. Most recently, on December 14, 2023, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources recommended by majority vote that the Senate pass the bill, S.3033. These efforts demonstrate broad support for managing these lands to protect clean, safe, reliable water supplies and other resources that could be damaged by additional mining in this sensitive area.

B. **Governmental Support**

As demonstrated by the Protect the Pecos Support Book, New Mexico's leaders at every level of government have responded to constituents who are advocating for protection of the Upper Pecos River Watershed and supported the efforts. The proposed administrative mineral withdrawal has express support from following leadership, among others.

- New Mexico's Congressional Delegation, including Sen. Martin Heinrich, Sen. Ben Ray Luján, Rep. Teresa Ledger Fernández; Rep. Melanie Stansbury, and Rep. Gabe Vasquez;
- Congressional Hispanic Caucus;
- Members of the New Mexico State Legislature, including but not limited to Senators Liz Stefanics and Peter Wirth; and Representatives Ambrose Castellano, Joseph Sanchez, and Anita Gonzales;
- New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham;
- New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands, Stephanie Garcia Richard;
- Village of Pecos, NM;
- San Miguel County, NM; and
- Santa Fe County, NM.

At a state level, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has supported a withdrawal, and the New Mexico State Legislature has also been supportive. On March 11, 2025, the New Mexico House of Representatives passed House Joint Memorial 5, which expresses support for "federal administrative action and permanent protections" for the Upper Pecos River Watershed

⁹⁹ **Attachment B**, Protect the Pecos Support Book.

¹⁰⁰ S.4599 (116th Cong.).

¹⁰¹ S.182 (117th Cong.); H.R.5628 (117th Cong.).

¹⁰² S.3033 (118th Cong.); H.R.5943 (118th Cong.).

“to safeguard critical water resources, the local economy, the environment and cultural heritage.”¹⁰³ At this time, the memorial is awaiting a vote by the New Mexico Senate.

On March 12, 2025, State Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard issued Executive Order No. 2025-001, which enacted a moratorium on mineral leasing on state trust lands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed. The State Land Commissioner took this action due to the sensitive nature of the Upper Pecos Watershed and the need to “safeguard the water and lands that sustain agriculture, outdoor recreational activities, clean drinking water and fish and wildlife, while also providing the federal government time to consider appropriate administrative and legislative designations to protect the broader landscape.”¹⁰⁴

On a local level, the area proposed for administrative withdrawal is located within the counties of San Miguel and Santa Fe and near the Village of Pecos. These jurisdictions have taken multiple legislative and policy actions to support a mineral withdrawal.

First, both counties have taken steps to enact local mining legislation to ensure public health, safety, and welfare; and to protect the environment, water, air, wildlife, habitat, natural resources, and cultural and historical resources. On August 28, 2019, the Santa Fe County Commission adopted Ordinance No. 2019-2, amending the land development code and adopting regulations for mineral resource exploration, extraction, and processing.¹⁰⁵ On September 15, 2021, the San Miguel County Commission adopted Ordinance SMC-No. 09-15-2021-P&Z, enacting requirements for mineral resource exploration, extraction, and processing within the boundaries of San Miguel County to protect the citizens and the environment from harmful and hazardous toxic effects and nuisances that result from mining.¹⁰⁶

Second, local governments have passed multiple resolutions supporting a legislative and administrative mineral withdrawal to protect water and other values in the Upper Pecos River Watershed. On May 9, 2023, San Miguel County adopted Resolution No. 05-09-23 “In Support of the Administrative and Legislative Protection of the Upper Pecos River Watershed through the Withdrawal of Mineral Rights.” On May 10, 2023, the Village of Pecos, New Mexico passed Resolution 2023-006, “In Support of the Administrative Protection of the Upper Pecos River Watershed through the Withdrawal of Mineral Rights.” And on June 13, 2023, Santa Fe County adopted Resolution No. 2023-055, “A Resolution Supporting the Administrative and Legislative Protection of the Upper Pecos River Watershed through the Withdrawal of Mineral Rights.”

¹⁰³ **Attachment P**, State of N.M. 57th Legislature, House Joint Memorial 5 (1st Sess. 2025).

¹⁰⁴ **Attachment Q**, State of NM, Commissioner of Public Lands, Executive Order No. 2025-001, Moratorium on Mineral Leasing in the Upper Pecos River Watershed (Mar. 12, 2025).

¹⁰⁵ Santa Fe County, Ordinance No. 2019-2, An Ordinance Amending the Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC), *available at* https://www.santafecountynm.gov/documents/ordinances/Ordinance_2019-2.pdf (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

¹⁰⁶ San Miguel County Ordinance No. SMC-09-15-2021-PZ, Mineral Resource Exploration, Extraction and Processing, *available at* <https://cms6.revize.com/revize/sanmiguelcounty/Mineral%20Resource%20Exploration-Extraction-Processing%20Ordinance%2009-15-2021P&Z.pdf> (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

The federal agencies should coordinate their land use planning and management activities with state and local governments, to the extent consistent with federal law, and should incorporate state and local decision making and policy statements into a federal decision that finalizes the proposed 20-year administrative withdrawal through the issuance of a public land order.

C. Sovereign Pueblo Support

The proposed administrative mineral withdrawal has support from Pueblos. As described above, Indigenous peoples have lived in and used the area proposed for withdrawal since time immemorial, and multiple Pueblos and Tribes maintain an ongoing connection with the lands and waters of the Upper Pecos River Watershed, including but not limited to:

- Pueblo of Jemez; and
- Pueblo of Tesuque.

D. Acequias and Mercedes

New Mexico's acequias and mercedes (land grants) are an integral part of New Mexico's cultural fabric and have stewarded these lands and waters for generations. Multiple acequias and mercedes rely on the clean water and natural resources of the Upper Pecos River Watershed to maintain their livelihoods and traditional uses. As shown in the Support Book,¹⁰⁷ the following acequia organizations and land grant communities have expressed their support for the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal:

- New Mexico Acequia Commission;
- New Mexico Acequia Association;
- Cow Creek Basin Acequia Association;
- San Miguel del Bado Land Grant; and
- Anton Chico Land Grant.

E. Local Organizations and Residents

The proposed administrative mineral withdrawal enjoys the support of local businesses, community organizations, and members of the public, including youth who have grown up near the Pecos River and have formed a deep connection to its clear waters, thriving ecosystems, and the rich cultural traditions it supports. The Support Book reflects the importance of the proposal to the community and includes statements of support from the following:

- 48 Businesses and Community Organizations; and
- 360+ Individual Members of the Public and 11 local Pecos youth.

¹⁰⁷ **Attachment B**, Protect the Pecos Support Book.

IV. CONCLUSION

In New Mexico, there is nothing more valuable than a clean, safe, reliable water supply. The Pecos River headwaters support local communities and economies, cultural traditions and resources, agriculture and ranching, fish and wildlife, and recreation. We strongly support DOI's proposal to withdraw approximately 164,810 acres of land in the Upper Pecos River Watershed from location and entry under the United States mining laws and leasing under the mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of 20 years. The proposal enjoys broad support in New Mexico, including from federal, state, and local leadership; Pueblos; acequias and land grant communities; and local businesses, organizations, residents, and youth. The two-year mineral segregation is a good first step toward protecting New Mexico's water security and resources. We urge the agencies to promptly schedule and conduct the public meeting that was postponed in February 2025 and to complete the necessary environmental reviews. We respectfully request that the Secretary of Interior issue a final public land order enacting a twenty-year administrative withdrawal before the expiration of the two-year segregation period.

We appreciate your time and consideration evaluating these comments. Sally Paez, staff attorney for New Mexico Wild, has been authorized to submit this comment letter on behalf of the groups listed below. Please contact Sally Paez with any questions about this letter. We would be happy to discuss these comments with you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sally Paez", is written over a horizontal line.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (New Mexico Wild)

Sally Paez, Staff Attorney
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
(505) 843-8696
sally@nmwild.org

Upper Pecos Watershed Association

Frank Adelo, President
P.O. Box 140
Pecos, NM 87552
upwa@pecoswatershed.org

Molino de la Isla Organics LLC

Ralph Vigil, Owner
Pecos, NM 87552
ralph@nmwild.org

New Mexico Acequia Association

Paula Garcia, Executive Director
805 Early St., Suite 203B
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 995-9644
lamorena@lasacequias.org

Santa Fe Watershed Association

Morika Vorenberg Hensley, Executive Director
1413 Second St., Suite 3
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-820-1696
mori@santafewatershed.org

American Rivers

Rachel Ellis, Southwest River Protection Program
P.O. Box 30711, Flagstaff, AZ 86003
rellis@americanrivers.org

Amigos Bravos

Sarah Knopp, Policy Specialist
114 Des Georges Places
Taos, NM 87571
(575) 758-3874
sknopp@amigosbravos.org

Hispanics Enjoying Camping Hunting and the Outdoors (HECHO)

Max Trujillo, Regional Field Manager
max@hechoonline.org

The Wilderness Society

Michael Casaus, New Mexico State Director
317 Commercial St. NE, Ste. 313
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-247-0834
michael_casaus@twc.org

National Parks Conservation Association

Maude Dinan, New Mexico Program Manager
505-423-3550
mdinan@npca.org

Forest Trust

Henry H. Carey

P.O. Box 8309

Santa Fe, NM 87504

505.670.2833

henry@forestreserve.com

Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter

Teresa Seamster, Mining Co-Chair

2215 Lead Ave. SE

Albuquerque, NM 87106

ctc.seamster@gmail.com

Attachments:

Attachment A: Map, Pecos Administrative Mineral Withdrawal

Attachment B: Protect the Pecos Support Book

Attachment C: New Mexico 50-Year Water Action Plan

Attachment D: American Rivers, America's Most Endangered Rivers 2021

Attachment E: 2020 ONRW Petition

Attachment F: 2022 ONRW Hearing Officer Report

Attachment G: 2003 Pecos Wild & Scenic River CRMP

Attachment H: 1992 Administrative Order on Consent

Attachment I: 1995 Robinson Report

Attachment J: 1995 LeMore Study Paper

Attachment K: 2015 NMED Briefing Report to Legislative Committee

Attachment L: 2012 NMED Presentation to BLM

Attachment M: 2018 WQCC Variance Decision

Attachment N: Map of Resilient Connected Habitat Network

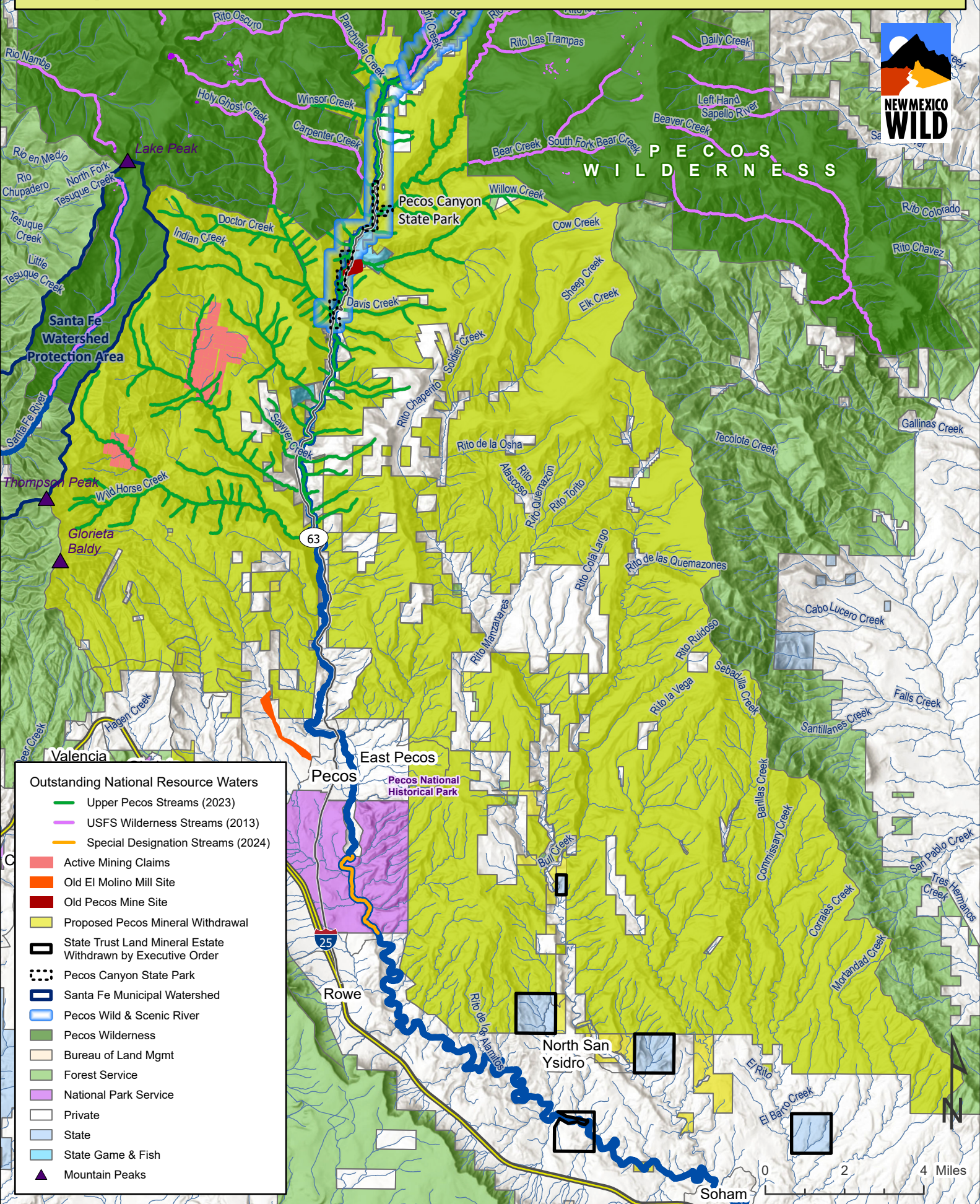
Attachment O: Pecos Canyon State Park Management Plan

Attachment P: N.M. Legislature House Joint Memorial 5 (2025)

Attachment Q: N.M. State Land Commissioner Executive Order 2025-001

Attachment A:
Map, Pecos Administrative
Mineral Withdrawal

Proposed Pecos Administrative Mineral Withdrawal



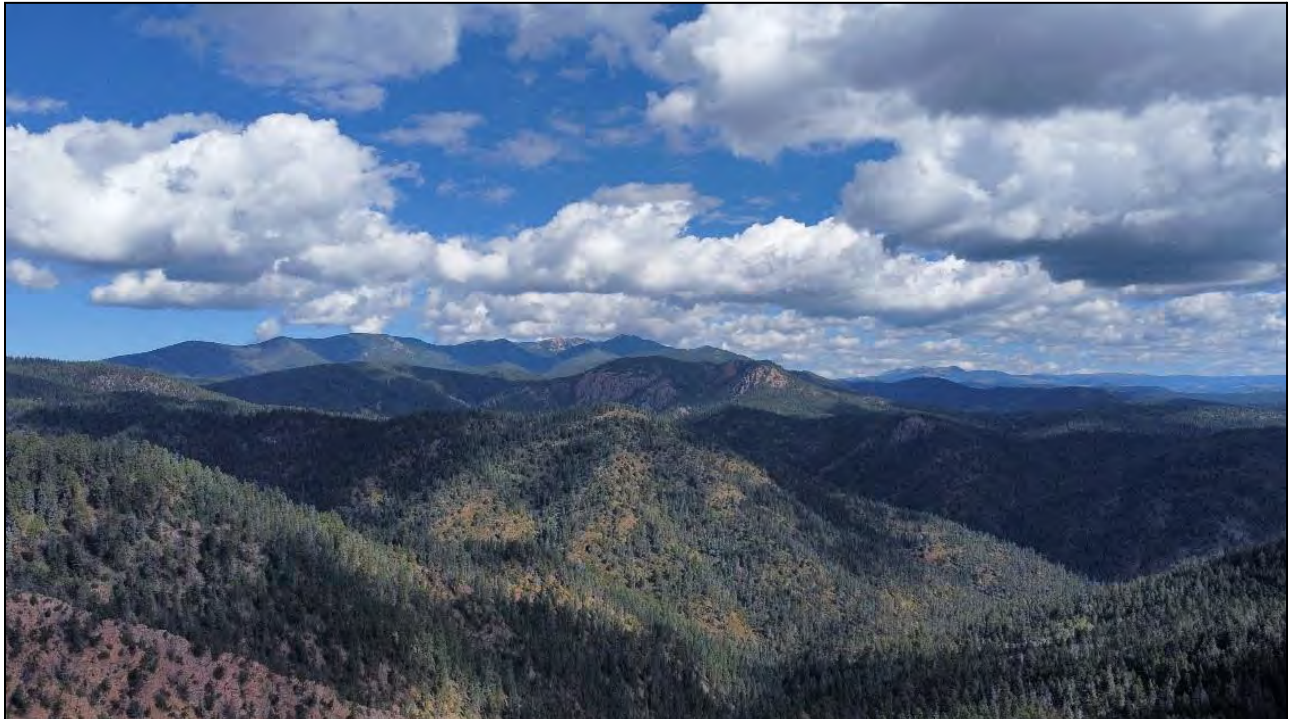
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 - Pecos Wilderness
 - Bureau of Land Mgmt
 - Forest Service
 - National Park Service
 - Private
 - State
 - State Game & Fish
 - ▲ Mountain Peaks



**Attachment B:
Protect the Pecos
Support Book**



Support for Mineral Withdrawal for Pecos Watershed



SUPPORT FOR PECOS WATERSHED MINERAL WITHDRAWAL

Governments

Pueblo of Jemez
Pueblo of Tesuque
Village of Pecos
Santa Fe County
San Miguel County

Elected Officials

U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján
U.S. Representative Teresa Leger Fernández
U.S. Representative Melanie Stansbury
U.S. Representative Gabe Vasquez
New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
State Senator Liz Stefanics
State Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth
State Representative Ambrose Castellano
State Representative Joseph Sanchez
San Miguel County Commissioner Janice Varela
San Miguel County Commissioner Max Trujillo
San Miguel County Commissioner Harold Garcia
San Miguel County Commissioner Kenneth Medina
San Miguel County Commissioner Martin Sena
Santa Fe County Commissioner Anna Hansen
Santa Fe County Commissioner Camilla Bustamante
Santa Fe County Commissioner Anna Hamilton
Santa Fe County Commissioner Jusin Greene
Santa Fe County Commissioner Hank Hughes
Mayor Telesfor “Ted” Benavidez, Village of Pecos
Mayor Pro Tem Ralph Lopez, Village of Pecos
Trustee Herman Gallegos, Village of Pecos
Trustee Brian Sandoval, Village of Pecos
Trustee Armando Gabaldon, Village of Pecos

Business and Community Support

American Rivers
Amigos Bravos
Audubon Southwest
Center for Civic Policy
Conservation Voters New Mexico
CAVU – Climate Advocates Voces Unidas

Defenders of Wildlife
Earth Keepers 360
Earthworks
EcoFlight
Flowerhill Institute
Forest Trust
Gila Resources Information Project
HECHO (Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting and the Outdoors)
Hummingbird Cabin on the Pecos
Las Vegas Community Water Board
Las Vegas Peace & Justice Center
Molino de la Isla Organics
NACA Inspired Schools Network
National Parks Conservation Association
Native Land Institute
New Mexico Acequia Association
New Mexico Acequia Commission
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
New Mexico Climate Justice
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
New Mexico Wild
Pecos NM Business Association
Pecos River Cabins
Pecos River Open Spaces
Pecos Self Storage
Pueblo Action Alliance
Reflective Jewelry
River Source, Inc.
Santa Fe Fat Tire Society
Santa Fe Fly Fishing Schools
Santa Fe Watershed Association
Semilla Project
Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Wilderness Society
Trout Unlimited
Upper Pecos Watershed Association
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Leaders Network
Western Resource Advocates
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlands Network

Individual Supporters

Over 300 individuals!

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- xvii. Precious resource under threat: New Mexico's waters, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (4/28/2022)
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THE FIGHT TO PROTECT THE PECOS IS FAR FROM OVER!

RALPH VIGIL

THE PECOS IS MORE THREATENED THAN EVER BY INTERNATIONAL MINING COMPANY'S EXPANDING CLAIMS

THE PECOS IS IRREPLACEABLE, and its mountains, rivers, watershed, mesas, and forests belong to the people of New Mexico. This area has been devastated by irresponsible mining activity in the past. Our lands, water, and way of life are again under threat from extensive new mining proposals in the Upper Pecos watershed.

In 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado-based subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd, acquired 20 mining claims in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, NM. Comexico applied for permits to conduct exploratory drilling for gold, copper, zinc, lead, and silver. This initial exploratory drilling would adversely impact more than 400 acres and five tributaries of the Pecos, plus the river's mainstem. This threat led to the formation of the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition and, to date, Comexico has yet to be issued permits.

However, since 2019, Comexico has gained ownership of over 236 mining claims in the greater Pecos headwaters. The possibility of destructive hardrock mining now goes well beyond the original exploratory drilling sites, as shown by the "Active mining claims" map. The area now claimed by Comexico covers 4300 acres and, if developed, would impact the entire Pecos watershed and possibly Santa Fe's municipal watershed.

OUR GOALS:

- > PROTECT BOTH THE PECOS WATERSHED AND SANTA FE MUNICIPAL WATERSHED
- > PREVENT EXPLORATORY DRILLING OF THE JONES HILL DEPOSITS
- > PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY EXPANDED MINES AND PROCESSING SITES
- > PREVENT ADDITIONAL NEW MINING CLAIMS FROM BEING STAKED IN THE PECOS
- > IF ANY EXPLORATION OR FULL-SCALE MINING IS APPROVED, ENSURE THAT THE MOST PROTECTIVE LIMITATIONS AND CONDITIONS ARE PUT INTO PLACE TO PROTECT RESOURCES

The Stop Tererro Mine Coalition is a group of local community, governmental, tribal, agricultural, business, and conservation partners working to protect the Pecos from threats of hard rock mining.

WWW.STOPTERERROMINE.ORG

HOW WE CAN PROTECT THE PECOS:

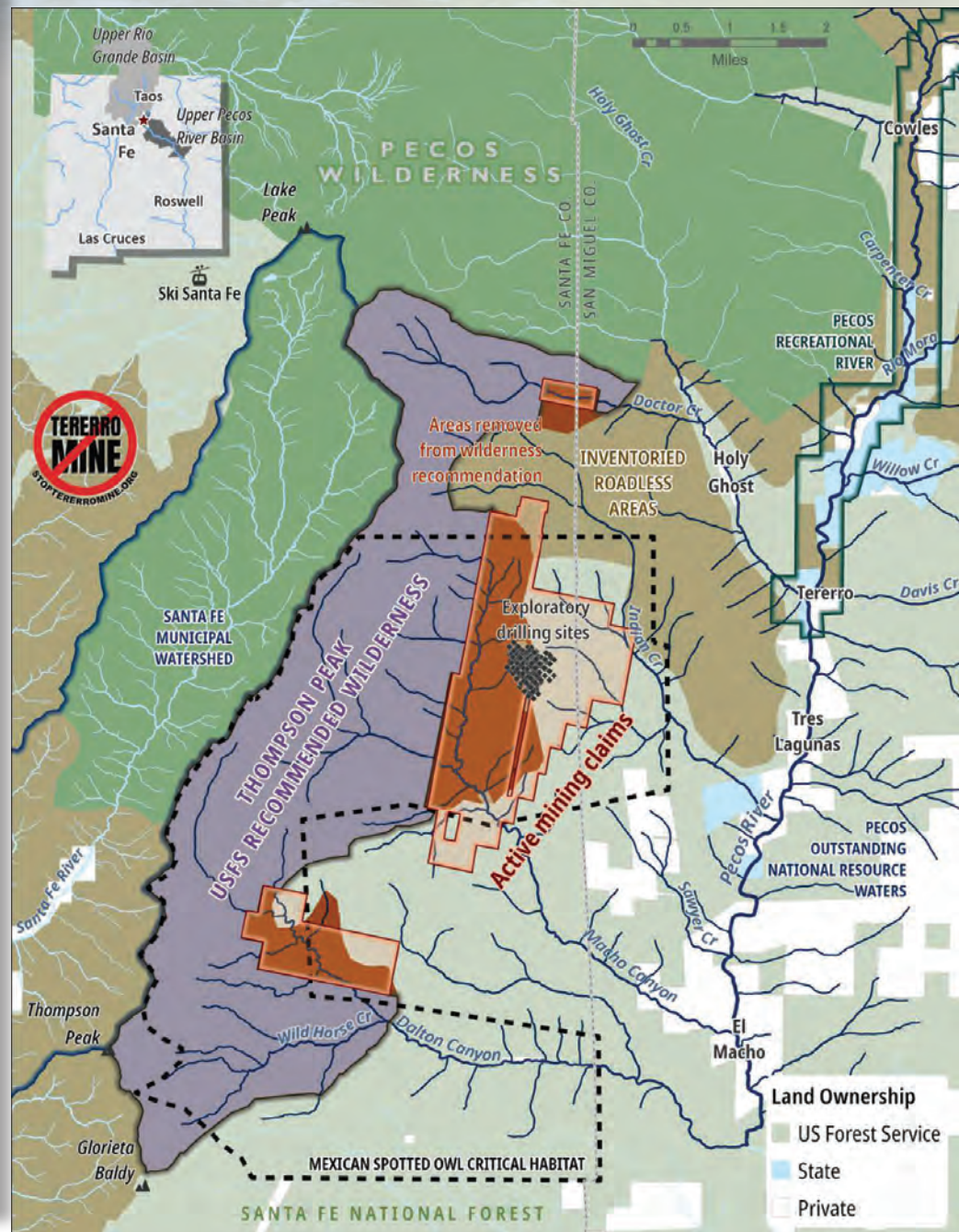
CREATE AN ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE MINERAL WITHDRAWAL TO PROTECT CRITICAL CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES, ESPECIALLY WATER, IN THE PECOS WATERSHED: We continue to work to secure permanent protection with Congress through a legislative mineral withdrawal such as that described by the Pecos Watershed Protection Act proposed by the New Mexico Congressional delegation. Additionally, we are requesting the Secretary of Interior to enact a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal of the Pecos headwaters, which would provide immediate protection.

DESIGNATE THOMPSON PEAK AND SURROUNDING LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS AS WILDERNESS: We are working with our community to advance legislation for Congress to designate new wilderness for lands in the Santa Fe National Forest that qualify. Wilderness can enhance protections for water quality, forest health, biodiversity, and cultural and historical resources that are important to local communities and tribes. As shown on the map, the U.S. Forest Service is managing the "Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness" to protect its wilderness characteristics, but declined to provide this protection to surrounding wilderness quality lands, including Comexico's mining claims area.

ENFORCE OUTSTANDING NATIONAL RESOURCE WATERS DESIGNATION: New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission has designated 180 miles of stream and 43 acres of wetlands in the Pecos watershed, which prohibits any degradation of water quality. We must mandate US Forest Service compliance with these water quality protections to ensure that there is no degradation to these high-quality headwaters streams.



AMIGOS BRAVOS/JIM O'DONNELL



WE NEED YOUR HELP! GO TO WWW.STOPTERROMINE.ORG TO LEARN HOW TO TAKE ACTION.

Proposed Administrative Mineral Withdrawal - Upper Pecos Watershed

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an administrative withdrawal?

An administrative withdrawal is a management tool that temporarily limits certain activities on public land, such as hard rock mining and mineral and geothermal leasing, to maintain other public values in the area, such as protecting water, cultural, ecological, scientific, scenic, historical, environmental, air, or archaeological resources.¹ An administrative withdrawal does not affect or limit any other uses of the land.

What is the threat to the Upper Pecos Watershed?

Water is an especially precious resource in New Mexico. Pollution from hard rock mines has contaminated watersheds across the western United States. Toxic spills and acid mine drainage kill fish and wildlife, poison community drinking water, and pose serious health risks. The American public does not receive royalties when international companies extract minerals from public land, and the public often pays for cleanup costs.

This threat is not hypothetical: the Pecos Valley is still recovering from irresponsible mining that contaminated the river in the 1920-30's, and then again in the 1990's. American Metals mined 2 million tons of ore, leaving a tremendous waste rock pile that leached acid into the Pecos River following heavy rains, sanitizing two different sections of the river and creating cancer plumes in the Valley. The mining efforts in the early 1990's by Conoco Inc. caused the death of over 90,000 trout. All these actions required the State of New Mexico to pay over \$28 million of public money in cleanup costs.

Despite this devastating history, an international mining company, New World Resources Ltd., through a Colorado subsidiary, Comexico LLC, wants to develop hundreds of mining claims spanning 4300 acres in the Upper Pecos Watershed within an inventoried roadless area of the Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF), adjacent to the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed.² Comexico has filed applications with the SFNF³ and the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division (MMD)⁴ to conduct exploratory drilling for copper, gold, and zinc on 20 of the mining claims. The SFNF is preparing an Environmental Assessment to study the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).⁵ The MMD will not grant a permit until Comexico has provided evidence that federal approval has been or will be issued, and after the MMD has conducted a public hearing.

¹ See Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2760, p.2 (June 1, 1990) (supplemented Jan. 24, 1995).

² See New World Resources Ltd. Website, <https://newworldres.com/tererro-copper-gold-zinc-project> (last visited Feb. 7, 2023) (explaining that the company has the right to acquire a 100% interest in 20 pre-existing unpatented federal mining claims for a volcanogenic massive sulfide (VMS) ore deposit covering 400 acres, and further stating that the company has staked new Federal mining claims, covering 4,300 acres, that encompass what the company calls "multiple under-explored VMS prospects").

³ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56733>.

⁴ <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/mining-act-reclamation-program/pending-and-approved-exploration-applications/pending-exploration-applications-regular/sf040er-tererro-exploration-project/>.

⁵ National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.

In addition to threatening the quality and quantity of critical water resources in the Upper Pecos Watershed, the proposed mining would have negative impacts on cultural resources important to local Pueblos and Tribes, rare native populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout, wildlife including endangered Mexican spotted owls which have designated critical habitat and protected activity centers in the area, agriculture, recreation, and the local economy.

What is the goal of this proposal?

The goal is to immediately protect the upper Pecos Watershed from the threat of hard rock mining through administrative action, which can be implemented as soon as the withdrawal is proposed. The administrative withdrawal would prevent new hard rock mining claims on approximately 165,000 acres of public land managed by the SFNF and approximately 1,600 acres of adjacent public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). An administrative withdrawal would secure temporary protection, pending permanent protection by Congress, and would support the reintroduction and passage of the “Pecos Watershed Protection Act” or similar federal legislation.

Who is working on this proposal?

The Stop Tererro Mine (STM) coalition is a diverse group made up of local community, governmental, tribal, agricultural, business, and conservation partners working to protect the lands and waters in the Upper Pecos Watershed from the adverse effects of hard rock mineral exploration and mining.

What are the core values of the coalition?

The values of the STM coalition include the following:

- Ensure clean and safe drinking water.
- Protect and restore forest, river, and watershed health.
- Protect cultural resources.
- Benefit New Mexico’s economy, acequia communities, and agriculture.
- Maintain and improve fisheries, wildlife habitat, and wildlife corridors.
- Maintain the naturalness and wild character of roadless areas and wilderness quality lands.
- Sustain opportunities for recreation.

What is the authority for administrative withdrawal and how does it affect the use of the land?

Federal law⁶ grants the Secretary of the Department of Interior the authority to withdraw federal public land from:

1. entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws (i.e., the sale of public land);
2. location, entry, and patent under the mining laws⁷ (i.e., hard rock mining); and
3. disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing (i.e., drilling for oil, gas, and steam) or mineral materials (e.g., gravel pits).

⁶ Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), 43 U.S.C. § 1702(j) (Section 202, authorizing the “withholding [of] an area of Federal land from settlement, sale, location, or entry, under some or all of the general land laws, for the purpose of limiting activities under those laws, in order to maintain other public values in the area or reserving the area for a particular public purpose or program”).

⁷ General Mining Act of 1872, 30 U.S.C. §§ 22 et seq.

What are the steps in the process?

1. The Secretary of Interior either proposes a withdrawal “on the secretary’s own motion” or receives an application for withdrawal from the federal agency that manages the public land.⁸ The coalition is asking the Secretary to initiate a withdrawal on her own, but the same result could stem from an application filed by the SFNF and BLM, which manage the land proposed for withdrawal.
2. The Secretary of Interior publishes a “Notice of Proposed Withdrawal” in the Federal Register, stating the extent to which the land will be withdrawn from the operation of the public land laws while the proposal is being considered.⁹
3. The notice starts a temporary withdrawal period called a “segregation” that lasts for up to 2 years to allow time for study, analysis, and public input.¹⁰
4. During the segregation period, the federal agency that manages the segregated lands conducts the environmental review required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and prepares an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, as appropriate.
5. The federal agency that performed the NEPA analysis prepares a withdrawal package and submits it to the Secretary of Interior.
6. The Secretary of Interior reviews the withdrawal package, including the NEPA documents, and decides whether to proceed with the withdrawal.
7. For an area of land of 5000 acres or more, the Secretary of Interior can approve a withdrawal that lasts for a period of up to 20 years.¹¹

Will an administrative mineral withdrawal prevent mining in the Upper Pecos Watershed?

Maybe. No new mining claims can be established or developed on lands that have been withdrawn. A withdrawal is, however, subject to “valid existing rights” that predate the withdrawal.¹² Existing mining claimants that are in good standing with BLM are not affected by the segregation or administrative withdrawal until mining operations are proposed. If new mining operations are proposed on withdrawn or segregated lands, the mining claimant must demonstrate valid existing rights. If a mining company such as Comexico can demonstrate that it had valid existing rights at the time of the withdrawal, those rights would remain valid, and the mining claims could potentially be developed, subject to conditions designed to protect environmental and cultural resources and to ensure the proper restoration and remediation of the land.

What is the process for determining whether a mining claim is a “valid existing right”?

If a mining claimant submits a proposed mining plan to the Forest Service on lands that have been segregated or withdrawn, a certified Forest Service mineral examiner would make a mineral investigation of the unpatented mining claim. The mineral examiner's findings, conclusions, recommendations, together with pictures and maps, would be compiled in a “Report of Mineral Examination.” This report forms the basis for the Forest Service to decide whether to contest the validity of the claim. The Forest Service would consider:

⁸ FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. § 1714(b)(1).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ FLPMA, 43 USC 1714(c)(1).

¹² FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. § 1701 note (stating withdrawal is subject to valid existing rights).

1. whether the claim was properly “located” prior to implementation of the withdrawal or segregation, which means that a prospector has entered available federal lands and followed procedures for establishing a mining claim;
2. whether the mining claimant has properly maintained the claim by paying annual fees; and
3. whether the claim is supported by a “discovery” of a valuable mineral deposit, which means that the claimant has demonstrated “that the mineral can be extracted, removed, and marketed at a profit.”¹³

If the Forest Service decides to contest the validity of a claim based on the mineral examination, the matter would be referred to the BLM under the regulations of the Department of the Interior, which has decision-making powers in matters relating to all the federal land laws, including the mining laws. The BLM would make a final decision about whether the claim is valid.

What else is being done to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed?

- **Legislative Withdrawal:** Since the administrative withdrawal is temporary (up to 20 years), the coalition is urging New Mexico’s congressional delegation to reintroduce legislation for permanent protection. Legislation called the “Pecos Watershed Protection Act” was introduced in the previous session of Congress, sponsored by Senator Martin Heinrich (S.182) and Representative Teresa Leger Fernández (H.R.5628), and needs to be reintroduced for consideration by the current Congress.
- **Water Quality Protection:** In August 2022, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission recognized the significance of the watershed by designating sixteen (16) named tributaries to the Pecos River and ninety-six (96) unnamed tributaries to those surface waters, constituting in total nearly one-hundred eighty (180) miles of streams; and sixteen (16) wetlands consisting of nearly forty-three (43) acres as “Outstanding National Resource Waters” (ONRWs).¹⁴ ONRWs are afforded the highest level of surface water protection in New Mexico and are subject to a legal mandate that prohibits any degradation of water quality.¹⁵
- **Forest Service Environmental Regulations:** The coalition is watching to ensure that the Forest Service meets its responsibility to require that any mining will be conducted in a way that will minimize adverse environmental impacts on surface resources, including water and air quality, cultural resources, wildlife and fisheries, and scenic resources.¹⁶
- **State of New Mexico Environmental Regulations:** The coalition is watching to ensure that the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division follows state laws and regulations designed to protect the environment and to provide opportunities for public participation.¹⁷
- **County Environmental Regulations:** The counties that could be affected Comexico’s mining proposal have adopted ordinances to protect environmental and cultural resources.
 1. In September 2021, San Miguel County adopted Ordinance No. 09-21-2021-p&z, which established requirements for mineral resource exploration, extraction, and processing

¹³ *United States v. Coleman*, 390 U.S. 599, 600 (1968).

¹⁴ State of N.M. Water Quality Control Commission, Statement of Reasons and Decision, WQCC No. 21-51 (R) (Aug. 10, 2022), available at https://www.env.nm.gov/opf/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2022/08/2022-08-10-WQCC-21-51-Statement-of-Reasons-and-Order_Upper-Pecos-Watershed-pj.pdf (last visited Feb. 7, 2023).

¹⁵ See 20.6.4 NMAC (Water Quality Standards for Interstate and Intrastate Waters).

¹⁶ See 36 C.F.R. § 228.8 (requirements for environmental protection).

¹⁷ See generally N.M. Mining Act, NMSA 1978, §§ 69-36-1 et seq.; 19.10.1 NMAC et seq.

to protect the citizens and environment from the harmful and hazardous toxic effects and nuisances that result from mining.

2. In August 2019, Santa Fe County adopted Ordinance No. 2019-2, which amended the County's Sustainable Land Development Code to include new regulations for mineral exploration, extraction, and processing to protect the environment, water, air, wildlife, habitat, natural resources, and cultural and historical resources.
- **Wilderness Designation:** The coalition is working with the community and New Mexico's congressional delegation on a proposed wilderness designation or other land protection legislation for a portion of the watershed. No new mining claims can be established in wilderness, and any mining on valid existing claims would need to be conducted "in a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment" to comply with the Wilderness Act of 1964.¹⁸ The "wilderness environment" is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."¹⁹

How can I or my organization get involved?

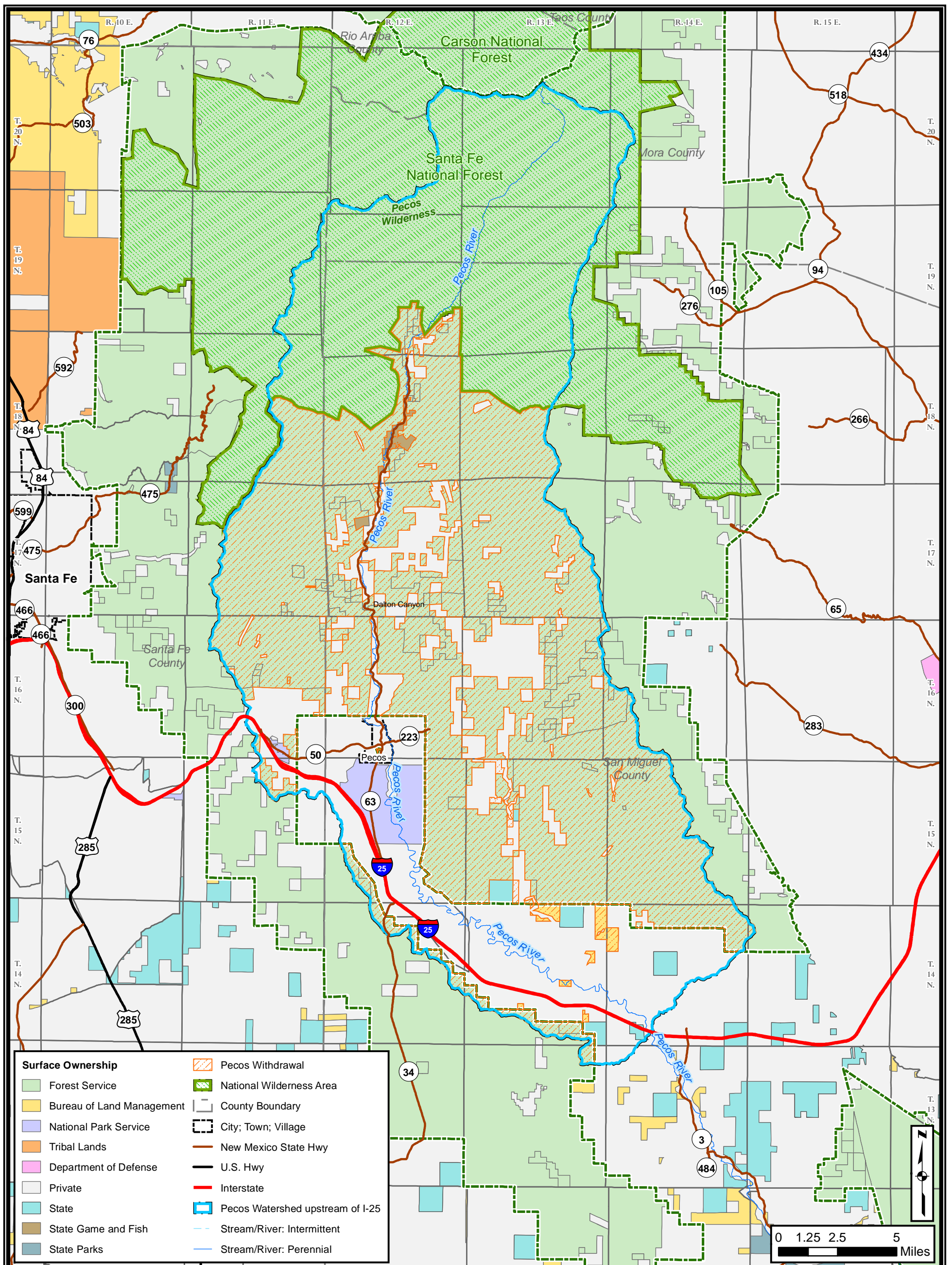
Visit our website: <https://stoptererroamine.org/>

Is there a map of the area proposed for administrative mineral withdrawal?

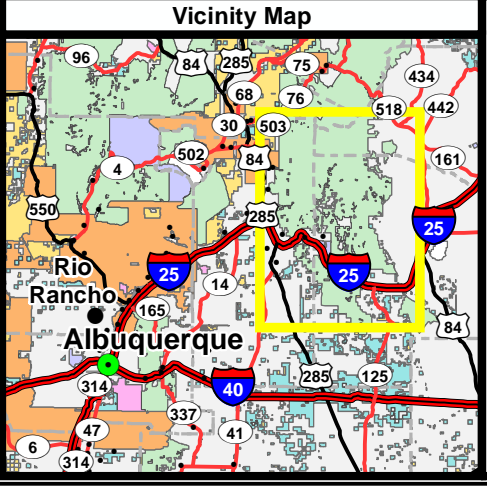
The current administrative mineral withdrawal proposal is based on the preliminary map prepared for Senator Martin Heinrich prior to the introduction of Pecos Watershed Protection Act in 2020, which he sponsored in the 117th Congress. The map is shown on the following page.

¹⁸ See 16 U.S.C. § 1133(d)(2).

¹⁹ See 16 U.S.C. § 1131(c).



Surface Ownership	
Forest Service	Pecos Withdrawal
Bureau of Land Management	National Wilderness Area
National Park Service	County Boundary
Tribal Lands	City; Town; Village
Department of Defense	New Mexico State Hwy
Private	U.S. Hwy
State	Interstate
State Game and Fish	Pecos Watershed upstream of I-25
State Parks	Stream/River: Intermittent
	Stream/River: Perennial



Map Creation Date - 7/9/2020
 Map Revision Date - 9/1/2020 \ Version 6
 Sheet 1 of 1

References
 Data acquired from a variety of sources of differing accuracy, precision and reliability. Features represented by the data may not represent accurate geographic locations. River and stream centerlines taken from the U.S. Geological Survey National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) and carry the same limitations. Ephemeral streams not shown for clarity.

Disclaimer
 The USDA Forest Service makes no warranty, expressed or implied regarding the data displayed on this map, and reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace this information without notification. Creation of this map does not indicate USDA support of this proposal. This represents USDA technical assistance only. These documents remain congressional records in their entirety, even after the completion of the proposed map, and are not USDA records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or any other law. If USDA receives any request or demand for access to these records under the FOIA or any other authority, USDA will immediately notify the Committee and will respond to the request or demand based upon the understanding that these are congressional, not USDA, records.

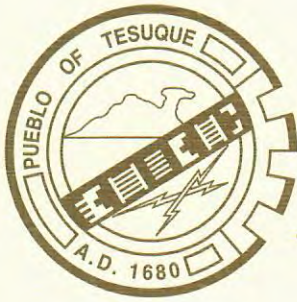
**Pecos Watershed, upstream of I-25
 Mineral Withdrawal**

Preliminary Map only

New Mexico Principal Meridian,
 Mora, San Miguel and Santa Fe Counties,
 New Mexico

U.S. Forest Service - Southwestern Region
 Carson and Santa Fe National Forests

Map prepared at the request of U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich



Office of the Governor
Pueblo of Tesuque
20 TP828
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87506

October 16, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

E-mail: Jasmine_Yepa@heinrich.senate.gov

Senator Heinrich,

I write on behalf of the Pueblo of Tesuque to thank you for reintroducing the Pecos Watershed Protection Act (S. 3033) and to extend our strong support for the bill, which would withdraw federal lands in the Pecos Watershed from mineral extraction and designate it as a wilderness area.

The Pueblo of Tesuque has been connected to the Pecos watershed since time immemorial. We continue to access the area for hunting, fishing, gathering and ceremonial purposes.

The Pecos Watershed Protection Act will stop the misguided effort to renew mining operations in and near the Pecos watershed. Our region is still recovering from mining operations in the Pecos watershed that took place last century. In 1991, toxic runoff and heavy metal pollution from abandoned mines rushed into the Pecos River. The spill dumped sulfuric acid and other chemicals into our watershed, poisoning our water, killing off fish, and creating significant economic devastation. Cleanup has cost New Mexico taxpayers \$8 million and remediation is not close to completion.

Water is the blood of Pueblo and all nearby communities. We cannot again place our life-giving waters in the hands of foreign-owned mining corporations. Again, we thank you for introducing S. 3033, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, and will work with you to ensure that it is enacted into law in the 118th Congress.

Sincerely,

Milton Herrera

Governor

October 3, 2023
Statement from Pueblo of Jemez

The Pecos River (Tóqk'ô P'âægi, Corn Cob River) has been the lifeline for all forms of life throughout history. Our people have always set precedence on protecting our watersheds (Tóqk'ô P'âæwâamu, Corn Cob River Valley) and want to ensure the same protections are afforded to the generations yet to come. As stewards of these lands we are directly responsible for ensuring these protective measures are taken.

The Pecos River (Tóqk'ô P'âægi, Corn Cob River) is the lifeline of all that live up and down the Pecos River Valley (Tóqk'ô P'âæwâamu, Corn Cob River Valley). From the animals on the land and in the water, to the birds in the air, the Pecos River is what sustains them. The waters of the Pecos River sustained our ancestors who occupied the village of Pecos Pueblo until 1838. To this day, the people of the Jemez Pueblo still visit the shrines in the Pecos River Valley to perform ceremonies. For the Jemez People, the waters from Tóqk'ô P'âægi are sacred and should be protected. I am very happy to see Senator Heinrich's legislation to protect these sacred waters and pathways.

Daryl Lucero
Pueblo of Jemez
2nd Lt. Governor



**THE VILLAGE OF PECOS
P.O. DRAWER 337
PECOS, NEW MEXICO 87552
PHONE (505) 757-6591
FAX (505) 757-2833**

**Telesfor "Ted" Benavidez
MAYOR**

**Will Crespin
TREASURER**

**Anna M Vigil
CLERK**

**Corrine M Varela
Wanda R Lozano
DEPUTY CLERKS**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Herman Gallegos
Ralph Lopez
Brian Sandoval
Armando Gabaldon**

October 3, 2023

The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján
United States Senate
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández
United States House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Congressman Gabe Vasquez
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Thompson Peak Wilderness Designation

Dear Senator Heinrich, Senator Luján, Representative Leger Fernández, Representative Stansbury and Representative Vasquez:

I write to formally state my support for legislative action that would permanently protect the upper Pecos River Watershed. Specifically, I urge you to reintroduce the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which could enact a legislative mineral withdrawal for the upper Pecos River watershed, and to formally designate as wilderness the area that the Santa Fe National Forest is managing as the Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness. These legislative protections would be subject to valid existing rights.

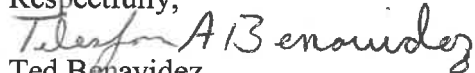
The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river, contaminating community water supplies, causing a massive fish kill, and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers footed the bill for millions in reclamation and cleanup costs.

The proposed legislative withdrawal and wilderness designation would provide permanent protection to prominent creeks and drainages, including Dalton Canyon, Macho Canyon, Wild Horse Creek, Indian Creek, and Doctor Creek. In August 2022, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission formally designated these crucial tributaries to the Pecos River as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs). In addition to water quality, the legislative withdrawal and wilderness designation would protect cultural and ecological resources, important fish and wildlife habitat, and economic, scenic, and recreational values that are of crucial importance to both locals and visitors.

The proposed boundaries for the legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness (see attached maps) encompass many of the key critical headwaters already mentioned, and the proposed wilderness boundary encompasses the area identified as having a high degree of wilderness qualities per the current Santa Fe National Forest Plan and is substantially the same area recommended for wilderness designation by the Santa Fe National Forest.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Respectfully,



Ted Benavidez

Mayor, Village of Pecos, NM

Cc:

Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Melanie Barnes, State Director, BLM New Mexico

Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Randy Moore, Chief, U.S. Forest Service

Michiko Martin, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region

Shaun Sanchez, Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest

Brenda Mallory, Chairperson, Council on Environmental Quality

Justin S. Greene
Commissioner, District 1

Anna Hansen
Commissioner, District 2

Camilla Bustamante
Commissioner, District 3



Anna T. Hamilton
Commissioner, District 4

Hank Hughes
Commissioner, District 5

Gregory S. Shaffer
County Manager

September 12, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senator
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernández
United States Congresswoman
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Melanie Stansbury
United States Congresswoman
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gabe Vasquez
United States Congressman
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Thompson Peak Wilderness Designation

Dear Senator Heinrich, Senator Luján, Congresswoman Leger Fernández, Congresswoman Stansbury and Congressman Vasquez:

The Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners writes to support legislative action to permanently protect the upper Pecos River Watershed. Specifically, we urge you to reintroduce the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which could enact a legislative mineral withdrawal for the upper Pecos River watershed, and formally designate as wilderness the area that the Santa Fe National Forest is managing as the Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness. These legislative protections would be subject to valid existing rights.

The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river and contaminated community water supplies, caused a massive fish kill, and drove away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers footed the bill for millions in reclamation and cleanup costs.

The proposed legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness designation would provide permanent protection to prominent creeks and drainages, including Dalton Canyon, Macho Canyon, Wild Horse Creek, Indian Creek, and Doctor Creek. In August 2022, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission formally designated these crucial tributaries to the Pecos River as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs). In addition to water quality, the legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness designation would protect cultural and ecological resources, important fish and wildlife habitat, and economic, scenic, and recreational values that are of crucial importance to both locals and visitors.

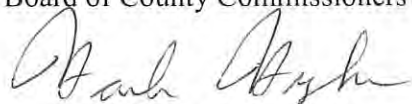
The proposed boundaries for the legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness (see attached maps) encompass many of the key critical headwaters already mentioned. The proposed wilderness boundary encompasses the area identified as having a high degree of wilderness qualities per the current Santa Fe National Forest Plan and is the same area recommended for wilderness designation by the Santa Fe National Forest.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Anna Hansen, Chair
Board of County Commissioners



Hank Hughes, Vice Chair
Board of County Commissioners

Attachments:

Preliminary Thompson Peak Wilderness Map (prepared by New Mexico Wild)
Preliminary Legislative Mineral Withdrawal Map (as prepared for the Pecos Watershed Protection Act of 2021, S.182, H.R. 5628)

Cc:

Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior
Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Melanie Barnes, State Director, BLM New Mexico
Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Randy Moore, Chief, U.S. Forest Service
Michiko Martin, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region
Shaun Sanchez, Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest
Brenda Mallory, Chairperson, Council on Environmental Quality

I Herewith Certify that this Instrument was filed
for record 09/13/2023 09:04:59 AM and was
duly recorded as Instrument No. 202303043 of the
Records of San Miguel County, NM.

Witness My Hand and Seal Of Office
Geraldine E. Gutierrez

Deputy
County Clerk, San Miguel, NM



September 12, 2023

The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján
United States Senate
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández
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1421 Longworth House Office Building
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The Honorable Congressman Gabe Vasquez
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Thompson Peak Wilderness Designation

Dear Senator Heinrich, Senator Luján, Representative Leger Fernández, Representative Stansbury and Representative Vasquez:

On behalf of San Miguel County, the undersigned County Commissioners write to formally state our support for legislative action that would permanently protect the upper Pecos River Watershed. Specifically, we urge you to reintroduce the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which could enact a legislative mineral withdrawal for the upper Pecos River watershed, and to formally designate as wilderness the area that the Santa Fe National Forest is managing as the Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness. These legislative protections would be subject to valid existing rights.

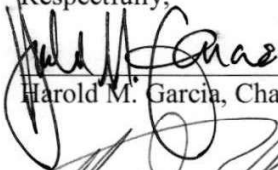
The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river, contaminating community water supplies, causing a massive fish kill, and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers footed the bill for millions in reclamation and cleanup costs.

The proposed legislative withdrawal and wilderness designation would provide permanent protection to prominent creeks and drainages, including Dalton Canyon, Macho Canyon, Wild Horse Creek, Indian Creek, and Doctor Creek. In August 2022, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission formally designated these crucial tributaries to the Pecos River as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs). In addition to water quality, the legislative withdrawal and wilderness designation would protect cultural and ecological resources, important fish and wildlife habitat, and economic, scenic, and recreational values that are of crucial importance to both locals and visitors.

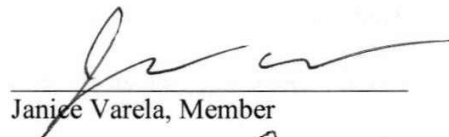
The proposed boundaries for the legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness (see attached maps) encompass many of the key critical headwaters already mentioned, and the proposed wilderness boundary encompasses the area identified as having a high degree of wilderness qualities per the current Santa Fe National Forest Plan and is substantially the same area recommended for wilderness designation by the Santa Fe National Forest.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.


Respectfully,




Harold M. Garcia, Chairman




Janice Varela, Member



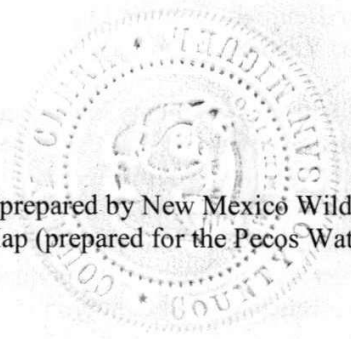
Max O. Trujillo, Member



Martin Sena, Vice-Chair



Kenneth Medina, Member



Encl:

- Preliminary Thompson Peak Wilderness Map (prepared by New Mexico Wild)
- Preliminary Legislative Mineral Withdrawal Map (prepared for the Pecos Watershed Protection Act of 2021, S.182, H.R. 5628)

Cc:

- Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior
- Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- Melanie Barnes, State Director, BLM New Mexico
- Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Randy Moore, Chief, U.S. Forest Service
- Michiko Martin, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region
- Shaun Sanchez, Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest
- Brenda Mallory, Chairperson, Council on Environmental Quality

September 27, 2023

The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján
United States Senate
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández
United States House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Congressman Gabe Vasquez
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Thompson Peak Wilderness

Dear Senator Heinrich, Senator Luján, Representative Leger Fernández, Representative Stansbury, and Representative Vasquez:

On behalf of the undersigned stakeholders, representing tribal leaders, state and local elected officials, farmers and acequia pariantes, small businesses, community organizations, conservation groups, religious groups, trail and recreation organizations, sportspersons, and local advocates, we write to formally state our support for legislative action that would permanently protect the upper Pecos River Watershed. Specifically, we urge you to reintroduce the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which could enact a legislative mineral withdrawal for the upper Pecos River watershed, and to formally

designate as wilderness the area that the Santa Fe National Forest is managing as the Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness.

We are locally led and have been working together for years to highlight the incredible natural and cultural values of the upper Pecos watershed, as well as the significant and growing threats it is facing.

Such consensus between local, state, and tribal leaders regarding the importance of permanently protecting the Thompson Peak area through a wilderness designation warrants immediate action. We ask that you begin the process of drafting legislation to designate the area specified in the attached map as wilderness, thereby permanently protecting the clean water and cultural values of this special place. As you know, a legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness designation in these critical headwaters are the highest and most durable forms of federal legislative protection for the upper Pecos River watershed and the downstream communities who depend on clean water.

The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. For context, in 2019 Comexico LLC, a Colorado-based subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd, acquired 20 mining claims in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, New Mexico. Comexico then applied for permits to conduct exploratory drilling for gold, copper, zinc, lead, and silver. This initial exploratory drilling could adversely impact more than 400 acres and five tributaries of the Pecos River. Alarmingly, Comexico has gained ownership of over 236 mining claims throughout the Pecos headwaters. The area now claimed by Comexico covers 4,300 acres and, if developed, would impact the entire Pecos watershed and possibly the Santa Fe municipal watershed.

Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river, contaminating community water supplies, causing a massive fish kill, and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers footed the bill for millions in reclamation and cleanup costs.

The proposed boundaries for the legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness (see attached maps) encompass many of the key critical headwaters already mentioned, and the proposed wilderness boundary encompasses the area identified as having a high degree of wilderness qualities per the current Santa Fe National Forest Plan and is substantially the same area recommended for wilderness designation by the Santa Fe

National Forest. The recommended acreage for the wilderness designation is approximately 11,599 acres of U.S. Forest Service land, and the recommended acreage for the legislative mineral withdrawal is approximately 166,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service land and Bureau of Land Management land.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Respectfully,

American Rivers
Rachel Ellis, Associate Director,
Southwest River Protection Program
rellis@americanrivers.org

Amigos Bravos
Rachel Conn, Deputy Director
rconn@amigosbravos.org

Audubon Southwest
Judy Calman, New Mexico Director of
Policy
judy.calman@audubon.org

CAVU (Climate Advocates Voces
Unidas)
Kurt Gutjahr, Executive Director
kurt@cavu.org

Conservation Voters New Mexico
Demis Foster, Executive Director
demis@cvmn.org

Earth Keepers 360
Reverend Andrew Black, Founder
andrewdouglasblack@gmail.com

Flowerhill Institute
Joseph Brophy Toledo, Cultural Advisor
and Traditional Leader
facebroz@gmail.com

HECHO (Hispanics Enjoying Camping
Hunting and the Outdoors)
Max Trujillo, Senior Field Coordinator
max@hechoonline.org

Las Vegas Peace and Justice Center
Pat Leahan, Co-director
pat.leahan@startmail.com

Las Vegas Community Water Board
Bob Wessely, Chair
Wessely@SciSo.com

National Parks Conservation Association
Emily Wolf, New Mexico Program
Manager
ewolf@npca.org

New Mexico Acequia Commission
Ralph Vigil, Chairman
ralph@nmwild.org

New Mexico Climate Justice
Anni Hanna, Director
anni.hanna@gmail.com

New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Jesse Deubel, Executive Director
jesse@nmwildlife.org

Elizabeth “Liz” Stefanics
New Mexico State Senator, Senate
District 39
Lstefanics@msn.com

New Mexico Wild
Garrett VeneKlasen, Northern
Conservation Director
Garrett@nmwild.org

Pecos River Open Spaces
Christopher Thomson, President
ChristoThoms@aol.com

Santa Fe Fat Tire Society
Kyle Klain, President
president@santafefattiresociety.org

Santa Fe Watershed Association
Morika Vorenberg Hensley, Executive
Director
mori@santafewatershed.org

Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter
Teresa Seamster, MS EdS, Chair of
Northern New Mexico Group
ctc.seamster@gmail.com

Trout Unlimited
Claire Catlett, Upper Rio Grande
Engagement Manager
claire.catlett@tu.org

Upper Pecos Watershed Association
Lela McFerrin, Vice President
lelamcferrin3@gmail.com

Western Environmental Law Center
Tannis Fox, Senior Attorney
fox@westernlaw.org

Western Resource Advocates
Jeremy Vesbach, Western Lands
Director
jeremy.vesbach@westernresources.org

WildEarth Guardians
Madeleine Carey, Southwest
Conservation Manager
mcarey@wildearthguardians.org

Wildlands Network
Michael Dax, Western Program Director
michael@wildlandsnetwork.org

Stuart P. Castle, Lifelong user and lover
of the Pecos
scastledata@gmail.com

Stephen Nelson, Dalton Canyon
landowner
nelsoninsalton@yahoo.com

Robin Reindle, Member, STM Coalition
Rreindle@yahoo.com

Encl:

Preliminary Map – Pecos Watershed, upstream of I-25 Mineral Withdrawal (USFS 2020)

Proposed Map – Thompson Peak Core Unit - Wilderness (NM Wild 2023)

Cc:

Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Melanie Barnes, State Director, BLM New Mexico

Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Randy Moore, Chief, U.S. Forest Service

Michiko Martin, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region

Shaun Sanchez, Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest

Brenda Mallory, Chairperson, Council on Environmental Quality

CENTER FOR CIVIC POLICY * NACA INSPIRED SCHOOLS NETWORK *
NATIVE LAND INSTITUTE * NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER *
PUEBLO ACTION ALLIANCE * THE SEMILLA PROJECT * THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján
United States Senate
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández
United States House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Congressman Gabe Vasquez
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Thompson Peak Wilderness

Dear Senator Heinrich, Senator Luján, Representative Leger Fernández, Representative Stansbury, and Representative Vasquez:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing tens of thousands of members and supporters in New Mexico, we write to formally state our support for the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which would enact a legislative mineral withdrawal for the upper Pecos River watershed, and to formally designate as wilderness the area that the Santa Fe National Forest is managing as the Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness.

The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. In 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado-based subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd, acquired 20 mining claims in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, New Mexico. Comexico then applied for permits to conduct exploratory drilling for gold, copper, zinc, lead, and silver. This initial exploratory drilling could adversely impact more than 400 acres and five tributaries of the Pecos River. Alarmingly, Comexico has gained ownership of over 236 mining

claims throughout the Pecos headwaters. The area now claimed by Comexico covers 4,300 acres and, if developed, would impact the entire Pecos watershed and possibly the Santa Fe municipal watershed.

Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river, contaminating community water supplies, causing a massive fish kill, and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers were then left to foot the bill for millions of dollars in reclamation and cleanup costs.

The Pecos watershed is highly deserving of protection from the threat that new mining would pose to its sensitive cultural, historic, and natural resources. Jemez Pueblo and Tesuque Pueblo have utilized the area's rich natural resources since time immemorial. Today, both Pueblos continue to use the upper Pecos Watershed for hunting, fishing, herb gathering and ceremonial purposes. Spanish land grant heirs and acequia parciantes continue to hunt, fish, gather herbs and firewood, farm and ranch in the watershed, as they have done for hundreds of years. The Pecos River is a clean, pristine mountain water source supporting not only the wildlife, flora and fauna in our area, but also the economy of the Pecos Valley, including recreation, hunting and fishing.

The boundaries of the legislative mineral withdrawal and wilderness—and the boundaries of the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal—encompass many of the key critical headwaters in this watershed. The proposed wilderness boundary encompasses the area identified as having a high degree of wilderness qualities per the current Santa Fe National Forest Plan and is substantially the same area recommended for wilderness designation by the Santa Fe National Forest.

Thank you for introducing this important legislation, which is broadly supported by tribal leaders, state and local elected officials, farmers and acequia parciantes, community organizations, small businesses, and conservation and recreation groups.

Respectfully,

Oriana Sandoval, CEO
Center for Civic Policy
oriana@civicpolicy.com

Julia Bernal, Executive Director
Pueblo Action Alliance
julia@puebloactionalliance.org

Anpao Duta Flying Earth, Executive Director
NACA Inspired Schools Network
anpaoduta@nacainspireschoolsnetwork.org

Eli Cuna, Executive Director
The Semilla Project
eli@semillastrategies.org

Keegan King, Founder & CEO
Native Land Institute
keegan@native-lands.org

Michael Casaus, New Mexico State Director
The Wilderness Society
michael_casaus@tws.org

Virginia Necochea, Executive Director
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
vnecochea@nmelc.org



New Mexico Acequia Commission

HC74 Box 842 ♦ Pecos, New Mexico 87552
Chairman (505) 603-2879 ♦ molinodelaisla@gmail.com
www.nmacequiacommission.org

MICHELLE LUJAN-GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

RALPH A. VIGIL
CHAIRMAN
MARY MASCAREÑAS
VICE-CHAIRMAN

November 15, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

E-mail: Jasmine_Yepa@heinrich.senate.gov

Senator Heinrich,

I write on behalf of the New Mexico Acequia Commission to thank you for reintroducing the Pecos Watershed Protection Act (S. 3033) and to extend our strong support for the bill, which would withdraw federal lands in the Pecos Watershed from mineral extraction and designate it as a wilderness area.

New Mexico Acequias have been connected to the Pecos watershed since time immemorial. Acequias are connected thru our watersheds and that have provided water, food, and sustenance for our communities for hundreds of years and we continue to access the area for fuel and other aspects of our ways of life.

The Pecos Watershed Protection Act will stop the misguided effort to renew mining operations in and near the Pecos watershed. Our region is still recovering from mining operations in the Pecos watershed that took place last century. In 1991, toxic runoff and heavy metal pollution from abandoned mines rushed into the Pecos River. The spill dumped sulfuric acid and other chemicals into our watershed, poisoning our water, killing off fish, and creating significant economic devastation. Cleanup has cost New Mexico taxpayers \$8 million and remediation is not close to completion.

The Pecos watershed is an integral part of our acequias and communities. We cannot again place our life-giving waters in the hands of foreign-owned mining corporations. Again, we thank you for introducing S. 3033, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, and will work with you to ensure that it is enacted into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph Vigil".

Ralph Vigil, Chairman
New Mexico Acequia Commission

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Has Officially Endorsed the Pecos Watershed Protection Act

The land, water, and lifestyle in Pecos, New Mexico, are under threat from extensive new mining proposals in the Upper Pecos Watershed. However, a significant step has been taken towards protecting this vital watershed and the well-being of communities along the river for generations to come.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus has officially endorsed the Pecos Watershed Protection Act.

“This growing support ratifies the immense importance of protecting the upper Pecos watershed. In this precious river here in our Hispanic communities along the Pecos, we know firsthand the devastating impacts mining has had on this river in the past. And we can't afford to let this happen again. Our acquia culture depends on clean water to nourish our crops and sustain our way of life,” stated Ralph Vigil, a member of the HECHO Hispanic Conservation Leadership Council.

Watch this video to learn more about the significance of this endorsement and how you can support this important effort.



VILLAGE OF PECOS, NEW MEXICO
Resolution 2023-024

**IN SUPPORT OF THE PERMANENT PROTECTION OF THE UPPER PECOS RIVER WATERSHED
THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE WITHDRAWAL OF MINERAL RIGHTS AND
WILDERNESS DESIGNATION OF THE THOMPSON PEAK AREA**

WHEREAS, the Village of Pecos is located along, and has grown to its present state, in large part due to its geographical situation along the Pecos River, which provides critical water resources to the community;

WHEREAS, clean water is essential for the health and wellbeing of Village residents, who have used the river for hundreds of years; and

WHEREAS, agriculture in the area depends on clean water carried by acequias to irrigate crops; and

WHEREAS, previous mining activities at the Tererro mine and mill site caused toxic waste to enter the Pecos River, and the contaminated runoff killed more than 90,000 trout and polluted community drinking water supplies; and

WHEREAS, the rehabilitation of the watershed required significant reclamation efforts by the State of New Mexico, the Environmental Protection Agency and others, and the toxic metal cleanup has cost New Mexico taxpayers \$28 million; and

WHEREAS, in August 2022 the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission designated 180 stream miles and over 40 acres of wetlands within the Upper Pecos River watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs), which reflects that high-water quality has been reestablished in these outstanding waters and prohibits any future degradation or pollution of these waters; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of an Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd. (formerly New World Cobalt Ltd.), applied with the Santa Fe National Forest and the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division to conduct exploratory drilling in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, NM to look for gold, copper, zinc, lead, and silver; and the company's website reflects that the company has acquired hundreds of mining claims that cover 4300 acres including several critical headwaters to the Pecos River, the area near Thompson Peak, and the surrounding forest; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and U.S. Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández and Melanie Stansbury introduced the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act" in the 117th Congress, a bill to legislatively withdraw approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral entry; and

WHEREAS, on April 13, 2022, the Village of Pecos approved Resolution Number 2022-001 in support of the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act" (Bill S.182) and resolved that the Village will join with other interested parties in supporting the Act; and

WHEREAS, in August 2022, the Santa Fe National Forest finalized a new land management plan; and through the planning process, the Santa Fe National Forest identified 11,599 acres that encompass several critical headwaters to the Pecos River the area near Thompson Peak as having a high degree of wilderness qualities; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the land management plan, the Santa Fe National Forest is managing the area near Thompson Peak to maintain its wilderness qualities, but the Santa Fe National Forest chose not to include Comexico's mining claim area in the area with protective management; and

WHEREAS, on May 10, 2023, the Village of Pecos approved Resolution Number 2023-006, in support of the administrative mineral withdrawal of mineral rights on 166,000 acres of federal public lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 20 years or until permanent protection is secured through legislation; and

WHEREAS, even if a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal is secured, the upper Pecos River watershed still requires permanent protection through legislation enacted by Congress; and

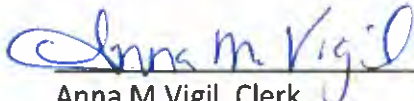
WHEREAS, on October 4, 2023, Senator Martin Heinrich reintroduced the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act" in the 118th Congress, which would withdraw approximately 166,000 acres in the upper Pecos River watershed from new mining claims and development and would designate approximately 11,599 acres in the Thompson Peak area as wilderness, providing strong permanent protection.


NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE VILLAGE OF PECOS THAT the Village of Pecos supports legislative action that would permanently protect the upper Pecos River watershed through the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which would enact a legislative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos River watershed and designate the Thompson Peak area as wilderness.


MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED this 11th day of October, 2023.

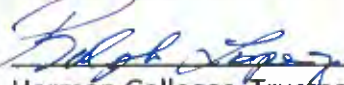
ATTEST:



 Will Crespin, Interim Treasurer

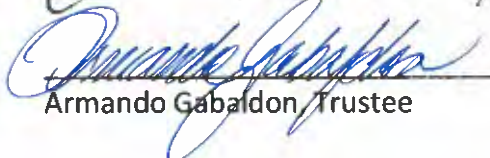

 Anna M Vigil, Clerk


 Telesfor A Benavidez, Mayor


 Ralph Lopez, Mayor Pro-Tem HERNAN GALLEGOS, TRUSTEE


 Herman Gallegos, Trustee RALPH LOPEZ, MAYOR PRO TEM


 Brian Sandoval, Trustee


 Armando Gabaldon, Trustee

RECORD OF COUNCIL VOTE – October 11, 2023									
	Yes	No	N.V.	Absent		Yes	No	N.V.	Absent
Lopez	✓				Gallegos	✓			
Sandoval	✓				Gabaldon	✓			

N.V. = (Abstain)

**VILLAGE OF PECOS, NEW MEXICO
RESOLUTION NO. 2023-006**

**IN SUPPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROTECTION OF THE UPPER PECOS RIVER WATERSHED
THROUGH THE WITHDRAWAL OF MINERAL RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, the Village of Pecos is located along, and has grown to its present state, in large part due to its geographical situation along the Pecos River, which provides critical water resources to the community;

WHEREAS, clean water is essential for the health and wellbeing of Village residents, who have used the river for hundreds of years; and

WHEREAS, agriculture in the area depends on clean water carried by acequias to irrigate crops; and

WHEREAS, many residents and visitors depend on the Pecos River Watershed for recreational activities such as fishing, camping, swimming and hiking; and in 2019 the New Mexico State Legislature passed SB 280, which appropriated \$2,100,000 to fund improvements to visitor services and administrative facilities for the Pecos Canyon State Park; and

WHEREAS, the Upper Pecos River watershed provides fresh water downstream for hundreds of miles, contributing to fish and wildlife habitat and supporting both a cold-water fishery and the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery; and

WHEREAS, previous mining activities at the Tererro mine and mill site caused toxic waste to enter the Pecos River, and the contaminated runoff killed more than 90,000 trout and polluted community drinking water supplies; and

WHEREAS, the rehabilitation of the watershed required significant reclamation efforts by the State of New Mexico, the Environmental Protection Agency and others, and the toxic metal cleanup has cost New Mexico taxpayers \$28 million; and

WHEREAS, in August 2022 the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission designated 180 stream miles and over 40 acres of wetlands within the Upper Pecos River watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs), which reflects that high-water quality has been reestablished in these outstanding waters and prohibits any future degradation or pollution of these waters; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of an Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd. (formerly New World Cobalt Ltd.), applied with the Santa Fe National Forest and the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division to conduct exploratory drilling in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, NM to look for gold, copper, zinc, lead, and silver; and the company's website reflects that the company has acquired hundreds of mining claims that cover 4300 acres in the surrounding forest; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, in response to the mining threat from Comexico, LLC, U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and U.S. Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández and Melanie Stansbury introduced the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act," a bill to legislatively withdraw approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral entry; and

WHEREAS, on November 2, 2021, these congressional leaders sent a letter to Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland, requesting that the Department of Interior begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the Upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral development, thereby providing interim protection until permanent protection can be secured legislatively; and


WHEREAS, on April 13, 2022, the Village of Pecos approved Resolution Number 2022-001 in support of the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act" (Bill S.182) and resolving that the Village will join with other interested parties in supporting the Act; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) grants the Secretary of the Department of Interior the authority to approve the administrative withdrawal of federal public land from future hard rock mining, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 20 years.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE VILLAGE OF PECOS THAT the Village of Pecos supports the administrative withdrawal of mineral rights on federal public lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 20 years or until permanent protection is secured through legislation.

MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED this 10th day of May, 2023.

ATTEST:

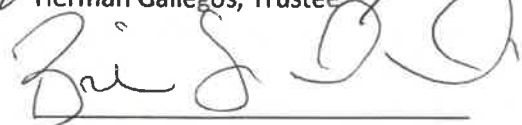

 Anna M Vigil, Village Clerk

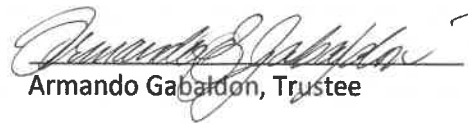

 Will Crespin, Interim Treasurer

ABSENT
 Telesfor A. Benavidez, Mayor


 Ralph Lopez, Mayor Pro Tem


 Herman Gallegos, Trustee


 Brian Sandoval, Trustee


 Armando Gabaldon, Trustee

RECORD OF COUNCIL VOTE - ^{MAY 10,} ~~APRIL 13,~~ 2023

	Yes	No	N.V.	Absent		Yes	No	N.V.	Absent
Lopez	✓				Gallegos	✓			
Sandoval	✓				Gabaldon	✓			

N.V. = (Abstain)

I Hereby Certify that this Instrument was filed for record 05/12/2023 03:41:41 PM and was duly recorded as Instrument No. 202301566 of the Records of San Miguel County, NM.



Witness My Hand and Seal Of Office
Geraldine E. Gutierrez

Deputy _____
County Clerk, San Miguel, NM



**SAN MIGUEL COUNTY
RESOLUTION NO. 05-09-23-COMMISSION**

**IN SUPPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION OF THE UPPER PECOS RIVER
WATERSHED THROUGH THE WITHDRAWAL OF MINERAL RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, the Pecos River Watershed provides critical water resources to the communities of San Miguel County, including municipal, domestic and agricultural users, and provides clean water to numerous ancient and agriculturally and culturally significant acequia systems, and;

WHEREAS, clean water is essential for the health and wellbeing of San Miguel County residents, and;

WHEREAS, the greater Pecos Valley region has been the center of a thriving culture for thousands of years and holds deep cultural significance to the Native Pueblos of New Mexico, including the Jemez and Tesuque Pueblos, and;

WHEREAS, for hundreds of years the greater Pecos River Valley has been home to traditional Hispanic communities and land grant mercedes where acequia-based agriculture, dependent on clean water originating in the Pecos River headwaters, has thrived, and;

WHEREAS, the greater Pecos Valley region houses archeological, sacred, and historic resources, in use from past to present, and is a place still valued and used for traditional practices by descendants of those who settled here, and;

WHEREAS, many residents and visitors depend on the Pecos River Watershed for recreational activities such as fishing, camping, swimming and hiking, and;

WHEREAS, the local economy is dependent on clean water to support farming, ranching, and recreation based economic activities, and;

WHEREAS, the Upper Pecos River watershed provides fresh water downstream for hundreds of miles contributing to high-quality aquatic habitat for native fish, including the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and supports both a cold-water fishery and the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery, and;

WHEREAS, the Upper Pecos River watershed hosts important habitat for federally endangered species, including the Mexican Spotted Owl, as well as the federally listed rare flowering plant, the Holy Ghost Ipomopsis, and;

WHEREAS, in 2019 the New Mexico State Legislature passed SB 280, which appropriated \$2,100,000 to fund improvements to visitor services and administrative facilities for the Pecos Canyon State Park, and;

WHEREAS, the State of New Mexico, the Environmental Protection Agency, and others have engaged in reclamation efforts to rehabilitate the Upper Pecos River watershed from toxic waste pollution originating from prior mining activity at the Tererro mine and mill site dating back to the 1880s, as it was designated a US Superfund site as recently as the 1990s when contaminated runoff killed more than 90,000 trout, contaminating wildlife and community drinking water supplies, and;

WHEREAS, in 2022 San Miguel County advocated for Outstanding National Resource Water (ONRW) protections for 180 stream miles and over 40 acres of wetlands within the Upper Pecos River watershed and associated tributaries, resulting in a formal ONRW designation by the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission, which prohibits any degradation of the existing high water quality and prevents increased pollution to these outstanding waters, and;

WHEREAS, in April of 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd. (formerly New World Cobalt Ltd.), acquired 20 Federal Mining Claims in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, NM and the surrounding national forest. The company intends to start prospecting in the area for gold, copper and zinc and has applied for exploratory drilling permits with the USDA Santa Fe National Forest and the State of New Mexico Mining and Mineral Division, and;

WHEREAS, on June 27, 2019, the San Miguel County Commission approved resolution number 06-27-2019-01 in support of strong measures to protect clean water and quality of life; and in opposition to the incomplete application of the proposed hard rock mining operation in the Jones Hill area of the Pecos River watershed on the Santa Fe National Forest by Comexico, LLC, and in support of strong measures to protect water quality, and;

WHEREAS, on September 15, 2021, the San Miguel County Commission adopted Ordinance No. SMC-No. 09-15-2021-P&Z to enact requirements for mineral resource exploration, extraction, and processing within the boundaries of San Miguel County to protect the citizens and the environment from harmful and hazardous toxic effects and nuisances that result from mining, and;

WHEREAS, in 2021, U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan and U.S. Representatives Teresa Leger Fernandez and Melanie Stansbury ("the Northern New Mexico Congressional Delegation") introduced the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act," a bill to legislatively withdraw approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral entry, and;

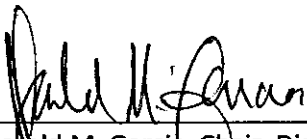
WHEREAS, the Northern New Mexico Congressional Delegation also signed a letter to Secretary Haaland dated November 2, 2021, requesting that the Department of Interior begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the Upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral development, thereby providing interim protection until permanent protection is secured legislatively, and;

WHEREAS, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) grants the Secretary of the Department of Interior the authority to withdraw federal public land from settlement, sale, location, and entry under the public land laws, including the United States mining laws, and operation under the mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights for a period of up to 20 years;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SAN MIGUEL COUNTY COMMISSION that the commission:

- Requests that the administrative withdrawal of mineral rights for approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 20 years, and;
- Supports the reintroduction of legislation to provide permanent protection to the Upper Pecos River watershed through a legislative withdrawal of mineral rights for approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River watershed, as proposed in 2021 by the Northern New Mexico Congressional Delegation in the "Pecos Watershed Protection Act", and;
- Directs the County Manager to submit copies of this Resolution to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the Director of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Chief of the United States Forest Service, the Deputy Chief of the USFS National Forest System, the USFS Southwest Regional Forester, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Land and Mineral Management, the Chief of Staff at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the New Mexico Congressional delegation, the Governor of New Mexico, the Jemez and Tesuque Pueblos.

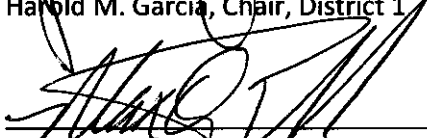
DONE, in Pecos, New Mexico, this 9th day of May, 2023.



 Harold M. Garcia, Chair, District 1



 Janice C. Varela, Member, District 2



 Max O. Trujillo, Member, District 3

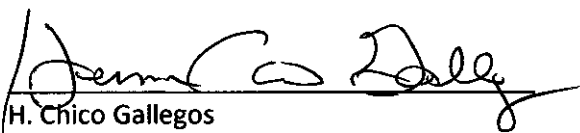


 Martin Sena, Vice Chair, District 4



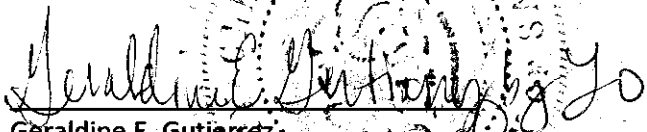
 Kenneth Medina, Member, District 5

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

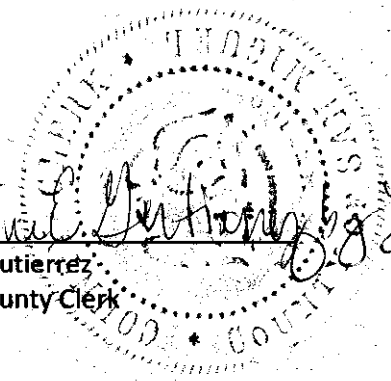


 H. Chico Gallegos
 San Miguel County Attorney

ATTEST:



 Geraldine E. Gutierrez
 San Miguel County Clerk



**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SANTA FE COUNTY**

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-055

Introduced by:
Commissioner Hank Hughes and Commissioner Anna Hansen

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE
PROTECTION OF THE UPPER PECOS RIVER WATERSHED THROUGH THE
WITHDRAWAL OF MINERAL RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, the headwaters of the Pecos River's primary tributaries are located in the northeast portion of Santa Fe County and in neighboring San Miguel County; and

WHEREAS, Santa Fe County resolved to work with San Miguel County for protection of the watersheds and drinking water supply associated with the Pecos River and its tributaries; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos River Watershed provides critical water resources to many communities, including municipal, domestic, and agricultural users, and provides clean water to numerous traditional and culturally significant acequia systems; and

WHEREAS, clean water is essential for the health and well-being of Santa Fe and San Miguel County residents; and

WHEREAS, the greater Pecos Valley region has been the center of a thriving culture for thousands of years and holds deep cultural significance to the Pueblos of New Mexico, including the Jemez and Tesuque Pueblos; and

WHEREAS, the greater Santa Fe River Valley region is adjacent to the Pecos Valley region and has likewise been the center of a thriving culture for thousands of years and holds deep cultural significance to the Pueblos of New Mexico, including the Jemez, Tesuque, Cochiti, and Santo Domingo Pueblos; and

WHEREAS, for hundreds of years, the greater Pecos River Valley has been home to numerous Spanish Land Grants where acequia-based agriculture has depended on clean water, originating in the Pecos Watershed; and

WHEREAS, the greater Pecos Valley region upholds legacy archeological, sacred, and historic resources, that are currently still in beneficial use by its descendants who still live and thrive in the Valley; and

WHEREAS, many Santa Fe County residents and visitors depend on the Upper Pecos Watershed for recreational activities, such as fishing, camping, swimming, and hiking; and

SFC CLERK RECORDED 06/21/2023

WHEREAS, the local economy is dependent on clean water to support farming, ranching, and recreation-based activities in the Upper Pecos River Watershed; and

WHEREAS, the upper Pecos River Watershed provides fresh water downstream for hundreds of miles, contributing to high-quality aquatic habitat for native fish, including New Mexico's state fish, the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and supports both a cold-water fishery and the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery; and

WHEREAS, the Upper Pecos River Watershed hosts important habitat for federally endangered species, including the Mexican Spotted Owl, which has designated critical habitat in the area, and a rare endemic flowering plant, the Holy Ghost ipomopsis; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the New Mexico State Legislature passed SB280, which appropriated \$2,100,000 to fund improvements to visitor services and administrative facilities for the Pecos Canyon State Park; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Mexico, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and others have engaged in reclamation efforts to rehabilitate the Upper Pecos River Watershed from toxic waste pollution originating from prior mining activity at the Tererro mine and mill site dating back to the 1880s. In the 1990s, contaminated runoff killed more than 90,000 trout, contaminating wildlife and community drinking water supplies; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission designated 180 stream miles and over 40 acres of wetlands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW); and

WHEREAS, the ONRW designation prohibits any degradation of the existing high water quality and prevents increased pollution to these outstanding waters; and

WHEREAS, the recent ONRW designation has been approved by the EPA, extending water quality protections under the federal Clean Water Act as well as state law; and

WHEREAS, the recent ONRW designation encompasses several named waterways and their unnamed non-perennial tributaries within Santa Fe County, including Dalton Canyon Creek, Doctor Creek, Indian Creek, Macho Canyon Creek, and Wild Horse Creek; and

WHEREAS, on August 28, 2019, the Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners (Board) adopted Ordinance No. 2019-2, which amended the County's Sustainable Land Development Code (SLDC) to adopt regulations to protect the County's environment, water, air, wildlife, habitat, natural resources, and cultural and historical resources from the negative impacts caused by mineral resource exploration, extraction, and processing; and

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2020, the Board passed Resolution No. 2020-16, "A Resolution Recommending a Reform of the 1872 Mining Law to Protect Public Lands and Local Economies and Supporting the Hardrock Leasing and Reclamation Act of 2019," reflecting that the Mining Law of 1872 lacks sufficient environmental standards to protect water resources and fish and wildlife habitats; and

SFC CLERK RECORDED 06/21/2023

WHEREAS, on June 27, 2019, the San Miguel County Commission approved Resolution No. 06-27-2019-01 in support of strong measures to protect water quality; and

WHEREAS, on September 15, 2021, the San Miguel County Commission adopted Ordinance No. SMC-No. 09-15-2021-P&Z to enact requirements for mineral resource exploration, extraction, and processing within the boundaries of San Miguel County to protect the citizens and the environment from harmful and hazardous toxic effects and nuisances that result from mining; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and U.S. Representatives Teresa Leger Fernández and Melanie Stansbury (“the Northern New Mexico Congressional Delegation”) introduced the “Pecos Watershed Protection Act,” S. 182, 117 Cong. (2021-2022), a bill to legislatively withdraw approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed from future mineral entry; and

WHEREAS, the Northern New Mexico Congressional Delegation also signed a letter to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland dated November 2, 2021, requesting that the Department of Interior begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the Upper Pecos River Watershed from future mineral development, thereby providing interim protection until permanent protection is secured legislatively; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) grants the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service the authority to submit an application to the Department of Interior requesting the withdrawal of federal public land from settlement, sale, location, and entry under the public land laws, including the United States mining laws, and operation under the mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights for a period of up to 20 years; and

WHEREAS, FLPMA grants the Secretary of Interior the authority to approve the withdrawal of federal public land from settlement, sale, location, and entry under the public land laws, including the United States mining laws, and operation under the mineral and geothermal leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights for a period of up to 20 years.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners of Santa Fe County, hereby:

1. Supports the administrative withdrawal of mineral rights for approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed, subject to valid existing rights, for a period of up to 20 years.
2. Supports the reintroduction of legislation to provide permanent protection to the Upper Pecos River Watershed through a legislative withdrawal of mineral rights for approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed, as proposed in 2021 by the Northern New Mexico Congressional Delegation in the “Pecos Watershed Protection Act.”

SFC CLERK RECORDED 06/21/2023

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Manager is directed to forward this Resolution to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Chief of the United States Forest Service, the Deputy Chief of the United States Forest Service National Forest System, the United States Forest Service Southwest Regional Forester, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Land and Mineral Management, the Chief of Staff at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the County's Federal and State Delegation, the Governor of New Mexico, and the Jemez and Tesuque Pueblos.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED ON THIS 13 DAY OF JUNE, 2023.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SANTA FE COUNTY**

By: *Anna C. Hansen*
Anna C. Hansen, Chair

ATTESTATION:

Katharine E. Clark
Katharine E. Clark
Santa Fe County Clerk

Date: 06/20/2023



SECRETARY ALI 11:00 AM
RECORDED 06/21/2023

Approved as to form:

Jeff Young for
Jeff Young
Santa Fe County Attorney

COUNTY OF SANTA FE)
STATE OF NEW MEXICO) ss

BCC RESOLUTIONS
PAGES: 4

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for Record On The 21ST Day Of June, 2023 at 09:22:36 AM And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 2014129 Of The Records Of Santa Fe County



Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office
Katharine E. Clark
Deputy *Dorothy Romero* County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM

Anton Chico Land Grant



BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Stoney Jaramillo, President
Max Sisneros, Secretary
Gerald Maestas, Treasurer
Daniel Montano Board Member
Adolfo Bachicha, Board Member

Meeting Agenda

Date: December 15, 2024

Agenda

1. Call to Order, Roll Call
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting
4. Discussion and Possible Action ---Pearl, Michael, Julian, Joseph, Percilla ----Raymundo Maestas Land Lease Contract Renew
5. Discussion and Possible Action ---Juan and Yolanda Lucero -- Land Lease
6. Presentation, Discussion and Possible Action ---Kyle Hitchcock----- La Loma Park
7. Discussion and Possible Action – Board of Trustees -----ACED Building
8. Discussion and Possible Action---- Board of Trustees -----2025 Election
9. Discussion and Possible Action---- Board of Trustees ---- Ralph Vigil Email -Re-Stop Mining Upper Pecos
10. Discussion and Possible Action----Board of Trustees---Hire additional Attorney
11. Public Comments- Discussion Only
12. Miscellaneous Announcements
13. Adjournment



Resolution 12-15-2024

Anton Chico Land Grant-Merced Board of Trustees supporting the Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Administrative Mineral Withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed.

WHEREAS, the Anton Chico Land Grant, established in 1822, holds a profound historical and cultural significance to the people of northern New Mexico. The land grant has been a central part of the identity, livelihood, and traditions of the communities that reside within its boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos River has been the lifeblood of the communities of the Anton Chico Land Grant for generations. The river, flowing from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, has provided clean water essential to the sustenance of the communities, supporting both agricultural practices and the acequia systems that have been vital to local food production, community cohesion, and cultural preservation; and

WHEREAS, acequias, the traditional communal irrigation systems, are not only a key element of the agricultural economy but also a pillar of the culture of the land grant communities. These centuries-old irrigation systems rely entirely on clean and sustainable water sources from the Pecos River to continue nurturing the farmlands that sustain local families and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, agriculture has been and continues to be an essential part of the lives of the people of the Anton Chico Land Grant. It connects them to the land and to their ancestors while ensuring food sovereignty and economic resilience. Without access to clean water, the viability of local agriculture and the acequia systems that nourish it would be severely threatened; and

WHEREAS, water is essential to every aspect of daily life in these communities. Clean water from the Pecos River provides for drinking water, personal hygiene, cooking, and the overall health and well-being of the residents. It sustains not only the land and wildlife but also the social and cultural fabric of the Anton Chico Land Grant and surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, recent proposals for mining activities in the Upper Pecos Watershed, including the Tererro Mine, pose significant risks to the quality of the water, the integrity of the land, and the well-being of the communities dependent on the Pecos River. Mineral extraction threatens to contaminate the watershed, disrupt wildlife habitats, and jeopardize the health of the environment and residents alike; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act seeks to safeguard this vital natural resource by permanently withdrawing the Upper Pecos Watershed from any future mineral development, thereby ensuring the long-term protection of the watershed, the environment, and the communities who depend on it; and

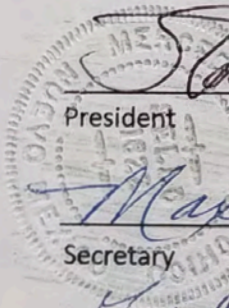
WHEREAS, an administrative mineral withdrawal is crucial for the protection of the Upper Pecos Watershed, as it would prevent mining activities that could lead to irreparable damage to the water quality and natural landscape. This action would be a significant step in preserving the cultural and agricultural heritage of the Anton Chico Land Grant and other communities along the Pecos River; and

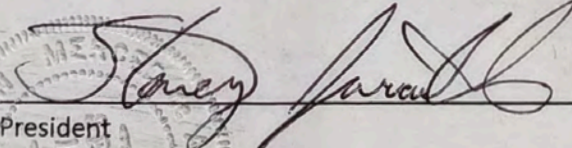
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anton Chico Land Grant-Merced Board of Trustees, in full recognition of the historic, cultural, and environmental importance of the Pecos River and the Upper Pecos Watershed to the communities of the Anton Chico Land Grant, hereby expresses its full support for the Pecos Watershed Protection Act and urges the immediate administrative withdrawal of mineral rights in the Upper Pecos Watershed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon federal, state, and local agencies to prioritize the protection of water resources in northern New Mexico, recognizing that clean water is not only essential for the health and well-being of local communities but also integral to sustaining the traditional agricultural practices and acequia systems that are the foundation of life within the Anton Chico Land Grant; and

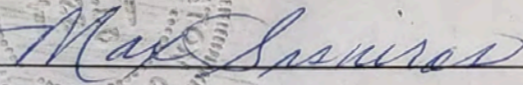
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge all stakeholders to work collaboratively to protect and preserve the Pecos River and its watershed for future generations, ensuring that the communities who rely on it can continue to live in harmony with the land, water, and their shared cultural heritage; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the New Mexico Congressional Delegation, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and other appropriate federal and state agencies to advocate for the protection of the Upper Pecos Watershed and support the communities that depend on it.

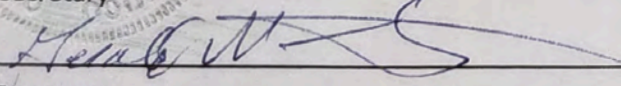




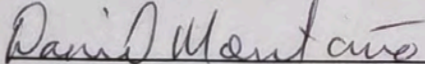
President



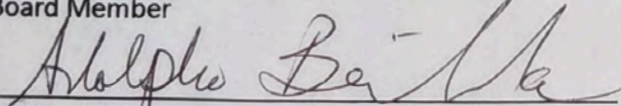
Secretary



Treasurer



Board Member



Board Member

San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced Board of Trustees supporting the Pecos Watershed Protection Act and Administrative Mineral Withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed.

WHEREAS, the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant, established in 1794, holds a profound historical and cultural significance to the people of northern New Mexico. The land grant has been a central part of the identity, livelihood, and traditions of the communities that reside within its boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos River has been the lifeblood of the communities of the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant for generations. The river, flowing from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, has provided clean water essential to the sustenance of the communities, supporting both agricultural practices and the acequia systems that have been vital to local food production, community cohesion, and cultural preservation; and

WHEREAS, acequias, the traditional communal irrigation systems, are not only a key element of the agricultural economy but also a pillar of the culture of the land grant communities. These centuries-old irrigation systems rely entirely on clean and sustainable water sources from the Pecos River to continue nurturing the farmlands that sustain local families and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, agriculture has been and continues to be an essential part of the lives of the people of the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant. It connects them to the land and to their ancestors while ensuring food sovereignty and economic resilience. Without access to clean water, the viability of local agriculture and the acequia systems that nourish it would be severely threatened; and

WHEREAS, water is essential to every aspect of daily life in these communities. Clean water from the Pecos River provides for drinking water, personal hygiene, cooking, and the overall health and well-being of the residents. It sustains not only the land and wildlife but also the social and cultural fabric of the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant and surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, recent proposals for mining activities in the Upper Pecos Watershed, including the Tererro Mine, pose significant risks to the quality of the water, the integrity of the land, and the well-being of the communities dependent on the Pecos River. Mineral extraction threatens to contaminate the watershed, disrupt wildlife habitats, and jeopardize the health of the environment and residents alike; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act seeks to safeguard this vital natural resource by permanently withdrawing the Upper Pecos Watershed from any future mineral development, thereby ensuring the long-term protection of the watershed, the environment, and the communities who depend on it; and

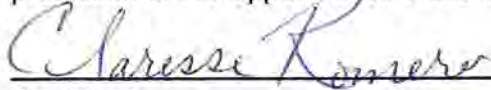
WHEREAS, an administrative mineral withdrawal is crucial for the protection of the Upper Pecos Watershed, as it would prevent mining activities that could lead to irreparable damage to the water quality and natural landscape. This action would be a significant step in preserving the cultural and agricultural heritage of the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant and other communities along the Pecos River; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced Board of Trustees, in full recognition of the historic, cultural, and environmental importance of the Pecos River and the Upper Pecos Watershed to the communities of the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant, hereby expresses its full support for the Pecos Watershed Protection Act and urges the immediate administrative withdrawal of mineral rights in the Upper Pecos Watershed; and

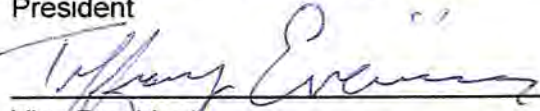
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon federal, state, and local agencies to prioritize the protection of water resources in northern New Mexico, recognizing that clean water is not only essential for the health and well-being of local communities but also integral to sustaining the traditional agricultural practices and acequia systems that are the foundation of life within the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge all stakeholders to work collaboratively to protect and preserve the Pecos River and its watershed for future generations, ensuring that the communities who rely on it can continue to live in harmony with the land, water, and their shared cultural heritage; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the New Mexico Congressional Delegation, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and other appropriate federal and state agencies to advocate for the protection of the Upper Pecos Watershed and support the communities that depend on it.



President



Vice President

Secretary



Treasurer

Member

**Resolution 2025-001 of the Cow Creek Basin Acequia Association
Supporting the Pecos Watershed Protection Act and an Administrative Mineral
Withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed**

WHEREAS, the Cow Creek Basin Acequia Association represents the acequias that rely on the waters of Cow Creek, Bull Creek, and their tributaries, which originate in the pristine headwaters of the Pecos Wilderness and flow through critical wetlands before reaching the confluence of Cow Creek and the Pecos River; and

WHEREAS, these waters sustain traditional agriculture, provide essential domestic use, and are central to the cultural heritage of our acequia communities, which have stewarded these lands and waters for generations; and

WHEREAS, clean and abundant water is fundamental to the survival of our acequia systems, which depend on the ecological health of the Upper Pecos watershed; and

WHEREAS, past mining activities in the region have left a lasting legacy of contamination, threatening water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and public health, making the protection of this watershed a priority for present and future generations; and

WHEREAS, proposed mining exploration and development in the Upper Pecos watershed pose an unacceptable risk to water resources, traditional land uses, and the cultural integrity of the acequia communities that depend on them; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act seeks to permanently safeguard the Upper Pecos watershed from harmful mineral development, ensuring the continued availability of clean water for acequias, wildlife, and future generations; and

WHEREAS, an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos watershed is urgently needed to prevent new mining claims and exploration that could jeopardize the health of our watershed and our communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cow Creek Basin Acequia Association strongly supports the passage of the Pecos Watershed Protection Act and urges the federal government to enact an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos watershed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cow Creek Basin Acequia Association calls upon elected officials, federal and state agencies, and community leaders to take all necessary actions to protect the Pecos watershed from mining threats, ensuring that clean water, traditional acequia agriculture, and the cultural heritage of our communities are preserved for future generations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the New Mexico congressional delegation, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), and the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service.

Adopted this 1 day of March, 2025

Cow Creek Basin Acequia Association

Luciane Tap - president

Kathy A. Romero

Joyce Rodriguez



State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

May 8, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Mr. Randy Moore
Chief, United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Administrative Mineral Withdrawal for the Upper Pecos River Watershed

Dear Secretary Haaland and Chief Moore:

I write to express my support for the administrative withdrawal from location and entry under the United States mining laws for approximately 166,600 acres within the upper Pecos River watershed under your authorities granted by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) for a period of up to 20 years. The purpose of the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal is to protect the watershed from mining claim location, prospecting, and mining operations while Congress considers legislative protections.

In 2021, Senators Heinrich and Luján introduced legislation for a permanent mineral withdrawal for the headwaters of the Pecos River (S.182) and Representatives Leger Fernández and Stansbury (H.R.5628) co-sponsored a similar bill in the House. Members of New Mexico's Congressional delegation also sent a letter to Secretary Haaland dated November 2, 2021, requesting that the Department of the Interior begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral development, thereby providing interim protection until permanent protection is secured legislatively.

As Governor of New Mexico, I urge you to begin the process of administratively withdrawing lands specified in the *Pecos Watershed Protection Act* from future mining and associated activities to protect the headwaters of the Pecos River and the cultural, ecological, and recreational resources it provides to the people of New Mexico.

As New Mexicans, we are united in our resolve to protect the pristine headwaters of the Pecos River from new mineral exploration and development. My administration has heard from diverse constituents who are deeply concerned by the prospect of renewed mining activity in the region. This valley was once the site of large mining and milling operations that contaminated the Pecos River and spread toxic mine waste throughout the surrounding area. After a long and expensive

cleanup, today the region has become a thriving center of tourism and a hub for New Mexico's growing outdoor recreation economy, including the recently established Pecos Canyon State Park.

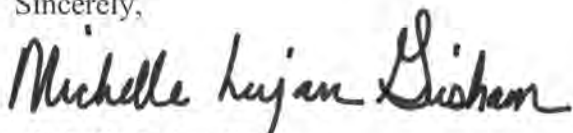
As a center of Native American culture for thousands of years, the headwaters of the Pecos River house archeological, sacred, and historic resources, in use from past to present, and is a place still valued and used for traditional practices by descendants of those who settled here, including the Native Pueblos of New Mexico and the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Additionally, for hundreds of years the greater Pecos River Valley has been home to traditional Hispanic communities where acequia-based agriculture, dependent on clean water originating in the Pecos River headwaters, has thrived.

Resumption of mining activities in the watershed presents unacceptable risks to an area still recovering from damages inflicted by past mining activities. In April of 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Cobalt Ltd, acquired 20 federal mining claims near Tererro, NM and the Santa Fe National Forest. The company intends to start prospecting in the area for gold, copper and zinc and has applied for exploratory drilling permits with the Santa Fe National Forest and the State of New Mexico. This proposed project has generated significant public comment and concern. In September of 2019, my office sent a letter to Chief of the Forest Service Vicki Christiansen in opposition to the exploratory drilling and resumption of large-scale hard rock mining in the region.

I thank you for your consideration of my request to begin an administrative mineral withdrawal for New Mexico's upper Pecos River watershed. By protecting the region for future generations, we will safeguard New Mexico's water supplies, preserve the heritage of Pueblos and Tribes, and protect the recreational resources valued by thousands of locals and visitors who are drawn to the region each year.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

CC: Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System
Michiko Martin, Southwest Regional Forester
Sean Sanchez, Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest
Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management
Laura Daniel-Davis, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Land and Mineral Management
Matt Lee-Ashley, Chief of Staff at the White House Council on Environmental Quality



June 13, 2023

Michiko Martin, Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service, Southwestern Region
333 Broadway Blvd. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Submitted via email to michiko.martin@usda.gov

Re: Administrative Mineral Withdrawal for Upper Pecos Watershed

Dear Regional Forester Martin:

The New Mexico Acequia Association (NMAA) writes to express support for our Congressional Delegation's November 2021 request (reiterated on October 18, 2022) to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed on the Santa Fe National Forest (SNF) in New Mexico from future mineral development by initiating the evaluation and administrative withdrawal process for approximately 166,600 acres within the Upper Pecos River watershed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLMPA), for a period of up to 20 years. The proposed administrative mineral withdrawal would protect the watershed from new mining claim location, prospecting, and mining operations, subject to valid existing rights, while Congress considers legislative protections.

Since 2019, NMAA has been engaged in opposition to the exploratory drilling permit application by Comexico, LLC, providing stakeholder education to dozens of downstream acequias likely to be impacted by exploratory drilling, meeting with USFS staff urging them to include acequias that are political subdivisions of the state as cooperating agencies in the NEPA process, and providing NEPA scoping comments. NMAA was also a petitioner to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters under the Clean Water Act, successfully securing this historic designation from our state Water Quality Control Commission in July 2022. The waters of New Mexico's Upper Pecos Watershed are the lifeblood of the region's acequia system, sustaining and enriching centuries-old acequias and farming and ranching traditions that depend upon clean water. Acequias depend upon clean water from the Pecos River for irrigating traditional crops and for sustaining vital cultural traditions. Acequia systems provide a significant benefit to the state, both culturally and economically.

NMAA is now urging the Forest Service to expedite its assessment and submit an application to Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland, requesting the immediate commencement of a two-year segregation of mineral rights followed by a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal. Please act now to protect New Mexico's scarce water resources, traditional land-based communities, and the array of cultural and ecological resources of the Upper Pecos River watershed until permanent protection can be secured through legislation. Thank you for your leadership in managing our forests for current and future generations.

Con respeto,



Paula Garcia, Executive Director
New Mexico Acequia Association
805 Early Street, No. B203
Santa Fe, NM 8755
(505) 995-9644
lamorena@lasacequias.org

Cc: Senator Martin Heinrich
Senator Ben Ray Luján
Representative Teresa Leger Fernández
Representative Melanie Stansbury
Representative Gabe Vasquez
Supervisor Shaun Sanchez, Santa Fe National Forest



New Mexico Acequia Commission

HC74 Box 842 ♦ Pecos, New Mexico 87552
Chairman (505) 603-2879 ♦ molinodelaisla@gmail.com
www.nmacequiacommission.org

MICHELLE LUJAN-GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

RALPH A. VIGIL
CHAIRMAN
MARY MASCAREÑAS
VICE-CHAIRMAN

May 2, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Mr. Randy Moore
Chief, United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Administrative Mineral Withdrawal for the Upper Pecos River Watershed

Dear Secretary Haaland and Chief Moore:

I write to express my support for the administrative withdrawal from location and entry under the United States mining laws within approximately 166,600 acres within the upper Pecos River watershed under your authorities granted by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) for a period of up to 20 years.

The purpose of the proposed administrative mineral withdrawal is to protect the watershed from mining claim location, prospecting and mining operations while Congress considers legislative protections. In 2021, Senators Heinrich and Luján introduced legislation for a permanent mineral withdrawal for the headwaters of the Pecos River (S.182) and Representatives Leger Fernández and Stansbury (H.R.5628) co-sponsored a similar bill in the House. Members of New Mexico's Congressional delegation also sent a letter to Secretary Haaland dated November 2, 2021, requesting that the Department of the Interior begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the upper Pecos River watershed from future mineral development, thereby providing interim protection until permanent protection is secured legislatively.

As the New Mexico Acequia Commission (NMAC), we urge you to begin the process of administratively withdrawing lands specified in the *Pecos Watershed Protection Act* from future mining and associated activities to protect the headwaters of the Pecos River and the cultural, ecological, and recreational resources it provides to our acequia communities. For generations, the greater Pecos River Valley has been home to traditional Hispanic communities where acequia-based agriculture dependent on clean water originating in the Pecos River headwaters has thrived. These are the descendants of New Mexico's land grant heirs and represent historically underserved communities that seek to maintain their way of life and traditional uses within the Santa Fe National Forest, which include grazing, foraging, and collection of wood and other forest materials.

Our acequia communities are united in our resolve to protect the headwaters of the Pecos River from new mineral exploration and development. Our acequia members are deeply concerned by the prospect of renewed mining activity in the region. This valley was once the site of large mining and milling operations that contaminated the Pecos River and spread toxic mine waste throughout the surrounding area. After a long and expensive cleanup, today the region once again is a thriving center of life that supports the many people, plants, fish and animals that depend on the Pecos River watershed.

Resumption of mining activities in the watershed presents unacceptable risks to an area still recovering from damages inflicted by past mining activities. Moreover, the Village of Pecos and San Miguel County residents continue to bear the burden of severe impacts from the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon Fire and cannot afford to be further negatively impacted by renewed mining in the Pecos River watershed.

In April of 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Cobalt Ltd, acquired 20 Federal Mining Claims near Tererro, NM and the surrounding national forest. The company intends to start prospecting in the area for gold, copper and zinc and has applied for exploratory drilling permits with the Santa Fe National Forest and the State of New Mexico. This proposed project has generated significant public comment and concern and the NMAC stands in opposition to the exploratory drilling and resumption of large-scale hard rock mining in the region.

I thank you for your consideration of my request to begin an administrative mineral withdrawal for New Mexico's upper Pecos River watershed. By protecting the region for future generations, we will safeguard our water supplies, preserve the heritage of our acequias and traditional way of life, and protect the recreational resources valued by thousands of locals and visitors who are drawn to the region every year.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ralph Vigil', written over the word 'Sincerely'.

Ralph Vigil, Chairman
New Mexico Acequia Commission

CC: Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management
Tommy Beaudreau, Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Matt Lee-Ashley, Chief of Staff at the White House Council on Environmental Quality

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 2, 2024

The Honorable Randy Moore
Chief
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Moore,

We are writing to follow up on your previous letter from April 11, 2023, in which the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) agreed to begin “evaluating the potential risk of mineral development in the Upper Pecos Watershed and whether...current laws and regulations are adequate for its protection.” The Pecos River irrigates farmland that families rely on for their economic survival in the immediate vicinity of the forest and for hundreds of miles in New Mexico. The communities along the Pecos River cannot afford the risk of another toxic spill. To protect this critical watershed, we request that the Forest Service provide an update on its evaluation and complete the initial steps of the administrative withdrawal process, without delay.

The Pecos River is not only an essential source of water for communities throughout New Mexico but is also deeply tied to our state’s cultural heritage. Traditional acequias—community-operated irrigation canals—rely on the river for water, supporting agriculture that sustains families and livelihoods. Pueblos use the land for fishing and hunting as well as ceremonial purposes. Any contamination of the watershed from mining would directly harm water quality, threatening local economies, fish and wildlife, and the health of the people living along the Pecos. These rural communities have made it clear: they do not want mining operations that could endanger the environment, their way of life, and the long-term sustainability of the region.

These risks of mining are not hypothetical. In 1991, toxic waste from a closed mine spilled into the Pecos River, killing fish along an 11-mile stretch. The cleanup took decades and cost millions of taxpayer dollars. The spill left scars on the landscape and on the memories of those who depend on the river. It is imperative that we learn from this tragic history and prevent further damage by protecting the Pecos watershed from new mining threats.

Earlier this Congress, members of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation introduced S.3033/H.R.5943, the *Pecos Watershed Protection Act*, to safeguard this vital resource for future generations. The legislation would permanently withdraw future mining in sections of federal land in the Upper Pecos Watershed. The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources voted to advance this legislation on December 14, 2023, and we are grateful that the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management both provided written statements in support for the bill. More recently, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus endorsed this legislation in October 2024.


While the *Pecos Watershed Protection Act* continues to progress through Congress, the Forest Service can act now to administratively withdraw the land from mineral development. To safeguard the lands, waters, and way of life in the Pecos, we strongly urge the Forest Service to complete, without delay, the initial steps of the mineral withdrawal process for the watershed in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management. In addition,

we request a briefing for our staff by no later than **December 12, 2024** if the Forest Service believes that the mineral segregation process may not be complete by the end of the year.

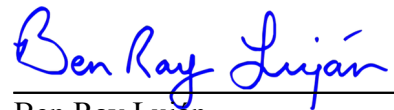
Communities along the Pecos River are asking for your leadership to protect their water, culture, and health from the dangers of mining, and to ensure future generations can continue to benefit from this critical watershed.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



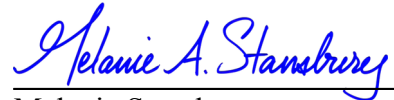
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



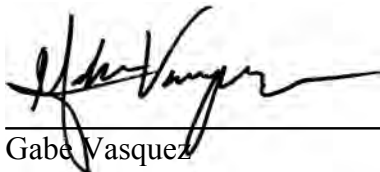
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress

CC:
The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management

August 2, 2023

The Honorable Debra Haaland, Secretary
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20242

The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Brenda Mallory, Chairperson
Council on Environmental Quality
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Randy Moore, Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Proposed Administrative Mineral Withdrawal for the Headwaters of
the Pecos River

Dear Secretary Haaland, Secretary Vilsack, Chair Mallory, Chief Moore, and Director
Stone-Manning:

On behalf of the undersigned stakeholders, representing tribal leaders, state and local
elected officials, farmers and parciantes, community organizations, small businesses,
and conservation and recreation groups, we write to formally request that you take
immediate steps to initiate an administrative mineral withdrawal for the headwaters of
New Mexico's Pecos River.

Without prompt agency action, we are concerned that a withdrawal cannot be finalized during the first term of the Biden administration, putting the future of this watershed, cultural and natural resources, downstream communities, and sites such as Pecos National Historical Park at great risk.

It is unlikely you will encounter a mineral withdrawal request with more local support than the Pecos. Recently, San Miguel County, Santa Fe County, and the Village of Pecos all unanimously passed resolutions in support of a 20-year administrative mineral **withdrawal for portions of the watershed. Members of New Mexico's state legislature** whose districts include portions of the watershed included in the proposed withdrawal have publicly called for the mineral withdrawal to move forward. In May of 2023, Governor Lujan Grisham sent a letter to Secretary Haaland and Chief Moore urging you to begin the process of administratively withdrawing lands specified in the Pecos **Watershed Protection Act from mineral exploration to protect the region's cultural,** ecological, and recreational resources for the people of New Mexico. All five members of **New Mexico's Congressional delegation have requested that the Forest Service, in** conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management, protect the upper watershed through a mineral withdrawal.

Such consensus between local, state, congressional, and tribal leaders regarding the importance of administratively protecting the headwaters of the Pecos River through a mineral withdrawal warrants action. We ask that you begin the process to withdraw lands specified in the Pecos Watershed Protection Act from mineral entry and associated activities, thereby protecting the clean water and cultural values of this **special place and providing time for New Mexico's congressional delegation to secure** more permanent protections.

The risks to the headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent. For context, in 2019 Comexico LLC, a Colorado-based subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd, acquired 20 mining claims in the Jones Hill area near Tererro, New Mexico. Comexico then applied for a state permit to conduct exploratory drilling for gold, copper, zinc, lead, and silver. This initial exploratory drilling could adversely impact more than 400 acres and five tributaries of the Pecos River. Alarmingly, Comexico has gained ownership of over 236 mining claims throughout the Pecos headwaters. The area now claimed by Comexico covers 4,300 acres and, if developed, would impact the entire Pecos watershed and possibly the Santa Fe municipal watershed.

Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river, contaminating community water

supplies, causing a massive fish kill, and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers footed the bill for millions in reclamation and cleanup costs.

Perhaps most concerning, new mining operations would occur in a geologic formation associated with acid mine drainage, posing a serious threat to water quality and aquatic **life. While hardrock mining has played an important role in our country's economic** prosperity, today water quality in thousands of stream miles is impaired by heavy metals or acidity and abandoned mines are a major source of these impairments.

Thank you for considering and quickly addressing our request. We hope to have the honor of hosting you and your staff in New Mexico and are confident that with your support we can move quickly to secure protections for this special watershed cherished by New Mexicans from all corners of the state. Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information.

We look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

American Rivers
Rachel Ellis, Southwest River Protection
Program

Amigos Bravos
Joseph Zupan, Executive Director

Audubon Southwest
Judy Calman, Director of Policy

Conservation Voters New Mexico
Greg Peters, Conservation Director

Defenders of Wildlife
Bryan Bird, Southwest Program Director

Earth Keepers 360
Reverend Andrew Black, Founder

Flowerhill Institute
Joseph B. Toledo, Cultural Advisor

Forest Trust
Henry H. Carey, President

Gila Resources Information Project
Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

HECHO (Hispanics Enjoying Camping,
Hunting, and the Outdoors)
Max O. Trujillo, Senior Field
Coordinator

Hummingbird Cabin on the Pecos
Joseph Giambalvo & Barbara Miller

Las Vegas Peace & Justice Center
Pat Leahan, Co-Director

Molino de la Isla Organics
Ralph A Vigil, Owner

National Parks Conservation Association
Emily Wolf, New Mexico Senior Program Coordinator

New Mexico Acequia Association
Paula Garcia, Executive Director

New Mexico Acequia Commission
Ralph A Vigil, Chair

New Mexico Climate Justice
Anni Hanna, Director

New Mexico Environmental Law Center
Dr. Virginia Necochea, Executive Director

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
Sally Paez, Staff Attorney
Carol Johnson, Board Member

N.M. State Representative Ambrose Castellano, District 70

N.M. State Representative Joseph Sanchez, District 40

N.M. State Senator Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics, District 39

N.M. State Senator Peter Wirth, Senate Majority Leader, District 25

New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Jesse Deubel, Executive Director

Pecos NM Business Association
Wendy Wilkerson, Artist

Pecos River Cabins
Kimberly Allen, Owner

Pecos River Open Spaces, Inc.
Christopher Thomson, President
Liza Bambenek, Susan Livermore, & Catherine A Louisell

Pecos Self Storage
Brian Hamos, Owner

River Source, Inc.
Rich Schrader, Director

San Miguel County Commissioner
Janice Varela

San Miguel County Planning & Zoning
Amanda Salas, Director

Santa Fe County Commissioner Anna Hansen

Santa Fe Fat Tire Society
Kyle Klain, President

Santa Fe Fly Fishing Schools
David Lemke, Owner

Santa Fe Watershed Association
Morika Vorenberg Hensley, Executive Director

Sierra Club
Teresa Seamster, Mining/Rio Grande Chapter

Stephen Nelson
Local Resident, Dalton Canyon

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Elle Benson, Southwestern Water
Program Coordinator

The Wilderness Society
Michael Casaus, New Mexico State
Director

Trout Unlimited
Dan Roper, New Mexico State Policy
Lead

Upper Pecos Watershed Association
Lela McFerrin, Vice President

Western Environmental Law Center
Tannis Fox, Senior Attorney

Western Resource Advocates
Jeremy Vesbach, Western Lands
Program Director

WildEarth Guardians
Madeleine Carey, Southwest
Conservation Manager

Wildlands Network
Michael Dax, Western Program Director

Cc:

Senator Martin Heinrich

Senator Ben Ray Luján

Representative Teresa Leger Fernández

Representative Melanie Stansbury

Representative Gabe Vasquez

Chair Mark Mitchell, All Pueblo Council of Governors

Chair J. Michael Chavarria, Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council

Encl:

San Miguel County Resolution No. 05-09-23-Commission

Santa Fe County Resolution No. 2023-055

Village of Pecos, N.M. Resolution No. 2023-006

Letter from Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (May 8, 2023)

Letter from N.M. Congressional Delegation (June 5, 2023)

Santa Fe New Mexican Editorial (May 5, 2023)

Santa Fe New Mexican Commentary (June 24, 2023)

Santa Fe New Mexican Letters to the Editor (July 20 & 28, 2023)

September 13, 2022

The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Ben Ray Luján
United States Senate
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernández
United States House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Melanie Stansbury
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Administrative Mineral Withdrawal for Upper Pecos River Watershed

Dear Senator Heinrich, Senator Luján, Representative Leger Fernández, and Representative Stansbury,

We are writing to follow up on a letter that you sent to Secretary of Interior Debra Haaland on November 2, 2021, requesting that she begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the Upper Pecos River Watershed from future mineral development, including new mining operations. The administrative withdrawal would be consistent with and in aid of the federal legislation now pending in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. We are proud that you have introduced the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which has been considered by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

We believe the resource values are so important, the threats so urgent, and the opportunities so narrow that it is prudent, necessary, and justifiable to pursue administrative protections while the legislation is pending. We thank you for sending the previous request for an administrative mineral withdrawal. Please let us know whether a response was received, and please consider sending another letter to Secretary Haaland and Forest Service Chief Randy Moore, perhaps from all four of you, reiterating the request.

We write to you today asking for your assistance as a coalition of eighteen organizations and individuals, representing tens of thousands of New Mexicans, on behalf of Pueblo, Hispano, acequia, conservation, and sportsman/woman stakeholders. As you know, we are locally led

and have been working together for years to highlight the incredible natural and cultural values of this special place, as well as the significant and growing threats it is facing, particularly from mining. In 2021, the American Rivers organization ranked the Pecos River #5 on the list of America's Most Endangered Rivers because a proposed hard rock mine could adversely impact over 5,000 acres of critical subalpine wildlife habitat and the river's life-giving clean water.

The pristine headwaters of the Upper Pecos River Watershed feed streams, rivers, and acequias; serve as an integral part of life for local communities; and provide a foundation for the local economy. The area holds deep cultural significance for many, including the Jemez/Pecos Pueblo, which established itself in the area around 1100 AD, and the Tesuque Pueblo, which has utilized the area's rich natural resources since time immemorial. Today, both Pueblos continue to use the watershed for hunting, fishing, herb gathering, and ceremonial purposes. In 1598, Spanish settlers arrived in the area and built the Spanish mission church in 1619. Today, Spanish land grant heirs and acequia parciantes still farm and ranch the valley. The watershed supports diverse wildlife and flora and is key to the restoration and protection of native Rio Grande cutthroat trout. The landscapes along the Pecos River are dramatic and include canyons, mountain meadows, and waterfalls. The watershed provides a diversity of opportunities for recreation, including hiking, fishing, horseback riding, hunting, and camping, including recreational opportunities at Pecos National Historical Park, which preserves over 12,000 years of history including the Pueblo of Pecos and colonial missions. The fishery at the Pecos River in Pecos National Historic Park is an important community resource that brings economic and educational benefits to the area.

On July 12, 2022, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission recognized the value of the Upper Pecos River Watershed by voting unanimously to protect these critical waters as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW). The ONRW designation grants the watershed special protection against water quality degradation under New Mexico's water quality standards and the federal Clean Water Act. We thank Senators Heinrich and Luján and Representative Leger Fernández for sending letters in support of these ONRW protections.

An administrative mineral withdrawal would help preserve the values provided by the Upper Pecos River Watershed for future generations, further New Mexico's ability to implement the ONRW designation, and help reach the goals of the Biden Administration's *America the Beautiful Initiative* and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's 30 x 30 goals, which are focused on protecting biodiversity and conserving 30% of lands and waters by 2030.

We deeply appreciate your interest, involvement, and support of the Upper Pecos River Watershed. We look forward to continuing to work with you on securing permanent protections through federal legislation. Meanwhile, please provide an update on the previous request for an administrative mineral withdrawal. We hope that you will follow up with the President Biden administration, Secretary Haaland, and Chief Moore to take this action at the earliest possible time.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Respectfully,

Michael Fiebig
Director, Southwest River Protection
Program
American Rivers

Rachel Conn
Deputy Director
Amigos Bravos

Liliana Castillo
Deputy Director
CAVU

Joseph Brody Toledo
Cultural Advisor, Co-founder,
Traditional Leader
Flower Hill Institute

Henry Carey
President
Forest Trust

Max Trujillo
Senior New Mexico Field Coordinator
HECHO

Ralph Vigil
Owner
Molino de la Isla Organics

Emily Wolf
New Mexico Program Coordinator
National Parks Conservation Association

Ralph Vigil
Chair
New Mexico Acequia Association

Maslyn Locke
Staff Attorney
New Mexico Environmental Law Center

Sally Paez
Staff Attorney
New Mexico Wild

Jesse Deubel
Executive Director
New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Jerry O'Shea

Susan Martin
Chair
Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter

NM State Senator Elizabeth "Liz "
Stefanics District 39

Dan Roper
New Mexico Angler Conservation
Coordinator
Trout Unlimited

Frank Adelo
President
Upper Pecos Watershed Association

Janice Varela
San Miguel County Commissioner,
District 2

Paula Garcia
Executive Director
NM Acequia Association

Pancho Adelo
President
Upper Pecos Watershed Association

Teresa Seamster
Chair
Sierra Club, Northern New Mexico Group

Cc:

Randy Moore, Chief of the United States Forest Service

Chris French, Deputy Chief, United States Forest Service

Laura Daniel-Davis, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Land and Mineral Management

Matt Lee-Ashley, Chief of Staff at the White House Council on Environmental Quality



STOP TERERRO MINE COALITION

Petition:

ADMINISTRATIVE MINERAL WITHDRAWAL IS NECESSARY AND AN APPROPRIATE TOOL TO PROTECT THE PECOS.

The Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Forest Service can ensure the permanent protection of the Upper Pecos Watershed in response to the potential for negative impacts from proposed exploratory mining and the expansion of Comexico's claims in the Thompson Peak area.

We have met with BLM and the Forest Service requesting that they recommend to the Secretary of the Interior to exercise her authority under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to withdraw the federal lands within its watershed from the mineral leasing laws for twenty years.

An administrative mineral withdrawal would start with a two-year segregation period for the federally managed minerals within the Upper Pecos Watershed. The segregation period would require land managers to determine the validity of existing claims before granting companies the right to initiate exploratory activities or mine in the area, which could result in some existing claims being invalidated. The segregation period would also prevent the establishment of new mining claims in the area for up to two years, and if an administrative withdrawal were approved it would prevent the establishment of new claims for 20 years.

Add your voice today in support of a mineral withdrawal!

Signatories:

Mary Orr	Charles Martinez	Stewart Anderson	Michael Zimmer
Dr. Robert C. Foehring	David Zaber	Jessi Cross	Julie Hasty
Mark A Johns	Mr and Mrs Joseph M	Thomas H. Aageson	Betsy Diaz
Mark Lane	Hartshorne	Shannon McKenna	San Williams
Doug Dunkle	Abigail Feldman	Bruce Black	Ben J Lewinger
Christopher Wentz	Inez Jones	Bruce Newton	Faith Yoman
Daniel Muenzberg	Neal Denton	Charles Hogan	Gail G Mattson
Claesse Romero	Mary Kraai	Steph Pencer	Judith Bayley
Stephen Nelson	Sandra Ortiz	Ralph A Vigil	Melissa Houser

ILene Diamond	Douglas K Conwell	Heidi Klingel	Kristin Graziano
Christine Otto	Clayton Schmitt	Janet M Berry	Leon Jon Bonney
Sherie Hartle	Elizabeth Bunker	Caroline Lajoie	Elena Patterson
Lura Brookins	Rob Dryden	Bronwyn Poole	Josef Tornick
Sandra Shoshani	Peggy Medina Giltrow	Doug Dunkle	Cristi Cave
Linda Werner	Jeff T Young	Jose Rincon	Emily Renfro
Benjamin Chaney	Lasita Shalev	Alicia	Z Babankova
Joseph McKenna	Laetitia Narvaez	Krystie	Anna Arnold
Riha Rothberg	Anna Cardenas	S. Scott	Gayle Kinsey
Dr Zella A. Bray, PhD	Jeanette Iskat	A. Reid	Wayne Muller
Kiaira Green	Leon Jon	Joanne Harris	Thomas Hodge
Carol Pittman	Bonney Blair Grey	Morgan O'Connor	Barbara Cooke
Dyas A. Lawson	Carlos Garcia	Emily Bass	Jessie Harwell
Elise Balzer	Kenneth Martinez	Geraldine Vigil	Terry Rothwell
Ada Rippberger	Karl Thomas Hakmiller	Jarrett Sasser	Anna Tindell
Elyse Benham	Stacey Carley	Jack Newman	Virginia Bell-Pringle
Megan Schendel	Douglas Conwell	Ryan P McCauley	Carla
Jasmine Claudio	Shelley Warren	Stuart Patterson Castle	Gordan
Henriques	Carl Strow	David Cox	Tamara Maschino
Emily Miller	Kristi Fuqua	Judith Allison	Jarrett Sasser
Michelle James	Blair Grey	Jaimie Hashey	Diego Rose
William & Dianne Wiley	Joe E. Jones	Bryan Steele	Susan Hill
Diane Forsdale	Kevin McGuire	Kelly Hobbs	Gerald Richard
Angela Thompson	Tim Blose	Jeff Young	Linda Storm
Annie McCann	Amy Tsay	Ursula Velasquez	Ann Betz
Susan Verkamp	Arlene Prescott	Shannon Martinez	Elizabeth Jean Salisbury
Jeanette Lysne	Peter Olson	Haitham Al-Shabibi	Karyn Rose
Peter Lysne	Kevin Reilly	Patricia Waldygo	Robin P Reindle
Mary Ann Waddell	Claudia Floyd	Dawn Roe	Jane C Slocomb
Andrew Venable	Melissa Houser	Dr. P Youngquist	Max G Weber
Cathy Gates	Keenan Carley	Corey Hernandez	Virginia McNally
Susan L Homer	Philip Musser	Robin Reindle	Reina Nelson
Mary V Orr	Susan More	Linda Wykue	Wes Draker
Rebecca Walding	Brandon Lucero	Linda Wylie	Elizabeth L. Gabaldon
Dori Smith	Jon Klingel	Joey Smallwood	Wallace Dominey
Judith Chaddick	Stuart Patterson	Merilynn Hidalgo	Adrienne Avitia
Kathleen Thier	Castle Jacob	Ann Coz	Pamela Mitchell
Andrew Venable	Anna Arnold	Jose Toya	William Britton
Carol Ingells	JT Krysiak	Melissa Homann	John Smallwood
Susan	Lura Brookins	Cyd Riley	Dr. Mary Estes
Charly Drobeck	Kimberly Allen	Robin Blagg	Donna McCrary
Jack Hunter	Danine Baca	Jasmine Meyer Trilby	Sean Helean
Louis R Levin	Sheryl Easley	Nelson Weissman	Betty Weseman
Janet Kerr	Amara May	Joan Camille Papp	Sarah

Gayle Kinsey	Sherri Sinclair	Jack Cowden
Wayne Muller	Rosie Brandenberger	Michael Rehling
Thomas Hodge	Christy Jones	Pen Bourdet
Barbara Cooke	Joe Jones	Jeff Holzem
Jessie Harwell	Juanita Lavadie	David Gritter
Terry Rothwell	Sondra Martucci	Joe Vincent
Anna Tindell	Joe E. Jones DDS	Vincent Sereno
Virginia Bell-Pringle	Michelle Wolpert	Steve Miller
Carla	Melissa Houser	Jeff Desmond
Gordan	David Thom	Gregory Prosen
Tamara Maschino	Ralph A Vigil	Paul R Turner
Jarrett Sasser	Seonaidh Davenport	Richard Fleming
Diego Rose	Donald Taylor	Russ Pate
Susan Hill	Suzanne Morey	Jeff Harrell
Gerald Richard	Sloan	LORNA ANDERSON
Linda Storm	Amy Brenneman	Ben Franklin
Ann Betz	Elizabeth Lende	Dennis Rowe
Elizabeth Jean Salisbury	Pam Neely	Stephen M Chavez
Karyn Rose	Todd Monson	Fred Helms
Robin P Reindle	Erika Soriano	Ronald A. Yeo, Ph.D.
Jane C Slocomb	Dulce Boles	Kara Armano
Max G Weber	Ben Trautman	James donoghue
Virginia McNally	Anne Dios	Kenneth Tabisn
Reina Nelson	Greg Davis	Sonia Hartshorne
Wes Draker	Juliet Smith	Todd Monson
Elizabeth L. Gabaldon	Alyce Santoro	Rebekah Sharits
Wallace Dominey	Gaye Denley	Oleg Pushkarov
Adrienne Avitia	Helen Wang	Karen Squires
Pamela Mitchell	Susan Wortman	Mia Franco
William Britton	Karen Baldwin	Jeff Fleming
John Smallwood	an Hanna	Fred Helms
Dr. Mary Estes	Todd Monson	Richard Pettit
Donna McCrary	Brian Rees	Stephen Jatho
Sean Helean	Terrye Bullers	Nayeli Navarro
Betty Weseman	Ellen achos	Jasmine
Sarah	Jeff Young	Glenn ike
Lisa Ephlin	William J Anderson	Claudia K Karll
Stephen Nelson	Ro ane Hopper	
Louise Jensen	Franck Greau	
Sandra Ortiz	Todd Monson	
Colin L Holloway	Doug Reaber	
Sarah	Everett Cole	
Roxane Hopper	M Pal	
Joel Hudson	Todd Monson	

#	Name	Address	Comment	Date	Email
1	Mary Orr	592 County Road 57 Ohkay Owingeh NM 87566	The Pecos watershed is a lifeline for for families and wildlife. It provides recreation and fishing for locals and visitors. It has been through mining damage in the past that the taxpayers had to pay for the cleanup and that contamination is still present..Lives have been disrupted from the fires of 2022. No more impacts! Withdraw the area from mineral extraction and mining.	11/1/23	mvorr01@gmail.com
2	Dr. Robert C. Foehring	2 Balsa Court, Santa Fe, NM 87508	There are too few pristine watersheds in NM. As a trout fisherman, hiker, birdwatcher, and wildlife photographer, I truly love the upper Pecos. There is already an old mine in the area that is in a long process of reclamation. We do not need more. The mining industry has a horrible track record of devastating watersheds and leaving without clean up. We do not need another foreign mining company in the Pecos.	11/1/23	rfoehrin@uthsc.edu
3	Mark A Johns	770 Paragon Drive Boulder, CO 80303	With the near constant intrusion of human kinds intrusion into the wilderness, we must do all we can to protect those areas for now and the future.	11/1/23	johns.touchstone@gmail.com
4	Mark Lane	PO Box 924 Lampasas TX 76550	I support the proposal	11/1/23	jacalynkaylane@gmail.com
5	Doug Dunkle	HC 74, Box 80 Pecos, New Mexico 87552	I urge you to enact Administrative Withdrawal necessary to provide protection to the Upper Pecos River.	11/1/23	coachdugger@gmail.com
6	Christopher Wentz	P.O. Box 2174 Corrales NM. 87048	The Upper Pecos watershed is a critically important area to protect for both current and future generations. It supports many citizens of New Mexico in agriculture, recreation, and sustaining the lives of innumerable species. The long-term preservation of the Pecos headwaters must be pursued through the permanent withdrawal of adjacent lands from mining exploration and development.	11/1/23	wentzcc1@gmail.com
7	Daniel Muenzberg	2747 Via Caballero Del Sur Santa Fe NM 87505	Agua es vida! It is essential to the preservation of the Pecos River watershed that the lands identified herein be withdrawn from current or future mine and mineral exploration. I therefore wish to express my support for the efforts of my state's congressional delegation. Respectfully, Daniel Muenzberg Santa Fe, New Mexico	10/31/23	djmuenz@msn.com
9	Claesse Romero	#16 NM Highway 484 Ribera, NM 87560	This mine will destroy our watershed and our livelihoods.	10/31/23	clareromleo@outlook.com
10	Charles Martinez	Frontage road 2116 #166 Rowe,new mexico	I've been in these woods my entire life.. learned to fish,hunt, survive off the land just looking at the beauty I can't believe this kind of destruction can even be thought of especially with the earth so vulnerable now we must conserve mother nature put a stop to this nonsense.	10/30/23	Charandjenn21@gmail.com
11	David Zaber	1543 Idlewild Ln Homewood Illinois 60430	This area is too valuable to be mined or altered in any way from any mining or other commercial activities. We spend lots of time in this area and cannot imagine any development scenario that would not harm this river, its' watershed and local communities. Please work to protect this area as wilderness and stop all mining claims.	10/27/23	djzaber324@gmail.com

12	Mr and Mrs Joseph M Harts	HC69 Box 1A, Rociada, NM 87742.	We live on the east side of the Pecos Wilderness and demand that NO MINING OF ANY KIND ANY WHERE NEAR THE WILDERNESS OR THE PECOS RIVER DRAINAGE SYSTEMS. They are the head waters of many streams and waterways that need to be protected from any CONTAMINATION which has occurred in this area and also in other northern new mexico streams. This area as well as the water ways need to be protected for future generations and our survival. PLEASE PUSH THIS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. Especially while this "simpatic" administration is in office.	10/27/23	ronisd10@gmail.com
13	Abigail Feldman	440 San Pasqual St Santa Fe, NM 87505	Protect our wild areas!	10/25/23	abigail.f.feldman@gmail.com
14	Inez Jones	4680 Westview Terrace Santa Fe, NM 87507	It is very important to me and our responsibility to protect natural resources especially water. Given our dependence on clean water and the arid place where we live. Protect before profit; what good is profit if ruins vital resources.	10/15/23	zenidom@yahoo.com
15	Neal Denton	3 Camino Gemma Pecos, NM 87552	This community has already been devastating by an abandoned mine. Let's not do it again.	10/10/23	nealhdenton@gmail.com
16	Mary Kraai	119 Quapaw Street Santa Fe, NM 87505	Protecting water from contamination is critical to life in NM and anywhere on planet Earth. "Needs" are more important than "Wants".	10/10/23	mek@cybermesa.com
17	Stewart Anderson	1854 PALACIO LANE' SANTA FE, NM 87505	THE PECOS IS A JEWEL AND SOURCE OF REGENERATION OF ALL SPECIES IN THE REGION INCLUDING HUMANS. NO AMOUNT OF GOLD IS WORTH IT.	10/10/23	andersonstew@fastmail.com
18	Jessi Cross	1333B Maez Rd Santa Fe, NM 87505	This pivotal region must be protected.	10/10/23	artyein@gmail.com
19	Thomas H. Aageson	189 Calle Galisteo Santa Fe NM 87508	Profit over water for community is not a solid rationale for permitting the disturbance of the environment, forest and waterways. The rationale, the underlying principle, is the common good. Way this greater good taking into consideration the human toll, destruction of the environment and poisoning the water as was done the last time.	10/10/23	tom.aageson@gmail.com
20	Shannon McKenna	1301 Manzano St. NE Albuquerque, NM 87110	Please do your part and protect the Pecos!	10/10/23	smckenna6548@aol.com
21	Bruce Black	804 Viejo Rastro Santa Fe New Mexico 87505	This area has suffered enough significant destruction recently with the fires	10/10/23	bdouglasblack@yahoo.com
22	Bruce Newton	12709 Desert Sky Ave NE Albuquerque, NM 87111	PROTECT THE PECOS!	10/10/23	newtonben52@gmail.com
23	Charles Hogan	1235 Willow Trail Bosque Farms, NM 87068	Please use your Congressional power and influence to stop the Tererro Mine and withdraw the Upper Pecos Watershed from all mineral development.	10/9/23	omarkyak@q.com
24	Steph Pencer	113 nw minnesota, bend, oregon, 97703	No Tererro Mine!!! Protect the Pecos River-keep it healthy & wild	10/9/23	poppypencer@gmail.com
25	Michael Zimmer	1603 Don Gaspar Santa Fe, NM 87505	I strongly support initiation of the process for an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed. I urge the DOI, BLM and USFS to work with the Stop Terrorro Mine Coalition in providing protection to this critical NM watershed that is so vitally important to the Pecos community and outdoor enthusiasts from around the state and beyond.	10/9/23	michaelz@stoneforest.com
26	Julie Hasty	1810 Calle de Sebastian, Unit H4 Santa Fe, NM 87505	Please protect the beautiful Pecos Watershed from additional damage due to mining.	10/9/23	jmdhasty@gmail.com

27	Betsy Diaz	PO Box 25302 Albuquerque, NM 87125-0302	<p>I strongly ask that the Pecos River be protected from pollution as a Water Resiliency Advocate and a member of an Earth Care Certified church. First and foremost, Creator God bestowed ONLY 1 SUPPLY OF WATER FOR THE ENTIRE LIFE OF THE EARTH. Humans as PART of natural life on Earth are asked not to have dominion over all life, but rather to be stewards which requires that we learn about natural life on this miraculous planet on which we live. That means we must learn how to support and sustain the natural environment where we live. We need to learn about the role of each part of our environment and its cycle of life.</p> <p>The water of a river replenishes the water cycle through being absorbed by the riparian ecosystems adjacent to it & through evaporation. When it is polluted it poisons the adjacent ecosystems & does not evaporate correctly in recycling which is critical to replenishing our SINGLE supply of water. Though humans ignore this responsibility, we are now paying the price for that in diminished water supplies in NM. Between careless use of water and contributing to the earth heating up, in NM we have lost 25% of NM's water, with another 25% expected to be gone in years to come. Do the math, that means a severe water shortage is already in process for all water users in this state.</p> <p>The Pecos water is needed for indigenous peoples living near it, and acequia people who do subsistence farming with its waters. Our fisherpersons need the river as well. If we wonder why there is drought and fires and heat, we need only look to humans' reckless use of water, such as polluting it, & their contributions to rising temperatures which between the 2 have us experiencing permanent drought. This is also responsible for the terrible extreme weather events which are due to the water cycle being seriously out of balance. Deluge and drought go hand in hand. Northern</p>	10/9/23	diazbetsy7@gmail.com
28	San Williams	2909 Pueblo Alto Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507	Stop any further mining operations on the Pecos!	10/9/23	sansomwilliams@gmail.com
29	Ben J Lewinger	5908 Ponderosa Ave NE Albuquerque, NM 87110	For our family, Pecos has been our most important retreat into NM nature. It got us through COVID, and continues to be a very important interface with the natural world. Please protect it. Not only for our family, but for many other families whose cultural heritage and livelihood is more directly connected to the land and water.	10/9/23	benjlewing@gmail.com
30	Faith Yoman	PO Box 22127 Santa Fe NM 87502	Please protect the Pecos River region by withdrawing the permission for mineral mining leases!	10/9/23	faithyoman15@gmail.com
31	Gail G Mattson	2874 Plaza Amarilla Santa Fe, NM 87507	Our watershed for Santa Fe must be protected!	10/9/23	mattsongail@gmail.com
32	Judith Bayley	100 Silver Ave SW #133 Albuquerque, NM 87102	Please protect vulnerable species.	10/9/23	judbay@aol.com
33	Ilene Diamond	2916 Tennessee St NE Albuquerque NM 87110	<p>Keeping the Pecos area free of mining is essential to many species, survival as well as maintaining clean water for local residents and farmers.</p> <p>The area near Cowles NM in the Pecos was mined for gold in the 1970's and 80's. Many toxins swept into the Pecos River through these mines. To clean and rehabilitation the area, Cowles was closed to hiking, camping, and fishing for 9 years.</p> <p>Please take keeping our environment safe for humans, animals, and plants seriously. If not now, when?</p> <p>Ilene Diamond - outdoor enthusiast.</p>	10/9/23	diamondize@icloud.com
34	Christine Otto	1209 Callejon Arias Santa Fe, NM	Keep the mines out.	10/8/23	chrstruckee@yahoo.com

35	Sherie Hartle	906 Osage Ave. Santa Fe, NM 87505	No mining, Keep the Pecos area clean and safe.	10/8/23	ssuzannehartle@yahoo.com
36	Lura Brookins	1550 Pacheco st Santa Fe NM 87505	It is imperative that we protect all waters in our country, especially in the Southwest!!	10/8/23	lurabrookins@gmail.com
37	Sandra Shoshani	825 Calle Mejia, Santa Fe, NM 87501	I support efforts this request for the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw federal lands within the Upper Pecos River Watershed from mineral leasing laws for twenty years, starting with a two-year segregation period.	10/7/23	hezy23@gmail.com
38	Linda Werner	6820 Mete Sol Dr NW Albuquerque, NM 87120	Please seriously consider this request. So much our lives (economic as well as aesthetic) depends on a strong and healthy natural environment. Thank you.	10/7/23	wernerld00@gmail.com
39	Benjamin Chaney	3920 E. Highway 66 Gallup, NM 87301	Please protect this watershed, arable land, and natural habitat for threatened/endangered species such as owls.	10/7/23	bchaney.90@gmail.com
40	Joseph McKenna	1700 Camino de la Vuelta Santa Fe, NM 87501	The possibility of more mining in the upper Pecos watershed is appalling. I have seen with my own eyes the tremendous damage that was done by previous mining operations. To begin mining there again would be a crime against mother earth NO mining in the upper Pecos!	10/7/23	mountain2332@yahoo.com
41	Joseph McKenna	1700 Camino de la Vuelta Santa Fe, NM Route 87501	We must do everything we can to protect the natural beauty of the Upper Pecos watershed. I have seen with my own eyes the immense damage that was done by previous mining operations. To begin mining once again in that area would be, in my mind, a grave offense against Mother Earth. NO mining there!	10/7/23	mountain2332@yahoo.com
42	Riha Rothberg	07 Placitas West Rd Placitas NM 87043	I urge the DOI, BLM and the USFS to work with the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition to implement an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed to protect all life the depends on the health of of this area. This would provode immediate protection until a permanent legislative solution can be secured. Please help protect the Pecos.	10/7/23	riha8@comcast.net
43	Dr Zella A. Bray, PhD	920 Riverview Drive, SE Rio Rancho, NM 87124 (Apt 302) Let,Ãs stop	We need to stop the madness and greed of these oil companies, destroying one habitat after another. In my opinion, we have sufficient gas and oil reserves and locations, which are being utilized. Essentially, there is no need to continue destroying our Remaining Forest and open spaces. We sell these leases for pennies, and when they are finished raping the land, we are stuck as taxpayers clean up their messes. Deb, please do not allow these people to take are lands and forest for their own greed. We have sufficient reserves of oil and gas, and should not move to destroy habitats to simply make money. These individuals need to remember that you cannot eat or drink a dollar bill. let's at least leave something for the next generation. And remember that money does not solve everything. So Deb, please say NO to these buyers of gas and oil And remaining green for the next generation. If we don't, we will be responsible for the. planets demise. Hopefully, Deb, you can pull this off and keep these people on a leash from the destructive rape of this area for at least 20 years. Thank you for at least trying to stop these individuals from recovering oil and gas I'm just trying or wilderness.	10/7/23	zella.bray@gmail.com
44	Kiaira Green	2619 Sierra Drive NE	Please protect our environment. I would like to continue living.	10/7/23	kiairagreen1001@gmail.com
46	Carol Pittman	PO Box 374, Datil NM 87821	The future of our state depends on our making good decisions now. Please strive to protect the upper Pecos watershed from inappropriate mining. Thank you for your attention.	10/7/23	pittray@gilanet.com

47	Dyas A. Lawson	332 Escena St. SE Albuquerque, NM 87123	For more than two centuries, resources have been irresponsibly raped from New Mexico, destroying habitat, creatures, and leaving the nation's third-poorest state to pay for clean-up and restoration. It's long past time for mining operations to cease entirely in this fragile ecosystem.	10/7/23	wordsmith52@yahoo.com
48	Elise Balzer	8220 Curry Ave NE Albuquerque NM 87109	To whom it may concern, please do everything in your power to keep the Pecos from more harm and restored back to its natural beauty. Thank you for your service.	10/7/23	eebalzer@gmail.com
49	Ada Rippberger	1721 Kit Carson Ave SW Albuquerque, NM 87104	Water is life and MUST be protected before any consideration for mining or other extractive operations.	10/7/23	arippberger@yahoo.com
50	Elyse Benham	2312 12th St SE Rio Rancho, NM 87124	Please don't allow another mining project in this area. The area is fragile and still recovering from previous pollution due to mining. Please protect our landscape for us to enjoy and protect the endangered life forms for years to come.	10/7/23	elyse.paske@gmail.com
51	Megan Schendel	10901 Ralph Ave Albuquerque, NM 87112	Keep our Pecos free of mining. Protect our greatest resource!	10/7/23	ssmegss@gmail.com
52	Jasmine	5312 Estrellita Del N RD ABQ 87111	Please protect this watershed	10/7/23	records.career_0y@icloud.com
53	Claudio Henriques	650 5th Avenue New York, NY 10019	The Upper Pecos Watershed needs permanent protection through legislation to prevent mineral development and protect the area's natural and cultural values.	10/7/23	claudio.sh@bol.com.br
54	Emily Miller	310 Clara Lane Belen, NM 87002	New Mexico is such a beautiful and biologically diverse place. Protecting that beauty for future generations is so important. Protecting our resources and our water for future generations should be one of our highest priorities.	10/7/23	scitchet@gmail.com
55	Michelle James	10808 Wasatch Rd SE Albuquerque, NM 87123	Protect the Pecos for unborn generations.	10/7/23	whiteoakroad@gmail.com
56	William & Dianne Wiley	4341 S Purple Sage pl, Chandler, AZ	I suggest it is our responsibility to protect the fauna, flora & water of the Pecos River watershed. My grandchildren are looking to you to stand up & protect American wilderness.	10/6/23	nmtriman@gmail.com
57	Diane Forsdale	109 Valley Dr Santa Fe, NM 87501	Please work to ensure an administrative mineral withdrawal to protect the Upper Pecos for the time being. This area has been devastated by mining in the past and now they are talking about more mining, which is just going to be a repeat of the past in terms of damaging the ecosystem. Please work to protect our fragile wilderness in New Mexico!	10/6/23	dforsdale109@gmail.com
58	Angela Thompson	3828 Rancher Loop NE Rio Rancho, NM 87144	Please save the Pecos such a beautiful place needing the saving of wildlife.	10/6/23	thomar1229@gmail.com
59	Annie McCann	571 Bellaire Drive, Venice FL	Protect the Pecos from mining!!	10/6/23	gem3@comcast.net
61	Susan Verkamp	PO Box 557 El Prado, NM 87529	Please protect the Pecos from potentially damaging mining activities. Please withdraw the federal lands in the watershed from mineral leasing laws so that land managers can evaluate existing claims before allowing more. Thank you, Susan Verkamp	10/6/23	susiev@cybermesa.com
62	Jeanette Lysne	1744Camino Uva Los Alamos nm 87544	Stop the Mine!	9/29/23	jhllysne@gmail.com
63	Peter Lysne	1744Camino Uva Los Alamos New Mexico 87544	Stop the mine!	9/29/23	lysne@swcp.com
64	Mary Ann Waddell	17 Calle Prado Santa Fe, NM 87507	We must protect water. Everything else depends on it. An ecosystem cannot survive without clean water. And remember that we are part of the ecosystem.	9/27/23	Mawaddell2@gmail.com
65	Mary Ann Waddell	17 Calle Prado Santa Fe, NM 87507	We must protect water. Everything else depends on it. An ecosystem cannot survive without clean water. And remember that we are part of the ecosystem.	9/27/23	Mawaddell2@gmail.com

66	Andrew Venable	709 Washington ave grants nm 87020	By allowing this mining to start, the Pecos river and surrounding tributaries would be horrible affected.	9/22/23	avenable6978@gmail.com
67	Cathy Gates	8 Aguila Pl, Santa Fe, nm	This area needs protection to preserve the quality of the river and its surrounding environs. Too much has already been adversely impacted in the past.	9/18/23	cathy75@me.com
68	Susan L Homer	5000 Sequoia Rd NW	Please consider ending mineral extraction in the Pecos River Tererro area. The damage it causes is extreme.	9/16/23	33slhomer@comcast.net
69	Mary V Orr	PO Box 4585 Espanola, NM 85733	The Pecos Valley and Pecos River have had enough damage from past mining. The state ended up with all the clean up. This is an area that provides recreation and respite. The Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire negativly affected the mountiain range adjacent to the Pecos Valley. Protection is the first order of the day for this place and the people and wildlife in ii Please do a mineral withdrawal to stop this mining speculation.	9/15/23	mvorr01@gmail.com
70	Rebecca Walding	P.O. Box 146, Cerrillos, NM 87010	The Pecos needs to be protected. We cannot afford to lose water or watershed in New Mexico.	9/15/23	studio50@swcp.com
71	Dori Smith	920 Riverview Drive SE Rio Rancho NM 87124	The Tererro mining area is in a very special and beautiful valley, favored by New Mexico residents like us, who picnic, fish, and enjoy the river. The 2-lane highway in the narrow canyon cannot support the truck traffic entailed in a mining operation. Do not allow this damaging mining to happen again. Thank you.	9/15/23	dori.do@gmail.com
72	Judith Chaddick	PO Box 3116, Espanola, NM 87533	Please take the action needed to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed. It is an ecologically fragile and sacred area which I have hiked and camped in many times. It must be premaritally protected from mining and other destructive activities. Thank you Sincerely, Judith Chaddick	9/14/23	judyhaddick@gmail.com
73	Kathleen Thier	4 Mosca Peak, Santa Fe, NM 87508	Stop Tererro Mine! Please value the environment, wildlife, safe water, sacred land, people over greed.	9/14/23	kmbthier1@gmail.com
74	Andrew Venable	709 Washington ave grants nm 87020	By allowing this mining to start, the Pecos river and surrounding tributaries would be horrible affected.	9/14/23	avenable6978@gmail.com
76	Carol Ingells	500 Rodeo Rd. Santa Fe, NM 87505	I support measures being taken to stop or at least slow down establishment of the Terrero Mine. We must protect the Pecos River and its ecosystem.	9/13/23	cningells@earthlink.net
77	Susan Charly Drobeck	PO Box 458, Tesuque, NM 87574	We must protect what's left of the wild, generous, and living waters and lands. Please keep the Upper Pecos Watershed permanently protected!	9/13/23	kebord1@cybermesa.com
78	Jack Hunter	6 Encantado Road Santa Fe NM 87508	Administratively Withdraw these mining claims. This area is too sensitive	9/13/23	jacklhunter@icloud.com
79	Louis R Levin	2078 Calle Contento Santa Fe, NM	Please protect our environment!	9/13/23	loulevin@yahoo.com
80	Douglas K Conwell	1616 Paseo de la Conquistadora Santa Fe NM 87501	It is essential to the health and welfare of the people and ecology of this area of New Mexico that this mine and others that may be pending be denied.	9/13/23	earthwalks1@yahoo.com
81	Clayton Schmitt	667 Casa Loma Blvd Boynton Beach, FL 33435	Protecting the Pecos watershed should outweigh any of the temporary benefits of mining or other uses that threaten water resources and the species that depend on them.	9/13/23	claytonpschmitt@yahoo.com
82	Elizabeth Bunker	51 East old Agua Fria Rd Santa Fe, NM 87508	Please save the Pecos Canyon for future generations of New Mexicans like my students to enjoy with their families.	9/13/23	ebunker58@aol.com
83	Rob Dryden	7 Avenida Vista Grande Santa Fe, NM 87508	Please protect the land and water of the pecos and the beautiful wilderness. The biodiversity of life itself, (that supports humanity) is more important than gold.	9/13/23	hotguyx102002@yahoo.com

85	Peggy Medina Giltrow	216 Alta Vista St, Santa Fe, NM 87505	As a citizen of Santa Fe and New Mexico, I urge the implementation of an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed. Many people depend on that water. I hike the area whenever possible. Once an environment is destroyed it is impossible to reclaim it in its original pristine condition. It is time for the Hard Rock Mining Act to be abolished; cash for companies should not be more important than preservation of our sacred land and water.	9/10/23	pgiltrow@cybermesa.com
86	Jeff T Young	25 Dalton Trail Sandia Park NM 87047	I am a life-long New Mexican and avid fly fisherman. There is no place more special to me than the Pecos. I have fished all over the Rocky Mountain West and always come back to my home water. I took my kids there when they were young and my wife and I still hike the trails all throughout the Pecos. I fish there at least 20 days a year. The Pecos represents the life blood of eastern New Mexico. We must do everything we can to protect this invaluable resource.	9/9/23	jeff.young.elk@gmail.com
87	Lasita Shalev	2300 W Alameda, unit B2 Santa Fe NM 87507	Mining tends to be a source of pollution	9/8/23	hdamerica@mac.com
88	Daniel Muenzberg	2747 Via Caballero Del Sur Santa Fe NM 87505	To Whom It May Concern, Please know that the Pecos River and its watershed, aside from its spectacular beauty, is vital to New Mexico's environmental health and the lives of the people who use and enjoy the benefits of its pristine waters. These considerations must be taken into account in any decisions that may be forthcoming. Sincere regards, Daniel Muenzberg	9/8/23	djmuenz@msn.com
89	Laetitia Narvaez	33 azul loop Santa fe nm	I support the continued protection of the Pecos area, its water ways, indigenous peoples, and endangered species. I oppose any destructive mining practices in this area.	9/8/23	lldenarvaez@outlook.com
92	Lasita Shalev	2300 W Alameda, unit B2 Santa Fe NM 87507	Mining tends to be a source of pollution	9/8/23	hdamerica@mac.com
93	Anna Cardenas	897 Camino Los Abuelos, Galisteo, NM 87540	Our families in Galisteo have enjoyed fishing and camping on the Pecos River since we were children. It is our way of vacationing in a clean environment. Terrero is the one area we can enjoy nature and all its beauty. We are now teaching are grandchildren to care for the Pecos River. Please don't allow these mining companies to come in and pollute our waters.	9/7/23	galigirl312@centurylink.net
94	Jeanette Iskat	1207 NM 3 Villanueva NM 87583	I live and farm in the Pecos river valley, downstream from the proposed mine. I have attended meetings about this proposal over the past few years. There is no safe way for us to have this mine in the watershed. We already have very serious drought conditions, and we depend on this water for livelihood, agriculture, fishing, recreation, and life. We will continue to block this mine at every level. we will make it so that mining companies cannot strip mine resources and leave. This has become a very accepted practice worldwide, but it has to stop and it will stop here.	9/3/23	sehrnett2000@yahoo.com
95	Leon Jon Bonney	PO Box 250 Ribera, NM 87560	I support protecting the entire Rio Pecos (Pecos River) system from mining and other invasive non-natural incursions.	9/2/23	2nmdogs@earthlink.net

96	Blair Grey	123 County Rd B52, Pecos, NM 87552	<p>I live in the El Molino reclamation valley and have spent since 2017 having to deal with drilling a new well due to the mine tailing contaminants from decades ago. I am aware this Terrero Mine for different minerals - but our watershed is PRICELESS and should never be sold out for short sighted corporate profits. Our weather changes have affected our forest and we do not know the patterns that could affect mining habits - like all the pure water wasted to process the minerals. Protect our sacred land and magical heritage for all the creatures and future generations!</p> <p>Act now to preserve versus sell us out, Blair Grey</p>	8/30/23	blair@elementalintegration.co
97	Carlos Garcia	125 Rancho Vlejo Blvd. Santa Fe, NM 87508	<p>My family has enjoyed the Pecos River for 3 generations. My father and I lived in Pecos for 15 years and I attended High School there for 2 years as well. My 3 daughters and I enjoy nothing more than fishing the pecos river and camping/hiking the area as well. The mining cannot be allowed to threaten or disrupt the beautiful pecos river! You have my full support!</p> <p>Carlos Garcia</p>	8/30/23	cargar507@gmail.com
98	kenneth martinez	route 1 box 11 a, santa fe, nm	<p>The Terro Mine project in Pecos presents a concerning and potentially devastating prospect for both the local environment and the community. The project's scale and scope raise alarms about its impact on the delicate ecosystem in the region, including the potential for habitat destruction, water pollution, and air contamination. Furthermore, the social fabric of the Pecos community, which relies heavily on a balance between nature and economic sustainability, might be severely disrupted by the influx of mining-related activities. In the face of such uncertainties and potential harm, it is imperative to prioritize the long-term well-being of the environment and the community over short-term economic gains that the Terro Mine project might promise.</p>	8/29/23	kmyster24@gmail.com
99	Karl Thomas Hakmiller	2135 Eton Ave SE Albuquerque, NM 87106	<p>This is New Mexico - not Louisiana. We aren't exactly made of water! A win for the environment is a win for the people of this state. A loss for the environment? Look to the Animas River for that.</p>	8/22/23	Karlhak001@gmail.com
100	Stacey Carley	5617 86th St. Lubbock, TX 79424	<p>My family has been going to the Pecos area since the 1950s. We are now taking a fifth generation there to hike, fish, and enjoy being in nature. It is a beautiful, peaceful place and we feel we have a spiritual connection to this area.</p> <p>I ask that you support administrative mineral withdrawal to protect federal lands within the Pecos Watershed from mineral leasing laws. Fish and other wildlife depend on clean water in the Pecos River. Farmers need the water for their crops. Future generations need places of refuge in this beautiful natural setting. Businesses in the area also benefit from visitors going to the Pecos area to enjoy the outdoors.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my comments!</p>	8/12/23	stacey.l.franklin@gmail.com
101	Douglas Conwell	1616 Paseo de la Conquistadora/Santa Fe NM 87501	<p>Please protect this very fragile and important watershed from further environmental toxic impacts. It has seen more than enough of its share.</p>	8/8/23	earthwalks1@yahoo.com
102	Shelley Warren	1 Herrada ct Santa Fe nm87508	<p>The requests for mining in Pecos Wilderness should be denied, to protect the land, use of land by animals and humans. These old mining laws need to be changed.</p>	8/7/23	slynnwarren@charter.met

103	Carl Strow	2749 Wren Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80909	The upper Pecos valley and watershed have contributed enough to mining in their history and have suffered enough from fires, overuse, and abuse. This new mining would harm the recreational value of our public lands. Thank you, Carl Strow	8/5/23	cstrow539@hotmail.com
104	Kristi Fuqua	2767 Cosmos Drive NE Atlanta, GA 30356	We have traveled to the Pecos Wilderness for the past 30 years. We have fished in the river and hiked. The area is sacred to our family. We would hate to see any damage caused to the wilderness by mining.	8/4/23	kristi.fuqua@gmail.com
105	Blair Grey	123 County Rd B52, Pecos, NM 87552	I live in the El Molino valley that has endured repeated water toxicity from a mine that was meant to have been "Neutralized" of toxic effects decades ago. Freeport mining just had to redrill my well as it was not safe. To even allow another mining project to come to this watershed is criminal. With the horrendous fires last year we have lost uncountable wildlife, trees and rare species so to add to the mix a mine that absolutely has accidents and unforeseen issues which could POISON our waterways - and KILL everything in the vicinity. Enough is enough - our earth is begging for respect and our sacred ecosystem here is rare and precious. PLEASE save our beloved Pecos. Our children, the fish, the bees and the trees so hope to have a future. Blair Grey	8/2/23	blair@elementalintegration.co
106	Joe E. Jones	46 Balsa Rd, Santa Fe, NM 87508	I urge the BLM, USFS, and DOI to work with our coalition to implement and administrative withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed to protect this precious resource from damaging mining operations. Thank you	8/2/23	jejonesdds1@gmail.com
107	Kevin McGuire	2710 San Joaquin Ave SE Albuquerque, NM 87106	I support an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed. Thank you.	8/2/23	klmcguire@gmail.com
108	Tim Blöse	110 Calle palomita Santa fe , NM 87505	I'm requesting and supporting the withdrawal of the upper Pecos River watershed from any mining or land-based extraction going into the future. As an avid hiker and fishermen, me and my family treasure the pristine Waters and land of this region. We are also property owners that fall within the upper watershed and are very concerned about any activities that would undermine its wilderness characters and water quality. Please remove all mining claims from the upper Pecos watershed.	8/2/23	tim@nativeearthlandscaping.com
109	Amy Tsay	761 W Manhattan Ave Santa Fe NM 87501	Mining in this area is an additional threat to the Pecos Watershed	8/2/23	acstar.amy@gmail.com
110	Arlene Prescott	223 North Guadalupe St. #196 Santa Fe, NM 87501	Why does an Australian mining company have rights to use our natural resources in the first place? Shame on who? The whole world is polluted and being ruined. Places like the Pecos Watershed need your utmost protection NOW.	8/1/23	apres2324@cs.com
111	PETER OLSON	PO Box 303 53 Double D Rd Pecos NM 87552	I urge all cognizant agencies (USFS, BLM, etc) to recommend to the Secretary of the Interior that federal lands in the upper Pecos River watershed be removed from hard rock mining activities, via administrative withdrawal. The Pecos River watershed has already suffered the negative economic and environmental consequences of hard rock mining. It is now the most important high elevation recreation area in New Mexico, in addition to being an irreplaceable source of clean water. Degradation of the Pecos from more hard-rock mining would be a grave mistake, with long-lasting consequences.	8/1/23	plojhu@gmail.com

112	Kevin Reilly	7 Avenida Vista Grande B-7 PMB 537 Santa Fe, NM 87508	It is hard to imagine a worse site for a mine than the headwaters of the Pecos River. Prior mining in the area has caused extensive environmental damage and poisoned the water of the Pecos. There is no justification for approving a new mine in the Pecos drainage.	8/1/23	reilly.kevin.v@gmail.com
113	Claudia Floyd	P.O. Box 303 Pecos, NM 87552	The proposed mining operations are not supported by the people who live in the Pecos area because they know what mining will do to their water, air, and land. Those familiar with the Terrero Mine are aware of the continuing problems from mining in the early 20th century and we do not want to have a repeat of that environmental disaster.!!	8/1/23	claudiajfloyd@gmail.com
114	Melissa Houser	186 Glorieta Mesa Road Glorieta, NM 87535	This area of the Santa Fe National Forest is a sacred treasure and should be protected through an Administrative Mineral Withdrawal.	8/1/23	missa.houser@gmail.com
115	Keenan Carley	5617 86th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79424	While I don't live in this area me and my family visit Pecos often. It's a beautiful area that must be preserved. Thank you.	8/1/23	kgcarley64@gmail.com
116	Philip Musser	10 Recado Rd Santa Fe. 87508	Please start the process of an administrative mineral withdrawal from the Upper Pecos Watershed. This area is too important as a natural watershed and mining is inappropriate and will needlessly harm the ecosystem.	8/1/23	pmusser306@gmail.com
117	Susan More	401 Old Taos Hwy #210 Santa Fe, NM. 87501	I urge you to do everything within your power to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed and the Pecos River. The Pecos is beautiful. It sustains life. It is vulnerable. A good start toward protecting it would be to put an administrative mineral withdrawal in place. Please do your part to accomplish this. Susan More Formerly a Pecos resident	8/1/23	susleimore@gmail.com
118	Brandon Lucero	PO Box 29690 Santa Fe, NM 87592	STOP THE TERRERO MINE!!!!	8/1/23	brandonuph@gmail.com
119	jon klingel	47 Star Vista Rd. Santa Fe, NM 87505	Have we learned nothing from the damage done by the Terro Mine? Poisoning of the Pecos River and the hatchery, closure for a long time of the camp and picnic grounds in the area, poisoning of vegetation along all the roads where tailing were put on the roads. Are we really stupid enough to consider a new mine in the area?	8/1/23	jon@klingel.name
120	Stuart Patterson Castle	5 Laguna Lane Santa Fe, NM 87508	I have used and enjoyed the Pecos canyon since I was a child. As an adult, at one point I was Bureau Chief of Ground Water for the state of NM Environment Department. In this capacity I helped regulated hard rock mining operations. I witnessed the devastating damage done to the Pecos area by the abandoned Terrero mine. This canyon is fragile and holds a unique environmental treasure. It should never again be subject to hard rock mining. Please invoke an administrative mineral withdrawal as soon as possible.	8/1/23	scastledata@gmail.com
121	Jacob	6936 sweetbrier avenue Nw Albuquerque, NM 87130	I go outdoors to experience the openness and be away from the craziness that comes with being in the city. It's going to be so devastating to see this land that's historically important to us as New Mexicans!	8/1/23	jakeandrade97@gmail.com
122	Anna Arnold	383 Glorieta Mesa Rd	The Pecos River is an essential waterway which needs to be protected. Many years of mitigation followed the old Terrero mine. This community should not have to go through it again.	8/1/23	annlarnold@aol.com
123	JT Krysiak	20 River Cabin Road Pecos, NM 87552	Clean water is life for all things living. Please protect the Pecos Watershed now and for future generations. Thank you.	8/1/23	pecosrivercabins@gmail.com
124	Lura Brookins	1500 Pacheco st Santa Fe NM 87505	Please protect all rivers and river environments forever!!	8/1/23	lurabrookins@gmail.com

125	Kimberly Allen	PO Box 231 Pecos, NM 87552	Clean water is Earth's most vital resource! Without this, all life will fail. Please protect the Pecos watershed. Please protect the clean water, the forest, the sacred sites, the Rio Pecos communities, the acequia farmers, area visitors and recreationalists, the wildlife and future generations. Thank you.	8/1/23	allenkd2@gmail.com
126	Lura Brookins	1500 Pacheco St. Apt 103 Santa Fe, NM 87505	All rivers and their environments need to be conserved forever!!	8/1/23	lurabrookins@gmail.com
127	Danine Baca	5 La Bonanza Rd Pecos, NM 87552	Please protect the Pecos!	8/1/23	daninebaca@yahoo.com
128	Sheryl Easley	73 Lower Colonias Rd Pecos NM 87552	Mining is bad for the community, releasing harmful chemicals and minerals into the water that has taken years to recover from the previous mining that went on years ago. Mining leaves erosion that has lasting impacts to our forests, private property, camping areas, hiking, mountain biking trails and roadways. Our small town deserves to have healthy drinking water, our wildfire deserves an area to thrive after numerous wildfires.	8/1/23	easley.sheryl@gmail.com
129	Amara May	1715 Quapaw place Santa Fe BM 87505	Healthy ecosystems, and healthy water especially, should be paramount in all decisions effecting our natural environment. Money will not sustain us, buffer against wild fire, nor provide the complex ecosystem services we all need to survive. Let's focus on long term not short term goals.	7/31/23	villageamara@gmail.com
130	Heidi Klingel	1721 medio st Santa Fe, nm 87501	Please! Withdraw this area from mineral development!	7/30/23	heidiklingel@hotmail.com
131	Heidi Klingel	1721 medio st. Santa Fe, nm 87501	Please! Withdrawal this area from mineral development!! Water and aquatic ecosystems are especially precious in the desert. Mineral extraction here would be devastating to this beautiful and sacred place.	7/30/23	heidiklingel@hotmail.com
132	Janet M Berry	11 Cumbres Pass Santa Fe, NM 87508	Enough is enough as we see the fallout from mining companies who take what they want and leave the land toxic and deeply damaged. They are only there for using, misusing and tossing aside.	7/30/23	spiderberry@gmail.com
133	Caroline Lajoie	P.O. Box 1401 Santa Fe NM 87504	I urge the DOI, BLM, and the USFS to work with the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition to implement an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed to protect all life that depends on the health of this area. This will provide immediate protection until a permanent legislative solution can be secured. Together, we can make a difference and ensure a better future for natural resources.	7/29/23	feliblue@live.com
134	Betsy Jones	322 Magdalena Rd, Unit 6 Santa Fe, NM 87501	Please, no mining in the Upper Pecos Watershed.	7/29/23	bbjones8789@gmail.com
135	Bronwyn Poole	152 S. Armijo Lane Santa Fe, NM 87501	I support an administrative mineral withdrawal to protect the Pecos wilderness!	7/28/23	btpoole@hotmail.com
136	Janet Kerr	4 Paseo Coyote Santa Fe, New Mexico. 87506	Protect our water. It's so precious.	7/28/23	jancampbellkerr@gmail.com
137	Doug Dunkle	18 Mirasol Lane Pecos, New Mexico 87552	We need to stop all mining efforts to ensure the health and safety of our environment.	7/27/23	coachdugger@gmail.com
138	Amara May	1715 Quapaw place Santa Fe BM 87505	Healthy ecosystems, and healthy water especially, should be paramount in all decisions effecting our natural environment. Money will not sustain us, buffer against wild fire, nor provide the complex ecosystem services we all need to survive. Let's focus on long term not short term goals.	7/26/23	villageamara@gmail.com
139	Jose Rincon	2300 diamond mesa trl sw albuquerque new mexico 87121	STOP THE MINING	7/24/23	jrincon8788@gmail.com

140	Alicia	36a Camino Canjilon	No mineral or oil in the Pecos watershed is worth more to us than the water. This has never been more true! We need to protect waterways all over the world, particularly in our drier climates! Many rely on this for drinking and agriculture. Please, for the love of God and Mother Earth, put an end to this!	7/23/23	aliciabrasser@gmail.com
141	Krystie S	3005 S Saint Francis Santa Fe, NM 87506	TAKE YOUR BUSINESS ELSEWHERE! YOU ARE NOT welcome.	7/22/23	hippychicaluv@yahoo.com
142	scott a reid	157 Calle Ojo Feliz unit E Santa Fe, NM 87505	<p>We have recently lost 340+ K acres of wilderness to fire. Now, our greatly reduced and precious remaining wilderness is under threat from mining! Have y'all seen what the area around Red River looks like as a result of mining? Do you remember the impact of the Gold Kng mine spillage into the Animas river? Let's get this one right, guys. Say no to exploitive and destructive mining interests. This beautiful wilderness area is STILL recovering from mining in the 20th century. With a planet already facing environmental crisis, we have the opportunity to move in the right direction and set an example for others. Our kids will thank you for preserving such a beautiful area.</p> <p>Thank you for saying no!</p> <p>Sincerely, Scott A Reid</p>	7/22/23	mediaculture2010@gmail.com
143	Joanne Harris	31 Camino de Pinones Pecos, NM (mailing address=Glorieta)	<p>I fully support all efforts to prevent the resumption of mining in the area surrounding the Pecos River and its watershed.</p> <p>Historically, there have been far too many mining accidents (regardless of "promises" to protect the ecology) in the USA that have created contamination of rivers and surrounding lands resulting in serious, long term health and pollution issues for the residents in the area and downstream from the accident or spill. Accidents are called accidents because no matter how well prevention is planned, "Acts of God", unforeseen problems, and one sheer unconscious action can destroy all good intentions forever.</p> <p>Our river, the beautiful Pecos wilderness and the health and well-being of our community is invaluable. Please don't allow the greater value to be "sold out" for temporary gain.</p> <p>We love the Pecos!</p>	7/22/23	azurestar33@gmail.com
144	Morgan O'Connor	1733 San Ysidro crossing Santa fe, NM 87507	I swim, fish and walk along the glorious Pecos river. It is a treasured asset of this area. There should never be any mining anywhere near this river. It is very important to local fly fishing enthusiasts. It also brings in tourism for camping and fishing. We should only be cleaning and restoring it more and adding protection. To allow mining would depreciate local home and land value. Do not let that happen.	7/22/23	mrzocwaves@gmail.com

145	Emily Bass	825 Calle Mejia 135 Santa Fe, NM 87501	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>Please initiate the process for an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos River Watershed. As a former pastor and ordained minister, I believe this issue is a moral and spiritual one. We live in a time of significant change and uncertainty, future generations bearing the brunt of this. It is up to us to ensure that our voices are heard and our natural resources are protected. Hardrock mining in the watershed will significantly impact all life that depends on clean water from the Rio Pecos and her tributaries.</p> <p>The damage to the area from reckless mining operations in the 1920s and related contamination of the river in 1991, which caused the death of 90,000 fish, is a clear reminder of why we can't afford another mining operation. I used to lead Santa Fe fifth graders on tours to our Upper Santa Fe Watershed and even they understood the impact of the loss of one single species. "The mountain would no longer be living," they said. Is this the future we want for our beloved Pecos Wilderness?</p> <p>This area is sacred to indigenous tribes and is home to Cicuye (Pecos Pueblo) and Tesuque Pueblo descendants. Their continued stewardship and care for these lands is why these wilderness places even exist at all. It is morally unjust to desecrate these lands which have sustained these traditional communities long before our occupation. From an economic standpoint, our Acequia farmers depend on clean water to irrigate their crops. The outdoor recreation economy helps support the area's businesses by attracting outdoor enthusiasts from around the world. The Rio Pecos is New Mexico's second most popular fishing destination.</p>	7/20/23	emily@inwildwonder.com
146	Geraldine Vigil	P.O. Box 1093 21 J Bar 4 Rd. Pecos, NM 87552	<p>Please stop any Mining in my back yard! I live by the river, and we (family) love the calming and beauty it has. We also enjoy fishing and swimming in the beautiful clean clear river. My kids love hiking and fishing up the canyon too. It break our hearts to see it destroyed by mining it, and/or accidentally contaminate our river. Not only would our lives be terribly affected by it, but also the community. Pl awe stop the possibility of future mining in our natural beautiful back yard.</p>	7/20/23	dinav6981@gmail.com
147	Jarrett Sasser	23 The Ledge rd Pecos NM	<p>Please protect the Pecos from mining, it is already stressed during the summer months, we need the resource protected</p>	7/20/23	flyfishwithjs@hotmail.com
148	Jack Newman	1107 Calle Corvo NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87113	<p>We must protect the Pecos watershed at all costs.</p>	7/18/23	jack.a.newman@gmail.com
149	Ryan P McCauley	5B Camino Contento Pecos, NM 87552	<p>Stakeholders stand to lose a beautiful and culturally important canyon, clean water, clean air. Mining would be a dramatic change for a community that is, frankly, unwilling and ill equipped to accommodate such a change.</p>	7/15/23	rypamc@gmail.com
150	Lura Brookin	1500 Pacheco st. #103 Santa Fe, NM 87505	<p>All nature, trees and waterways, need to be preserved forever!</p>	7/14/23	luragbrookins@gmail.com
151	Stuart Patterson Castle	5 Laguna Lane, Santa Fe, NM, 87508	<p>I was born in Santa Fe over 70 years ago. The Pecos Wilderness has always been a source of solace and renewal for me. I hope it remains in it's current state for my children and grandchildren, for centuries in the future. The Pecos canyon is very fragile and will be permanently degraded by any hard rock mining. I have seen this happen in the past, particularly with the molybdenum mine in Questa, and leaching from the old Tererro mine.. As the state ground water bureau chief in the 1990s, I am well aware of the extremely expensive impact of hard rock mining. I will oppose development of the Jones Hill mining in any way possible.</p>	7/13/23	scastledata@gmail.com

152	David Cox	David Cox 35 Pine Haven Dr Glorieta, NM 87535	I would love to write you about all of the wonderful adventures I've had on the Pecos River, in its watershed, or under the shadow of Thompson Peak. But rather than focus on catching trout or riding my mountain bike, I will express my concern about mining development in this the headwaters of the second largest river in the state of New Mexico, and a vital artery for not only outdoor recreation but agriculture and small community farms. Between the village of Pecos, New Mexico and the border of Texas, the Pecos river feeds a network of acequias that are the life's blood of numerous small agricultural-driven communities. They say that all live downstream and on a personal level, this mining interest is of great concern to me as a person who draws water from a community well in this very aquifer. Thank you for your time, David Cox, Glorieta, New Mexico.	7/13/23	dave@davecoxmedia.com
153	JUDITH ALLISON	292 Dalton Canyon Rd, Pecos NM 87552	My family moved to the Pecos Canyon from Atlanta in 1967. My three children, six grandchildren and I feel we are an integral part of this land. We feed it and it feeds us, no different that the wildlife who also inhabit the Pecos Canyon and the Pecos River and its tributaries. The first time I put my hands into its rich soil, I knew I had, for the first time in my life, found home. The house and property I own in Dalton Canyon has already been legally designated a family possession in perpetuity. I have travelled a great deal to countries all over the world and, though many landscapes are incredible to behold, I would not want to live anywhere else. To have my home threatened by the monetary interests of a mining company is unacceptable. The vein of minerals they want to mine runs from Silverton, Colorado to Silver City, New Mexico. Their mine doesn't need to be located in this pristine canyon.	7/13/23	jallison@cybermesa.com
155	Jaimie Hashey	5901 Alice Ave Albuquerque, NM 87110	Mining such a beautiful area that sustains so much life is not logical. Mining is dangerous to the Pecos river and the ecosystems it supports. If mining persists than many plants and animals will be damaged and die. We do not want this to happen since it will not only hurt the environment but also people who live in New Mexico. We need to love and take care of the lands that are important to keeping us all healthy.	7/8/23	hasheyjaimie@outlook.com
156	Bryan Steele	30 follen rd Lexington ma	Stop mining the Pecos. Protect the river and watershed before its damaged beyond repair. Nature is more important than mining operations.	7/4/23	bryhick@icloud.com
157	Kelly Hobbs	2900 vxcr4210 Athens, Tx 75752	Stop this atrocity and save our planet.	7/2/23	kinsight@icloud.com
158	Jeff Young	25 Dalton Trail Sandia Park Nm 87047	Stop the mine I have been recreating in the area for decades. It is too special to risk mining	7/1/23	jeff.yojng.elk@gmail.com
159	Ursula Velasquez	15 monte Cubre glorieta,nm 87535	I am a native to the Pecos area. My family has been here for generations. A mine would devastate our water and community. It has no economic benefit whatsoever. I'm totally against any kind of mine in our beautiful mountains.	7/1/23	ursula4725@icloud.com
160	Shannon Martinez	90 Dulce Ct. Corrales NM 87048	The Pecos, the Pecos Wilderness, and the community in and around Pecos are too vulnerable to any new mining operation. Protecting the fragile and very limited rivers, streams, lakes and other water sources in New Mexico should be top priority. Water is limited and the risk to polluting our water for both people and wildlife should be the top priority for this State.	7/1/23	teammartineztx@gmail.com
161	Haitham Al-Shabibi	20 Ridge Rd Placitas, NM 87043	Please protect the Pecos, and don't reverse the progress made over the last few decades. Please do not allow mining here.	7/1/23	haitham.a.kais@gmail.com

162	Patricia Waldygo	19 Dalton Rd Glorieta, NM 87535	Dear DOI, BLM, and USFS, Please deny all rights to any mining company that wants to mine the Pecos wilderness area and watershed. We need to ensure our clean water supply for the future, especially in the face of future droughts and heat waves. This beautiful area has more priceless value to its residents and to tourists who come here for refuge from polluted cities than can be measured by the monetary values of greedy mining companies. Please protect it and keep it unspoiled. Thank you.	7/1/23	ursakita@swcp.com
163	Dawn Roe	275 S. French Broad Avenue Asheville, NC 28801	I am currently an artist-in-residence in the Changing Climate cohort at the Santa Fe Art Institute creating artworks engaging with this watershed as an important fish habitat. I urge you to please be mindful of these vital concerns voiced by residents, many whose families have lived upon these lands for multiple generations.	6/19/23	dawnroe@gmail.com
164	Dr. P Youngquist	PO Box 956, Great Barrington MA 02130	I am writing to urge you to stop any forward movement on the Terrero mining propositions immediately. As a former resident of the Holy Ghost and Terrero community I can vouch that any mining, or exploration for mining, done in this fragile wilderness ecosystem and continually imperiled river will be a disaster. We who lived/live there know the damage that was done by the previous Terrero mine and horrifying long term impact of those activities residual toxic waste on the river and communities surrounding it. Communities, ecosystems and economies depend on the Pecos watershed staying free of mining and other extractive industries and you the Department of the Interior, the BLM and the USFS have the ability to ensure the permanent protection of the Upper Pecos Watershed in response to the great potential for irreversible impacts from proposed exploratory mining and the expansion of Comexico's claims in the Thompson Peak area. We are asking that the 165,000 acres of National Forest land and approximately 1,600 acres of DOI Bureau of Land Management land in the Upper Pecos River Watershed be protected from the mineral leasing laws for 20 years. No further exploration be allowed at all. Thank you for your serious attention to this matter.	6/18/23	kali1111@bellsouth.net
165	Corey Hernandez	6817 Welton Dr NE	Please keep the pecos protected and safe for our children and future.	6/17/23	coreys_world@hotmail.com
166	Robin Reindle	287 Dalton Canyon Road, Peco, NM 87552	Please do whatever it takes to preserve the Pecos watershed!!!	6/10/23	rreindle@yahoo.com
167	Linda Wykue	215 River Road Ilfield NM Mailing HC 73 Box 523 San Jose 87565	I support SFNF and BLM and the DOI removing all public land in the Pecos Watershed from active mining. I live 20 miles down stream on the Pecos River and mining poses a threat to our finally acceptable water quality in the Pecos, a threat to agriculture and safe recreational use. Linda Wylie	6/9/23	lwylie2015@gmail.com

168	Linda Wylie	215 River Road Ilfield, New Mexico HC 73 Box 523 San Jose, NM 87565	I own property and live on the Pecos River, I am aware of the historical long term degradation of waters in the Pecos River suffered from mining in Terrero. The watershed is used by the public for recreation and by land owners for irrigations and fishing, and any renewal of mining in the sensitive headwater area is certain to degrade the local environment and pollute down stream waters, that is regardless of remediation efforts. I urge the utmost caution and reserve in consideration of the project by COMEXICO and support BLM and USFS to work with Stop Tererro Mine Coalition to withdraw mineral rights in the Upper Pecos watershed. Linda Wylie	6/9/23	lwylie2015@gmail.com
169	Joey Smallwood	18 Camino Cerrito Glorieta/Pecos NM	One poisoning is enough. Please protect the Pecos! Sorry if I already signed this, I think this is a new petition.	6/9/23	jsmallw6@jhu.edu
170	Merilynn Hidalgo	3600 Old Airport Rd. NW, Apt. 1324 Albuquerque, NM 87114	<p>Please initiate the process for an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed. Hardrock mining in the watershed will significantly impact all life that depends on clean water from the Rio Pecos and its tributaries.</p> <p>I urge the DOI, BLM and the USFS to work with the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition to implement an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed to protect all life that depends on the health of this area. This will provide immediate protection until a permanent legislative solution can be secured.</p> <p>Thank you very much.</p>	6/3/23	30fieldoflowers@use.startmail.com
171	Ann Coz	416 Clifton Pl. Nashville, TN 37215	<p>Please initiate the process for an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed. We live in a time of significant change and uncertainty, and it is up to us to ensure that our voices are heard and our natural resources are protected. Hardrock mining in the watershed will significantly impact all life that depends on clean water from the Rio Pecos and its tributaries. The damage to the area from reckless mining operations in the 1920s and the related contamination of the river in 1991, which caused the death of 90,000 fish, is a clear reminder of why we can't afford another mining operation.. The area is highly fragile and home to several endangered wildlife and plant species that deserve protection. The area is sacred to indigenous tribes and is home to Cicuve (Pecos Pueblo) and Tesuque Pueblo descendants. The natural resources in the region have sustained many traditional communities along the Rio Pecos, and acequia farmers depend on clean water to irrigate their crops. The outdoor recreation economy helps support the area's businesses by attracting outdoor enthusiasts from around the world. The Rio Pecos is New Mexico's second most popular fishing destination. I urge the DOI, BLM, and the USFS to work with the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition to implement an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed to protect all life that depends on the health of this area. This will provide immediate protection until a permanent legislative solution can be secured. Together, we can make a difference and ensure a better future for natural resources and future generations.</p>	6/1/23	aco21966@yahoo.com
172	JOSE TOYA	308 Louisiana Blvd Northeast, Albuquerque, NM 87108	We are against the mining of the Terro	6/1/23	toyajose151@gmail.com
173	Melissa Homann	11013 elvin ave ne	Protect Pecos	5/29/23	melissachile@msn.com
174	Cyd Riley	78 Camino Bajo, Santa Fe, NM 87508	The mining of this sacred area destroys everything about it other than the bottom line of the mining companies. Mining + global climate change=disaster for plants, insects and animals. The greed and short-sightedness is breathtaking.	5/27/23	cyd@cydriley.com

175	Robin Blagg	2226 Camino Rancho Siringo Santa Fe, NM, 87505	NO MINES IN THE PECOS! The impact would be disastrous for the wildlife, the watershed, fisheries, recreation and the local community. This is NOT in the best interests of New Mexico.	5/26/23	blaggs@hotmail.com
176	Jasmine Meyer	166 NM-Hwy 50, Pecos, NM 87552	I agree with all statements made by the Stop the Tererro Mine Coalition and urge an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed. I am adamantly against the Terrero Mines and similar extraction in the Pecos wilderness, surrounding forests, and and other areas that may compromise the quality of water and life for residents and visitors. It is horrifying that the health of a watershed would be compromised for extraction, but in addition, this is sacred land that we as a people live in and visit for many purposes related to our wellbeing. In a world in which support for human and ecological wellness continues to narrow, it's vital that we protect what remains to us.	5/25/23	jasminesharai@gmail.com
177	Trilby Nelson	19C Cougar Canyon RD Santa Fe, NM 87508	We must preserve and protect the Pecos Wilderness from polluting extractive mining that will cause irreversible harm to the local wildlife and communities for years to come.	5/25/23	trilbynelson@gmail.com
178	Weissman Joan	224 Aliso Drive SE	This mine would be so destructive to our natural habitat and cultural history.	5/25/23	joan@joanweissman.com
179	Camille PappV©	76 Camino Espejo Santa Fe, NM 87507	Please stop the mining. This area must be preserved.	5/25/23	antonpappe@gmail.com
180	Kristin Graziano	PO Box 837 Arroyo Seco, New Mexico 87514	As a New Mexican, a conservationist, a family physician and an outdoorswoman, I hope we do not replicate the mistakes of the past. We must stop the Terrero mine. Now. The watershed that would be negatively impacted by mining operations plays a critical role in traditional Hispanic cultural practices, Indigenous ways of life, sustaining wildlife habitat, and ensuring the health of local river/riparian ecosystems. Placing an immediate hold on all mining activities, leases, and sales will serve to protect these resources in the near term while more permanent protections are put in place. I urge you to do so. Now.	5/21/23	dochratz@yahoo.com
181	Leon Jon Bonney	PO Box 250 Ribera, NM 87560	I support protecting the entire Rio Pecos (Pecos River) system from mining and other invasive non-natural incursions.	5/19/23	2nmdogs@earthlink.net
182	Leon Jon Bonney	PO Box 250 Ribera, NM 87560	I support protecting the entire Rio Pecos (Pecos River) system from mining and other invasive non-natural incursions.	5/18/23	2nmdogs@earthlink.net
183	Elena Patterson	95 Paa-Ko Dr., Sandia Park, NM 87047	I petition to stop Tererro mining in Pecos wilderness, New Mexico.	5/18/23	lenokn11@q.com
184	Josef Tornick	3600 cerrillos Rd Santa fe, NM 87507	Please don't allow this mine to move forward. it will pollute a beautiful natural resource.	5/16/23	josefskye@icloud.com
185	Cristi Cave	1016 Tierra Drive Santa Fe, NM. 87505	This is common sense. No activity that could endanger a watershed like that of the Pecos should be undertaken without proper investigation into the potential effects of the operation. The Pecos has cultural, economic, and ecological value to local peoples that far exceeds its extremely temporary value of mineral extraction. That temporary extraction value has already led to many decades of local government work and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to remediate the disastrous effects of the last mining operation in this area. Perhaps this new prospective mining corporation says it can mine without damaging the watershed. If so, then let it undergo the same level of evaluation that any other major land-altering project would have to endure if it's activities could potentially negatively affect this beloved local watershed.	5/16/23	chamisa99@gmail.com
186	Emily Renfro	2649 Calle Primavera Santa Fe NM 87505	It was closed for a very good reason. Remediation is still in progress. This is not what we want here.	5/16/23	emilyrenfro@comcast.net

187	Z Babankova	692 Coyote Ridge Santa Fe, NM 87507	Please do not allow mining in Pecos. Protecting the water is of highest priority.	5/14/23	zeebaban@gmail.com
188	Anna Arnold	383 Glorieta Mesa Rd, Glorieta New Mexico	Protecting the Pecos River from mining is essential. The previous mine in the early 1900s polluted the waters to the extent that clean up is still required.	5/14/23	annlarnold@aol.com
189	Rgayle kinsey	10206 Elmhurst Albuquerque 87114	Stop generating federal Revenue using natural resources leased to mining operations which are always destructive causing permanent, irreversible damage. Period!	5/14/23	rubyquail@gmail.com
190	Wayne Muller	29 Tennis Court NW Albuquerque, NM 87120	PLEASE do all you can to save the Pecos headwaters and protect the local watershed from this terrible mining project!	5/13/23	wayne@waynemuller.com
191	Thomas Hodge	11 Pinon Ridge Rd	Mining in the Upper Pecos Watershed and surrounding areas is dangerous to the future of this sacred landscape. If we allow the contamination of of the watershed that feeds this wilderness and the people residing here then there is no hope for a sustainable future here or anywhere else. Allowing this to happen we are saying that we have learned nothing from the damage (most of which can not be fixed) from the neglect and harm we've already perpetrated against our dear mother Earth.	5/13/23	thodge.dom@gmail.com
192	Barbara Cooke	4 Sandia Lane Santa Fe NM 87508	Please stop this! Deb Halland work your magic!	5/13/23	bcookern@gmail.com
193	Jessie Harwell	24 Los Llanitos Pecos, NM	Mining in the Pecos wilderness will only further compromise an ecosystem that is clearly already struggling. The wildfires last year obliterated wildlife habitat and much of the beautiful terrain already. There is no need to destroy this further with a mine. Plus the contamination that is always associated with any mining activity will potentially compromise the water supply for Pecos as well as Santa Fe most directly. Though if the Pecos river becomes contaminated, this will effect many more communities. Please do not allow the mining to occur in what remains of this beautiful wilderness!!	5/13/23	jessie.harwell@gmail.com
194	Terry Rothwell	42 Coyote Trail, Santa Fe Nm	Stop this now. It's too easy to screw things up and much harder to clean it up.	5/13/23	tsrothwell@gmail.com
195	Anna Tindell	1000 Cordova Pl. Santa Fe nm 87505	Please protect our water.	5/13/23	Annarosetindell@yahoo.com
196	Virginia Bell-Pringle	41 Camerada Road Santa Fe, NM 87508	We have a private well downstream from this proposed site and we have no other alternatives on our property to drill if our water is contaminated by this mining activity. Ruining the water table in this area would turn Eldorado into a blighted area.	5/13/23	vbellingpringle@yahoo.com
197	Carla gordan	15 Camino dos millas Glorieta, NM 87535	Stop the mine. We don't want this destruction and contamination in our backyard!	5/13/23	santafern@gmail.com
198	Tamara Maschino	22 Calle Alejandra Santa Fe, NM 87508	Mining the delicate ecosystem of the Pecos River will forever ruin the fish and wildlife of the area and also the right to enjoy a clean environment for everyone.	5/12/23	tmaschino@earthlink.net
199	Jarrett Sasser	23 The Ledge rd Pecos NM 87552	No mines in the Pecos Headwaters	5/12/23	flyfishwithjs@hotmail.com
200	Diego Rose	27 la Joya Rd Glorieta, NM 87535	The Pacos Wilderness, and the Pacos River are a New Mexico and a National treasure. It is more valuable than any thing they are going to dig out of the ground. The Pecos Can not be replaced What they are digging for can be found elsewhere, in places that will do less damage. Mine companies al ways promise to restore the land. I have lived in the western Rocky Mountain Region for over 70 years. I have visited more than 100 mining locations. I have not seen even one restored.	5/12/23	appaloosa0@gmail.com

201	Susan Hill	Susan Hill PO Box 23676 Santa Fe NM 87502	It's time to understand that our natural world is finite and we need a paradigm shift, a different way of seeing it that puts protection first and profits way down the list. There are other ways for the state to generate income. We need not sell off pieces of ourselves. Thank you for consideration of this principle. Please keep what remains of the body of nature in tact.	5/12/23	Susanhill@gmail.com
202	Gerald Richard	13 Black Dog Rd Silver city, NM	I cannot for the life of me understand allowing other countries to come in and dig up our resources. Don't we do enough of that ourselves? Not only that but the possibility of contamination of yet another water system. There are states with polluted waters due to lead, oil pipeline spills, etc. The Rio Grande is but a trickle yet we want to allow the Pecos to be raped. Stop already! Do you not understand, if we continue on this dig baby dig, raping the planet we live on we as a species are die off after we kill everything else. Take a science class and about ecosystems and how they work. The interdependence of all species and plants is crucial to the balance of our ecosystem. You all should be ashamed. If you cannot preserve our resources instead of selling them off to the highest bidders you should be fired.	5/12/23	gdr1212@icloud.com
203	Linda Storm	198 NM 50 Glorieta, NM 87535	No mining belongs in the pristine forests of Pecos. Endangered animals have their habitat there. How about drilling where the federal government destroyed the land with the "controlled" burn that merged two fires, and left more than 500 square miles of dead land?	5/12/23	hce@cybermesa.com
204	ANN BETZ	20 Buen Pastor, Santa Fe, NM 87508	Drilling at the Pecos headwaters is a terrible idea. We need to protect the beauty and purity of the New Mexico environment.	5/12/23	ann.betz@gmail.com
205	Elizabeth Jean Salisbury	322 County Road B52 Pecos, NM 87552	Stop the ability to mine within the Pecos Watershed area, please. Thank you	5/12/23	ejs.pineywood@gmail.com
206	Karyn Rose	27 La Joya Rd. Glorieta NM 87535	Mining in the Pecos Wilderness would be detrimental on so many levels to ALL life downstream that I can't even believe anyone would even entertain the idea. Totally inappropriate!!!!!!!!	5/12/23	glorieta@cybermesa.com
207	Robin P Reindle	287 Dalton Canyon Road, Pecos, NM 87552	Water is life. The Pecos River is one of the main arteries of water flowing through our state. It originates close to the place an Australian mining company is preparing to mine. This will not be a small operation. We have already had a mining company superfund site from a mine that wreaked destruction here. Our pristine wild areas are worth more than anything that can be pulled up from the ground. It is imperative that this mining project is stopped.	5/12/23	Rreindle@yahoo.com
208	Jane C Slocomb	PO Box 62, Glorieta, NM, 87535	Please leave the Pecos alone!! It is the watershed & it's also home to many species of wildlife, not to mention people & the farmers who all depend on it. DO NOT DESTROY IT with this unnecessary mine. Mining does more damage to the environment than anything else, except the invasion of people. The people who live on the Pecos in the canyon, at least respect the blessing that they have. They take care of it. DO NOT DESTROY IT!! Thank you!!	5/12/23	janispaini@gmail.com
209	MAX G WEBER	19 Cicuye Rd, Glorieta NM, 87535	Pecos River basin has already had a mine and has had to endure it's negative effects. Plus, the road up the canyon would be trashed with the additional traffic and big trucks going through the town of Pecos. Max Weber	5/12/23	maxgweber@gmail.com
210	Virginia McNally	17 Pivaton Ridge Road Pecos, New Mexico 87552	Please stop all mining and exploratory mining in the Upper Pecos River Watershed.	5/12/23	vmcnally@newmexico.com
211	Reina Nelson	287 Dalton Canyon Road Pecos NM 87552	We need to protect our beautiful wild places	5/12/23	reinaskyelson@gmail.com

212	Wes Draker	637 Buck Trl Canyon Lake, Tx 78133	To All I recently had the opportunity to kayak paddle parts of the Pecos river. My experience was breathtaking, but also sad. I saw firsthand how contamination from mining efforts can destroy a fragile ecosystem. The beauty of nature in and along the Pecos river that I got to see, will never be seen by most people. But for those people who will have the privilege to see remote stretches of the Pecos river I hope that it is even more beautiful than what I got to see through efforts and actions taking by people like yourselves, and the general public, to clean up, protect and maintain a fragile ecosystem. Seen or unseen by the human eye, makes little difference but the real ramifications of drilling and mining in the headwaters will eventually lead to a toxic and dead river. All humans and living creatures will suffer the effects of these actions. THIS MUST STOP! Please think about the human generations to come, all living creatures, and the health of our planet when it comes time to make a decision on this matter. Thank you in advance, Wes Draker.	5/11/23	wdraker77@gmail.com
213	Wes Draker	637 Buck Trl Canyon Lake, Tx 78133	To All I recently had the opportunity to kayak paddle parts of the Pecos river. My experience was breathtaking, but also sad. I saw firsthand how contamination from mining efforts can destroy a fragile ecosystem. The beauty of nature in and along the Pecos river that I got to see, will never be seen by most people. But for those people who will have the privilege to see remote stretches of the Pecos river I hope that it is even more beautiful than what I got to see through efforts and actions taking by people like yourselves, and the general public, to clean up, protect and maintain a fragile ecosystem. Seen or unseen by the human eye, makes little difference but the real ramifications of drilling and mining in the headwaters will eventually lead to a toxic and dead river. All humans and living creatures will suffer the effects of these actions. THIS MUST STOP! Please think about the human generations to come, all living creatures, and the health of our planet when it comes time to make a decision on this matter. Thank you in advance, Wes Draker.	5/11/23	wdraker77@gmail.com
214	Elizabeth L. Gabaldon	5 Sandoval Lane Pecos, NM 87552	,ÑúNO to mining!!Ñú Keep our water clean and our people healthy!!	5/11/23	llgabb@centurylink.net
215	Wallace Dominey	4031 Peach Country Ct. Houston, TX 77059	Please protect the Pecos.	5/11/23	wdominey@gmail.com
216	Adrienne Avitia	Mailing: HC 74 Box 379 Pecos, N.M. 87552 Physical: 11 Whittington Rd. Pecos, N.M. 87552	Protect Pecos and the Pecos people! Thank you.	5/11/23	adriannenoelavitia@gmail.com
217	Pamela Mitchell	PO Box 150158, Nashville, TN 37215	This area of the planet is the closest thing to heaven on earth in my opinion due to the trips I've made there and the summers I spent in the area. Please do not destroy it!	5/11/23	pmitchellsk8@gmail.com
218	William Britton	PO Box 807 Pecos, NM 87552	Mineral exploration and extraction would be an environmental and economic disaster for the Pecos River canyon and the Village of Pecos. The past Tererro mining operation is clear evidence of the environmental damage to the this ecosystem. We cannot let this happen again.	5/10/23	webritton@hotmail.com

219	John Smallwood	18 Camino Cerrito Glorieta NM 87535	I am studying for an MS degree in Environmental Science and GIS at Johns Hopkins. I have deeply researched the geology of my area and the repercussions that can arise from the proposed project. I am certain that approval of this project will threaten the rights of the citizens of this valley. If this plan is approved, I will make it my life mission to overturn such a reckless decision. I hope we can avoid such a scenario.	5/10/23	jsmallw6@jhu.edu
220	Dr. Mary Estes	4808 Winding Oaks Court Arlington, Texas 76016	Save our wilderness.	5/10/23	mce0004@unt.edu
221	Leon Jon Bonney	PO Box 250 Ribera, NM 87560	I support protecting the entire Rio Pecos (Pecos River) system from mining and other invasive non-natural incursions.	5/10/23	2nmdogs@earthlink.net
222	Donna McCrary	1528 Oak Meadows Dallas, Texas. 75232	The upper Pecos is one of the few national treasures unspoiled by development, mining and tourism. It should be preserved!!	5/10/23	nuvante.mccrary@gmail.com
223	Sean Helean	65 Sanchez Rd Ribera NM	No mine	5/10/23	seanhealen@protonmail.com
224	Betty Weseman	38 Camino de Pinones Glorieta NM	Stop mining our mountains!	5/10/23	bkweseman@gmail.com
225	Sarah	415 Sunset St, Santa Fe NM	Water is life! These waters in particular are fragile and need all the protection they can get. Without protection the entire ecosystem will suffer, humans included. Please help protect our home and our people!	5/10/23	sdfantasia@att.net
226	lisa Ephlin	12239 FM 1394. Wortham, Tx 76693	Water is truly our most precious resource and We should protect it from harm like your most precious possession. We need water for everyone. It is essential for life of Man, plants. Without clean water free of contamination, We will surely Perish.	5/10/23	lisaephlin@gmail.com
227	Stephen Nelson	287 Dalton Canyon Road Pecos NM 87552	There is only one Pecos River. It must be protected from mining!!!	5/10/23	nelsonindalton@yahoo.com
228	Louise Jensen	409 Lugar del Creston, Las Vegas, NM until November 2022	The Pecos River, and all of the tributaries of the Rio Grande, must be protected from any actual or potential contamination by extraction activities. They are critical resources of clean water for people and wildlife throughout arid New Mexico. Mineral extraction is a temporary financial gain for a company and its owners or shareholders. The water is a permanent and essential resource for plants, animals and people. It supports agriculture, provides drinking water and recreation to name just a few human-centered uses. It is a resource for many more in the state of New Mexico than a special industrial user group. We must learn to say "No"!	5/10/23	terraverde.louise@gmail.com
229	Sandra Ortiz	P.O. Box 391 Pecos, NM 87552	Please protect this valuable resource!	5/10/23	pecospal2001@yahoo.com
230	Colin L Holloway	28 Forest Road 83 Pecos, NM 87552	Leave it alone	5/10/23	cwebefree@gmail.com
231	Sarah	415 Sunset St, Santa Fe NM	Water is life! These waters in particular are fragile and need all the protection they can get. Without protection the entire ecosystem will suffer, humans included. Please help protect our home and our people!	5/10/23	sdfantasia@att.net
232	Roxane Hopper	11 Pinon Ridge Rd, Pecos NM 87552	Please put the concern of our natural resources, community health and taxpayer dollars above corporate business interest.	5/9/23	roxanehopper@gmail.com
234	Joel Hudsn	10 Calle Estra, Pecos NM 87552	My family live in the Canyon. Please stop this mine. There is zero benefit for this area. This area depends on ecological revenue. It would potentially destroy our water supply as well as others.	5/9/23	ccantbel@mail.com
235	Sherri Sinclair	1647 Dayton Ave Wichita Falls Tx 76301	Please do not allow drilling in the Pecos. This area is precious to many and that DOES NOT include the mining companys.	5/8/23	sinclairsherri@yahoo.com
236	Rosie Brandenberger	10 Calle Estra, Pecos, NM 87552	Initiate an Administrative Withdrawal! Stop the Tererro Mine.	5/8/23	rosiebrandenberger@gmail.com

237	Christy Jones	46 Balsa Rd Santa Fe, NM 87508	I fully support the effort to establish an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed. I own property in the area and do not want to see this beautiful wilderness destroyed by mining.	5/8/23	Oldhophead@aol.com
238	Joe Jones	46 Balsa Rd Santa Fe, NM 87508	I support the effort to establish an administrative mineral withdrawal in the Upper Pecos Watershed. I own property in the area and do not want to see this beautiful wilderness destroyed by mining.	5/8/23	jejonesdds1@gmail.com
239	Juanita Lavadie	3 Calle Elacio, Taos, NM 87571	The damage to our mountains from enthusiastic corporate entrepreneurial digging is ecologically irreversible, with the local communities bearing the brunt of the long-term effects. Financial income historically provides the means to move out and away.	5/8/23	juanita_j_lavadie@yahoo.com
240	Sondra Martucci	2275 2nd st N W, Deming NM 88030	Mining will destroy our NM water system .	5/8/23	sondramartucci@yahoo.com
241	Joe E. Jones DDS	46 Balsa Rd Santa Fe, NM. 87508	No mining in Pecos Canyon!	5/7/23	jejonesdds1@gmail.com
242	Michelle Wolpert	35 Cicuye, Glorieta, NM 87535	I totally support doing everything possible to stop this mine, including this withdrawal. The Pecos Valley is too valuable and beautiful to risk mining for minerals.	5/5/23	michelle_wolpert@hotmail.com
243	Melissa Houser	186 Glorieta Mesa Rd., Glorieta NM 87535	Please recommend to the Secretary of the Interior to exercise her authority under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to withdraw the federal lands within its watershed from the mineral leasing laws for twenty years. We need to support the 30x30 land conservation initiative by conserving public lands so that we can be a resilient community in the face of climate change.	5/5/23	missa.houser@gmail.com
244	David Thom	5200 beckner rd santa fe nm 87507	no mine!	5/5/23	info@uncledt.com
245	Ralph A Vigil	HC 74 Box 842 Pecos, NM 87552	The Pecos sustains life for many and needs protection. We can't afford a repeat of what has happened to this previous watershed due to irresponsible mining. My family has been in the area since the 1850's and we want our future generations to have access to clean, healthy water.	4/29/23	molinodelaisla@gmail.com

246	Seonaidh Davenport	223 N Guadalupe St 116 Santa Fe, NM. 87501	The Pecos watershed is VITAL and must be protected from mining interests.	12/8/24	seonaidh@gmail.com
247	Donald Taylor	131 14th St SW Albuquerque, NM 87102	I ALWAYS vote. This is a critical issue!	12/1/24	fflt@unm.edu
248	Suzanne Morey-Sloan	3 Avenida De Mercedes Santa Fe, NM 87506	It is very important to protect this beautiful and important area from senseless mining.	9/29/24	ssloan0318@att.net
249	Amy Brenneman	1200 Sierra Larga Dr. NE Albuquerque, NM 87112	I am writing in support of the Pecos Watershed Protection Act to permanently protect the watershed from new mining claims and expanding the Pecos Wilderness, thereby protecting clean water and native trout populations in the headwaters of New Mexico, Æs Pecos River.	9/15/24	telegirl07@yahoo.com
250	Elizabeth Lende	PO Box 14 Pecos, NM 87552	It is extremely important to me and my family that the Pecos river and watershed is protected. I am firmly against all drilling in this sacred land and river areas of the Pecos. It is imperative that we stop any Comexico drilling... it would negatively affect the land, water and animals and insects and habitat and it would be very bad for the future generations to come. With deep concern, Elizabeth Lende	9/5/24	lizbeth.lende@gmail.com
251	Pam Neely	46 Old Pecos Lane Santa Fe, NM 87508	The Pecos Wilderness is a treasure. It is irreplaceable. NO mining should be happening here. US mining laws are in severe need of updating. This is 2024, not the 1800s. How is it possible that we have to fend off an Australian company from coming in and destroying American lands?	9/4/24	pam@santafetotaos.org
252	Todd Monson	1127 Narcisco St. NE Albuquerque, NM 87112	My family and I love the Pecos River and it continues to need our help. Let's have administrative mineral withdrawal and protect the Pecos River into the future.	8/18/24	pacuate@gmail.com
253	Erika Soriano	1916 Buena Vista Dr SE	I love nature.	7/2/24	erikahatesspam@gmail.com
254	Dulce Boles	473 Juan Tomas, Tijeras, NM 87059	please stop the destruction of this beautiful and sacred land. Only the mining company will benefit.	6/30/24	dulceboles@q.com
255	Ben Trautman	24a Calle casitas Santa Fe 87506	There no such thing as a clean mine.	6/17/24	trautmanben@yahoo.com
256	Anne Dios	4805 Marquette Ave NE, Apt 205 Albuquerque, NM 87108	Please do not allow the Upper Pecos Watershed to be damaged by mining. There is simply no amount of profit that could offset the damage done, to the environment and future value from tourism and fishing. Please be on 'the right side of history' on this one, and work with Stop Tererro Mine. Thank you!	6/12/24	42a.di0s@gmail.com
257	Greg Davis	135 Principe De Paz Santa Fe, NM 87508	Please protect this amazing area for future generations.	5/31/24	davisvgg@gmail.com
258	Juliet Smith	PO Box 887 El Prado, NM 87529	I fully support protecting the Pecos watershed and removing the ability to mine the area in an effort to maintain and restore the watershed. The health of our watersheds, rivers, and streams are of extreme importance and New Mexico has the chance to lead the Southwest in creating meaningful policies.	5/23/24	julietsmith17@gmail.com
259	Alyce Santoro	PO Box 27, Villanueva, NM 87583	I am a landowner and acequia parciente along the Upper Pecos River. The Upper Pecos as an ecologically and culturally rich region that has infinite value left intact. The ill health of our entire planet is well documented and the causes well understood ,Æi at this late stage of the game, the profits of a mining company should never take precedence over the preservation, in the interest of the common good, of a rare and precious ecosystem.	5/11/24	alyce@alycasantoro.com
260	Gaye Denley	77 Silver Feather Trail Pecos, NM 87552	Water quality is a more precious resource than minerals. Minerals do not support life throughout the watershed. Leave them in the ground and save our water quality and the entire ecosystem that depends on it.	5/6/24	gayedenley@gmail.com
261	Helen Wang	710 Gonzales Rd. Santa Fe, NM 87501	New Mexico will already face 20% less available water in 50 years, Æwhy would we contaminate the limited water we have?	5/2/24	helen.n.wang@gmail.com

262	Susan Wortman	8 Red Tail Ridge Pecos, New Mexico 87552	Please stop any future mining on the beautiful Pecos River. When mining occurred here in the 1990's it destroyed thousands of fish. Locals and tourists alike love this river for picnicking, camping and fishing. Don't allow it to be destroyed!! Sincerely, Susan Wortman	4/28/24	swortman1@mac.com
263	Karen Baldwin	8 Red Tail Ridge Pecos, NM 87552	The Pecos river is important for so many reasons including the local economy, use by indigenous people and to me the most important fly fishing in one of the most beautiful rivers in the world. I urge the BOI, BLM and USFS to do everything possible to preserve this river and area. The opportunities to save our land are shrinking, please act now.	4/28/24	kbaldwinattny@hotmail.com
264	Ian Hanna	22 Trailcrossing Glorieta, NM 87535	As a life long resident of the Glorieta New Mexico area I strongly believe mining in this area should remain a part of our past not the future. Clean water and clean air are the most important resources the Upper Pecos Watershed has to offer. I support an administrative mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed and I am against further mining exploration and development.	4/4/24	ianhanna89@gmail.com
265	Todd Monson	1127 Narcisco St. NE Albuquerque NM, 87112	We need to protect this wonderful Northern NM river that so many of us, including myself, enjoy.	3/26/24	pacauate@gmail.com
266	Brian Rees	41 Calle Milpa Santa Fe NM 87507	The track record of mining in terms of the damage is causes, and more importantly, the damage that remains when companies leave, is dismal. Mining companies don't really care about the destruction of areas that I'd like my children and their children to be able to enjoy.	3/15/24	breesyclust@gmail.com
267	Terrye Bullers	1305 Monte Largo NE Albuquerque, NM 87113	I,Ãve hiked and camped for decades in the Pecos. Please protect and preserve the Pecos River from all mining activities so that this beautiful environment remains for our children and their families to enjoy in the future.	3/15/24	tbullers@comcast.net
268	Ellen Zachos	22 McFerrin-Taylor Rd., Pecos, NM	Please help protect this important natural resource.	3/7/24	acmeplant@gmail.com
269	Jeff Young	25 Dalton Trail Sandia Park NM 87047	Stop the terrero mine. The Pecos is too special	3/7/24	jeff.young.elk@gmail.com
270	William J Anderson	2929 Westheimer Road, Apt 412, Houston, TX 77098	I support any and all efforts to protect the entire Pecos Watershed. William J Anderson	3/7/24	andarch@aol.com
271	Roxane Hopper	11 Pivton ridge rd, Pecos, NM 87552	Please permanently protect the Pecos watershed ecosystem!	3/7/24	roxanehopper@gmail.com
272	Franck Greaux	7 Meadow Land Ct Tijeras NM 87059	As a resident, taxpayer, a user of the Pecos and Santa Fe National Forest, as a New Mexico voter, I want the Pecos to become free of any mining operations, present and future. I also advocate for a comprehensive plan of additional protection of this unique and magical place.	2/24/24	edger11@hotmail.com
273	Todd Monson	1127 Narcisco St. NE Albuquerque, NM 87112	We need to protect the Pecos River from mining forever! Let's start by passing the mineral withdrawal for the region.	2/19/24	pacauate@gmail.com
274	Doug Reaber	5600 Vulcan Vista Dr. NE Albuquerque, NM 87111	I strongly urge Congress to restrict future mine exploration activities in this area. Having worked directly on environmental restoration projects related to previous mining activities, I know the degree of damage that has been done, and still not completely addressed. Let us not continue to degrade our lands unnecessarily. Thank you	2/15/24	dreaber@comcast.net
275	Everett Cole	134 B Nine Mile Rd Santa Fe nm 87508	Please support protecting the Upper Pecos from mining development. This is an amazing pice of wild land and. Wonderful resource for New Mexicans and visitors to the state.	2/5/24	evlcole@yahoo.com
276	M Pal	po b0x 174 cottonwood az	what affects one affects all.	1/4/24	mpalowoda@yahoo.com
277	Todd Monson	1127 Narcisco St. NE Albuquerque, NM 87112	The Pecos River is a valuable resource for both New Mexico and the country. I fish the Pecos many times each year. The entire watershed should be protected for eternity. This means no mining!	12/20/23	pacauate@gmail.com
278	Jack Cowden	1920 Senda de Eleuterio Santa Fe, NM 87601	Please protect Pecos River	12/16/23	jackcowden@yahoo.com

279	Michael Rehling	2314 Gekeler Ln. Lagrange Oregon 97850	Please stop Mining Companies from destroying our last remaining pristine watersheds!	12/16/23	rehling.mike@gmail.com
280	Pen Bourdet	2 Camino de Vecinos Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507	I have fished the Pecos River in the beautiful Pecos Canyon for years. The aftermath of mining that was done on the Pecos many years ago is still obvious. Large areas continue to be fenced off with warnings of contamination. Those of us who love the Pecos and all who benefit from the river way down stream do not want another mine that could/would pollute the waters. No matter how the mining company say they have the newest safety standards, it,Ås never true or never enough. Contaminants still get through. We do not want a dead river.	12/15/23	pen.fishingnut@yahoo.com
281	Jeff Holzem	Jefferson City, Mo	As a volunteer water quality monitor and avid fly fisher, I am very concerned about the future of the Pecos Headwaters. We must protect it to safeguard fish and wildlife.	12/15/23	jeff2002h@yahoo.com
282	David Gritter	2660 Wyndham Dr. Grand Rapids, Mi. 49546	When I lived in Gallup NM. I was able to spend time in this area. It is breath taking to spend time here and it is an area worth protecting for any and all the reasons one can imagine. Please support this legislation. Thanks, Dave Gritter	12/15/23	dfly113@gmail.com
283	Joe Vincent	5344 S Joplin Ave Tulsa Ok 74135	I support this legislative action to protect the unique and vital natural resources of the Pecos River.	12/15/23	Joemamaok@gmail.com
284	Vincent Sereno	P.O. Box 2892 Arnold, CA 95223	Please help protect the Pecos Watershed. I have I have had the pleasure of visiting, camping and fishing along the Pecos. It provides valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife including the threatened Rio Grande Cutthroat trout.	12/15/23	smtbear@aol.com
285	Steve Miller	19645 SE 29th St. Sammamish, WA 98075	To the decision-makers regarding the future of the Upper Pecos Please do the right thing and withdraw the mineral rights on all federal lands in the Upper Pecos Watershed. The reasons are the usual and obvious list of concerns about the negative impacts of mining on watersheds. There is simply no compelling justification to allow mining here. Thanks for listening to the public!	12/14/23	spmiller7@comcast.net
286	Jeff Desmond	2119 Woodside Rd Ann Arbor MI 48104	Please for the sake of our environment, the health of our planet and maintaining beautiful and wild places, do not allow mining in the Upper Pecos Watershed. Future generations thank you.	12/14/23	jsdesmo@msn.com
287	Gregory Prosen	10S348 Jamie Lane Willowbrook, IL 60527	The upper Pacos River basin is pristine and should never be a place for mining nor drilling. It is a place we must preserve forever for our future generations to enjoy!	12/14/23	greg.prosen@gmail.com
288	Paul R Turner	My address is 1510 W Brown Road, Las Cruces NM 88005.	I have fished the Pecos River several times with my grandsons who live in Santa Fe. We have enjoyed fishing for trout using both flies and spinners as they are now 9 and 11. The beauty of the stream makes our outings memorable and we look forward to future visits together! Please protect the watershed and water quality of the Pecos for us.	12/14/23	paulrtuner@gmail.com
289	Richard Fleming	P. O. Box 515 Freedom, NH 03836	My daughter lived in New Mexico up until a month ago, so I have been to the Pecos area during visits. Northern NM is gorgeous and sacred, and its fishing in the Pecos as well needs to be protected.	12/14/23	rffleming4@gmail.com
290	Russ Pate	1737 Mapleton Dr Dallas, Texas 75228	I am in support of anything that protects Rio Grande Cutthroat trout and the Pecos Wilderness area.	12/14/23	pescaadorconmoscas@att.net
291	Jeff Harrell	131 Elite Drive Tijeras, NM 87059	Please help protect the Pecos watershed.	12/14/23	flynangler@gmail.com
292	LORNA ANDERSON	5601 N WASHINGTON ST APT 4209 STILLWATER, OK 74075-1453	Please withdraw the federal lands within the Upper Pecos Watershed from mineral leasing laws for twenty years. This will save the watershed from the potential for negative impacts from exploratory mining and the expansion of Comexico's claims in the Thompson Peak area. Thank you. Sincerely, Lorna Anderson	12/13/23	LORNA.ANDERSON.WY@HOTMAIL.COM

293	Ben Franklin	4507 Highway 314 SW Los Lunas NM 87031	Please do not mine near the Pecos river. I want to continue fishing there with my children and I want them to be able to take their children and grand children.	12/12/23	ben_kjs@hotmail.com
294	Dennis Rowe	14025 Wind Mountain Rd NE Albuquerque, NM 87112	Please support pending legislation to protect the Pecos River headwaters and watershed.	12/12/23	dwrpdr@comcast.net
295	Stephen M Chavez	8301 4th NW bldg 8 Los Ranchos NM 87114	Mining really doesn't need to occur in the Pecos watershed. NM is in the middle of the desert and the state needs this resource for recreation more than greedy mining corporation exploitation. This is our land for our use. Do the right thing and stop mining in the Pecos watershed.	12/12/23	chavezmilo55@yahoo.com
296	Fred Helms	9212 Autumn Rose Dr. NE Albuquerque, NM 87113	The environmental value of the area is worth more than the mineral value.	12/11/23	fred.a.helms@gmail.com
297	Ronald A. Yeo, Ph.D.	9125 Alameda Blvd. NE ABQ, NM 87122	This bill is crucial to protecting one of the best wildlife ecosystems in the state.	12/11/23	ryeo@unm.edu
298	Kara Armano	22891 Hwy 140 Hesperus, CO 81326	This is not the place for a mine of this caliber nor one run by a foreign entity. The Rio Pecos is a special place and has already seen intense degradation from past mining. Let's not go down that road again.	12/11/23	ski3pin@yahoo.com
299	James donoghue	1469 hwy 116 Belen nm 87002	This a nice start but certainly does nothing to protect watershed from natural disaster There is plenty of downed trees through out all of New Mexico watersheds with no plan to solve that issue	12/11/23	donoghuekeith@yahoo.com
300	Kenneth Tabish	650 Monroe St SE Albuquerque, NM 87108	To whom it may concern: As President of the Bosque chapter of Trout Unlimited and a member of the New Mexico Council of TU, I am asking that you take Administrative action to protect the upper Pecos Watershed from future mining. This area is a very valuable recreation resource of the state of New Mexico and historically, mining in the region has been destruction with long lasting impacts. It is time to stop the mining in the Upper Pecos Watershed. The upper Pecos Watershed is a cultural, historic and natural area that provided needed water for communities, recreation, and agriculture. Let's not place this valuable water resource under risk. I urge the DOI, BLM and the USFS to take administrative action to stop the mining until legislative action can be secured. Thank you for your support, Kenneth Tabish President Bosque Chapter of TU	11/24/23	tabish1054@yahoo.com
301	Sonia Hartshorne	HC69 Box 1A, Rociada, NM 87742	MUST AT ALL COST PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS! Especially the Up Stream Head waters.	11/20/23	ronisd10@gmail.com
302	Todd Monson	1127 Narcisco St. NE Albuquerque, NM 87112	We need to protect the upper Pecos and not allow mining anywhere in the Pecos watershed.	11/20/23	pacuate@gmail.com
303	Rebekah Sharits	14 Browncastle Ranch Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508	The pecos river has brought my kids and I back to center. One of my kids LOVES to fish, he dreams about it. Pecos was the precursor to this love and I couldn't imagine this being disturbed and destroyed for mining purposes. Why do we have to destroy everything that brings joy? For what? Money? Greed? Ego? Can you imagine all the other children who will never know its beauty because adults decided their desire was worth more than the children and their parents? When I visit I feel alive and it brings me serenity and balance. We have destroyed so much of the planet already, why can't we leave this one alone?	11/19/23	sharits0143@gmail.com

304	Oleg Pushkarov	76 Los Altos De Cicuye Pecos, NM 87552	This should be common sense that protecting the eco system and environment that feeds us and gives us life should be a priority over mining operation. Please stop the insanity and don,Ãt cause anymore damage	11/18/23	olegpushkarov@yahoo.com
305	Karen Squires	2034 Placita de Vida Santa Fe, NM 87505	The Pecos wilderness with its wildlife and river is the most important respite Santa Fe locals have from the dry desert. I go to the Pecos wilderness to enjoy the outdoors, my family grew up fishing in Pecos, and I want my own children and grandchildren to have the same quality of wilderness that I enjoyed as a child. Stop mining, stop polluting, and protect the Pecos wilderness for now and always! I have a bit to say about this, As I expect whoever reads this, to afford me the professionalism of their time and attention, and to pass this along up the chain for the next readers to do the same.	11/17/23	karensquires@gmail.com
306	Mia Franco	76 Los Altos De Cicuye Pecos, NM 87552	I recently moved to Pecos, from right on top Silver Falls State Park in Oregon. I could see it from 1850ft at my house on 5 acres in the Cascade foothills. It is the largest State Park in Oregon, boasting 10 breathtaking waterfalls within a single ~8 mile loop hike. Early Silver miners totally ravaged the area. They denuded all of the original old growth trees from around what is now the historic Lodge, a 100 year old cabin. They even crashed a car (imagine all that trash!) over the South Falls and sold tickets as a totally despicable and degenerate tourist attraction. This was in the 1920,Ãs before Charles Drake petitioned to protect it. I CAN NOT BELIEVE THIS IS EVEN STILL A THING TODAY. I moved away from the insanely epic natural beauty and abundant water of Oregon, because there will be a devastating massive earthquake in my lifetime, it,Ãs timed geophysical fact. They have no early warning system and no plan. I chose New Mexico because of the insanely epic natural beauty of the land, I moved to Pecos BECAUSE OF THE WATER. I am calling everyone out for their weakness. This needs to be stomped, immediately. Seriously?? Just quit playing games. You should not need petitions, you should not need signatures, you should not need votes or support or validation or credit or recognition or thanks to DO WHAT IS RIGHT. Government never gets public consent for anything, yet you,Ãre pretending that you need our pitchforks and rage to protect what little water a state like New Mexico has??? Dudes. Knock off the clown show, and finish this fight once and for all. ,ÃNo contamination of natural water sources and lands.,Ã This isn,Ãt hard. I basically ,Ãadded my voice,Ã to this JOKE of a made up battle, to laugh at you all and point out how silly this is. Act like real leaders.	11/17/23	fumasmotamiamigo@gmail.com
307	Jeff Fleming	77 Quail Meadow Rd, Placitas, NM 87043	Please take action on protecting this vital area and halt the mining. Thank you.	11/15/23	pjf.fleming@gmail.com
308	Fred Helms	9212 Autumn Rose Dr. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113	This issue is too important to ignore. Please take action.	11/15/23	fred.a.helms@gmail.com
309	Richard Pettit	502 Avenida Los Suenos, Bernalillo, NM 87004	I love to fish and hike in the Pecos watershed. Please withdraw the federal lands in this area from mineral leasing for the next 20 years.	11/15/23	randpettit@comcast.net

310	Stephen Jatho	5 cactus flower rd. Ranchos de Taos, NM 87557	Please protect our watersheds, creeks, rios, acequias, and rivers. Water is life.	11/7/23	jatho.stephen@live.com
311	Nayeli Navarro	5A Camino Contento Pecos, NM 87552	I am a mother of a grade school child and call Pecos our home. We spend hours exploring the Pecos wilderness and fishing on the Pecos River. Past mining efforts led to the lethal contamination of the Pecos Watershed impacting multiple communities. The flora, fauna, and people living along the Pecos deserve clean water to live healthy lives. The Tererro Mine Coalition is in direct opposition to this and endangers the lives and future of New Mexicans.	11/5/23	pequenalulurara@gmail.com
312	Jasmine	5312 Estrellita Del N RD ABQ 87111	Please protect this watershed	11/5/23	records.career_0y@icloud.com
313	glenn wikle	2006 conejo drive Santa Fe NM 87505	I am a frequent visitor to the New Mexico Pecos Canyon. Its mountain trails, clean rivers, and beautiful campgrounds are a national jewel enjoyed by tens of thousands of nature enthusiasts every year. One big mine has already caused irreparable damage to a significant part of the canyon. Don't let it happen again.	11/2/23	glennwikle@gmail.com
314	Claudia K Karl	10 Sunrise Vista Santa Fe, NM 87506	Thank you for your help in protecting the Pecos Watershed.	11/2/23	claudia.karl@gmail.com

12/16/2024

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

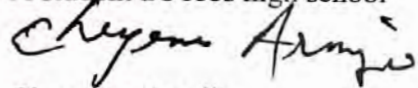
I am writing to express my concern about reopening the mines near our river. The last time the mines were active, the river was contaminated, harming both the environment and the people who depend on it.

The river is an important resource for our community. It provides clean water, supports wildlife, and is a place where we connect with nature. Reopening the mines risks repeating the mistakes of the past, putting all of this at risk again.

I urge you to prioritize the health of our river and community by stopping plans to reopen the mines.

Sincerely,

A student a Pecos high school

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheyenne Armijo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Cheyenne Armijo

12/16/2024

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

I strongly believe that this mine should not reopen. Most of my memories during hot summer days would mainly be about the Pecos River and even new experiences to come. Growing up without lots of activities to do in the small town of Pecos made it really enjoyable to actually be outside with family members, and for gatherings, holidays, and especially barbecues. Although there were many times I found myself alone outdoors, it lets me relax while riding my bike all over the town, listening to music or riding with friends. Recently I had joined an internship working outside with Riversource, the internship had taught me memorable lessons and explanations on how my backyard functions. We had studied water quality in the Pecos River up the mountain where we saw how clear the water was, especially in the cold. Going back to why this mine shouldn't open once more is because I wouldn't be able to do most of the activities, the water will be polluted and I wouldn't be able to fish or swim in the river anymore, this will also affect crops, soil, wildlife, etc.

Sincerely, Pecos High Student.

Matthew Varela

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MV', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

We are writing to you as young stewards of the Upper Pecos Watershed, a place that has shaped our lives and continues to be the heart of our community. Growing up near the Pecos River, we have formed a deep connection to its clear waters, thriving ecosystems, and the rich cultural traditions it supports. It is not just a river to us—it is our past, present, and future.

We respectfully urge you to move forward with the administrative mineral withdrawal of the Upper Pecos Watershed. This action is vital to protect our watershed from mining and other activities that could harm its pristine waters and fragile ecosystems. This decision must happen under the current administration, as the next may not prioritize the protection of water, land, and the communities that depend on them. The future of our river—and the generations that come after us—depend on swift and decisive action now.

The Pecos River is more than a natural resource; it is a lifeline. It supports local agriculture, provides clean drinking water, and offers countless opportunities for outdoor recreation and connection to nature. For us, it is a source of joy and inspiration, a place where we have learned to hunt, fish, swim, and appreciate the beauty of the world around us.

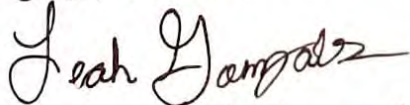
We want our children and grandchildren to enjoy the Pecos River just as we have—to experience its peace and wonder, to understand its importance to our culture, and to be able to depend on it for their lives and livelihoods. This vision is only possible if the watershed is protected from harmful development and exploitation.

As high school students, we recognize that we are the future, but we cannot do this alone. We look to you, as leaders with the power to make impactful decisions, to safeguard this treasure. By moving forward with the mineral withdrawal, you would be preserving the Pecos Watershed not only for us but for all who depend on its vitality and beauty.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering this crucial step to protect one of our nation's most precious resources. We hope to see action that reflects the shared values of conservation, sustainability, and the safeguarding of our shared future.

Sincerely,

Leah Gonzales



Pecos High School

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

We are writing to you as young stewards of the Upper Pecos Watershed, a place that has shaped our lives and continues to be the heart of our community. Growing up near the Pecos River, we have formed a deep connection to its clear waters, thriving ecosystems, and the rich cultural traditions it supports. It is not just a river to us—it is our past, present, and future.

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Sincerely,

Trinity Romero

Trinity Romero
PHS - Student

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Sincerely,

Ryland O.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ryland O.', written in a cursive style with a large loop at the end.

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

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Sincerely,

Carlos Rogland Pecos Student
HS

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

We are writing to you as young stewards of the Upper Pecos Watershed, a place that has shaped our lives and continues to be the heart of our community. Growing up near the Pecos River, we have formed a deep connection to its clear waters, thriving ecosystems, and the rich cultural traditions it supports. It is not just a river to us—it is our past, present, and future.

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Sincerely,

Emma Varela II

Pecos High School

Dear Esteemed Leaders,

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Sincerely, *Alexis Jarez*
Pecos highschool

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Sincerely, *Aaliyah Raybal*
Aaliyah Raybal

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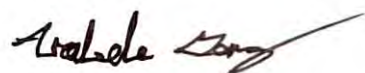
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Sincerely, Arabela Gonz

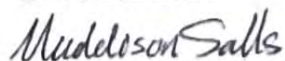
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arabela Gonz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

12/18/2024

Dear Esteemed leaders,

As a student who lives in Pecos the river is a large part of our lives it is the heart of our community in our town. It is important to us that we maintain the health of our rivers and ecosystems. We need to prioritize and protect the water and land here in Pecos because of the importance it holds, it supports local agriculture, provides clean water and is a place that connects us to nature. For us it is a place to be with friends and family, fishing, swimming, hunting, and is a beautiful place to explore and get to experience. It is important to us students that the future of our river is protected by moving forward with mineral withdrawal. Thank you for your leadership and for considering this important action to protect the Pecos river.

Maddison Salls



In the Pecos, push intensifies to halt return of mining

Editorial

May 5, 2023

In the summer, residents of Santa Fe and out-of-state visitors love to play in the Pecos Wilderness — it's where families go to hike, fish, splash in the river, camp and otherwise commune with nature.

For the people who live in the different villages in the Pecos, our playground is their home.

It's where they live, raise families, sit on the porch in retirement and otherwise spend their days. Whether they work growing food, run a business or commute to Santa Fe or Las Vegas, N.M., for jobs, their attachment to the land is fierce.

But all who visit and all who abide there still share a common goal: to preserve and protect the beauty and diversity of this place.

Over the years, the desire of humans to exploit natural resources has upset the balance of nature. It can be as easily fixed as too many campers leaving too much trash behind. Or, as in the case of past mining operations, the "trash" that remains can contaminate the soil and water, with poisons lingering decades after the work has stopped.

Today, the Upper Pecos Watershed is threatened by mining once more. We have

written about potential mining claims and the subsequent Stop Tererro Mine movement.

To sum up: In 2019, Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of an Australian mining company, applied for permission to begin exploratory mining operations in the Santa Fe National Forest. Parent company New World Resources states on its webpage that it hopes to mine copper, gold and zinc at its Tererro VMS Project.

Four years and one pandemic later, the process of getting the mine approved — that's not a given, of course — continues.

Neighbors of this proposed mine aren't satisfied with simply protesting, writing members of Congress, lobbying the governor and otherwise drumming up support to stop the mine. Their position is simple and has remained unchanged: The watershed of the Pecos River is too fragile to support mining. From bitter experience, they know what happens when mining goes wrong. Snowmelt in 1991 sent heavy metals from an old mine into the Pecos River, killing 90,000 trout at the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery and another 10,000 in the river. Cleanup costs — paid for by taxpayers — were in the millions.

That's why news of potential exploratory drilling for a new mine has prompted villagers, outdoor enthusiasts, tribal communities and other interested people to fight the mine. With just under two years left in the Biden presidency, they feel a sense of urgency. The next president might not care about preserving the magnificence of this wilderness.

That's why members of the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition are trying a new route to block the mine. They want an administrative mineral withdrawal within the Upper Pecos Watershed. This tool temporarily limits certain activities on public land, including hard-rock mining or mineral or geothermal leasing. The withdrawals can be granted as a way of protecting water, cultural, ecological, scientific, scenic, historic and archaeological resources in the area — all of which are present in the Pecos.

Administrative withdrawals can be granted by the secretary of the Department of Interior — currently Deb Haaland, a Laguna Pueblo citizen from New Mexico. Not only is Haaland familiar with the Pecos Wilderness, it's likely she understands its importance to tribal communities as well.

To kick off the process, anti-mine advocates are gathering support from members of the congressional delegation, and starting this week, visiting local governments to get their backing. On Tuesday, the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition will be at the San Miguel County

Commission asking for a resolution in support of administrative withdrawal.

However, such a withdrawal is only a temporary fix in the battle to prevent mining from taking hold once more. A more permanent solution is this: Pass long-overdue mining reforms in Congress.

It's way past time for the nation to amend its antiquated federal mining law, passed in 1872 when Ulysses Grant was president. Currently, companies — unlike the process for the oil and gas industry — don't have to secure leases from the federal government or pay royalties to develop minerals. The land belongs to the public, but mining doesn't fill public coffers and, too often, taxpayers pay for the messes mines leave behind. The current law benefits the mining industry, not citizens of the country.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich is one of several members of Congress working on updating the 1872 law, including adding the first royalty on hard-rock mines and impose new environmental requirements. With a slim majority of Democrats in the Senate — including interest from moderate Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat — mining law reform must be pursued.

But even with a stronger mining law, some areas are too precious for mineral exploitation. The Pecos Wilderness is one of those places.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/editorials/in-the-pecos-push-intensifies-to-halt-return-of-mining/article_c51ddff6-eb84-11ed-ba01-df5dc8ddd770.html

An endangered river? Not if people speak out

Editorial

April 14, 2021

In case anyone needed a reminder, the Pecos River remains at risk.

This week, the beloved stream was named No. 5 in the nation on a list of endangered waterways by the American Rivers conservation group.

It must be protected.

The risk today, as it has been in the past, is from mining. In 1991, the river was filled with toxic pollutants after a snowmelt washed through the shuttered Terrero Mine, carrying contaminants with it. Some 90,000 fish were killed, and the resulting cleanup cost \$20 million.

A mining company is seeking to bring back mining in the Pecos area, with a proposal to mine more than 5,000 acres, drilling up to 30 holes, 4,000 feet deep, to search for copper, zinc, lead and gold. Comexico LLC — a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd. — has an application pending before the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division.

May it stay that way — pending — or better yet, be withdrawn.

The area can't withstand another major mining operation. The work is messy, with trucks in and out on dirt roads, causing erosion and air pollution even before the

drilling starts. Water would be at risk from the dirt, and the noise and fumes would be bad for residents of the region.

The area is too fragile to support mining, an industry that too often takes what it wants and leaves a mess for others to handle.

For residents such as Frank Adelo, president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, a mining operation could be the final nail in the coffin to the health of the river, already struggling because of climate change. It's hard to keep a river flowing when there's little snowpack to melt and refresh the waters.

Adelo and others who live in and around the village of Pecos have joined together to fight the mine.

Adelo sums it up well: "The only solution really is no mine at all."

The U.S. Forest Service, which oversees the area in question, does not have to rubber stamp applications. Its officials can order expansive studies to examine the environmental impact of mining, all of which can be used as a basis on which to deny applications.

The Trump administration, with its emphasis on public lands as places to be plundered, is gone. The Biden administration must make

protection of the environment as a key consideration when considering extractive industry proposals on public lands.

State officials — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham already has written the Forest Service to express her concern — can support the efforts of locals against the mine. So can members of the New Mexico congressional delegation.

In the end, preserving the Pecos River for those who live here is more important than a foreign mining company's profits. By naming this river as endangered, the American Rivers group reminds us how essential the Pecos River remains to our region. Essential but endangered — but only if people allow it.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/editorials/an-endangered-river-not-if-people-speak-out/article_72c5bb72-9d5f-11eb-b90b-07018254b20b.html

Biden administration should protect the Pecos

Op-Ed by Nick Streit

March 16, 2024

Anyone who has fished the Pecos River understands why people love it so much. Above the village of Pecos, its riffles and pools offer endless opportunities for catching trout amid spectacular canyon scenery. As runoff winds down in late spring, a hatch of giant stoneflies makes every fish a greedy fool and every angler into a fish-catching legend. In October, the canyon becomes a winding trail of fluttering yellow cottonwood leaves playing harmony to the music of the rushing river. The Pecos Canyon has something for everyone: hikers, bikers, fishers, hunters or anyone who just wants to roll out a picnic blanket on a crisp, blue autumn day.

The Pecos wasn't always like this. In the early 1900s, mining in the Pecos watershed played a role in the West's extraction-focused economy, but at a dire cost to clean water. Decades after the Terrero mine closed, its legacy continued to rear its ugly head. Contaminated mine tailings had been used to gravel roads and campgrounds, and in the 1990s, they leached acidic contamination into the river and caused thousands of fish to die and anglers to stay away. The village of Pecos, which relies on recreation, suffered immensely.

Now that remediation efforts have brought the Pecos back to health, one would think we had learned a lesson about what mining can do to a river. I certainly have. Growing up

fishing and guiding near the Questa molybdenum mine, I've seen firsthand the toxic toll that mining took on the Red River. In 2014, my chapter of Trout Unlimited spearheaded restoration of the Red because we understood that the economies of our headwater communities would become increasingly linked to outdoor pursuits like fishing.

In buying gear and fishing licenses at stores like mine, out-of-town visitors provide tax revenue and fuel fish and wildlife conservation. They eat locally grown food at locally owned restaurants, stay at hotels, and frequent galleries, shops and bars. The clients I guide on a fishing trip today may go whitewater rafting tomorrow, attend an opera performance or play blackjack at a local casino.

Today the upper Pecos River is the state's second most popular trout fishery, drawing anglers from across the country and hosting more than 1 million angler days each year. In addition to contributing to the state recreation and tourism economies, the watershed plays a critical role in the conservation of native fish and wildlife species like Rio Grande cutthroat trout that still find refuge in the headwater tributaries.

Despite these values, the watershed is again under threat by outside mining interests with a different vision for the region's future. But

local communities and elected officials are pushing back and uniting around a vision of clean water and a protected watershed.

Federal legislation to protect the headwaters of the Pecos River from mining is moving through Congress. The Pecos Watershed Protection Act, sponsored by Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, and Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández and Melanie Stansbury, will permanently protect the upper watershed from new mining claims and expand the Pecos Wilderness to protect critical headwater streams and wildlife habitat, with robust support from local stakeholders and the fishing community.

But nothing is certain in Congress these days. That's why we need the Biden administration to use its authority to protect the Pecos River. Advocates, including the Stop Tererro Mine coalition, are pushing for a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal to prohibit mining while Congress considers permanent protections. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Forest Service Chief Randy Moore should initiate that process now.

The Pecos is irreplaceable, and too special to mine.

Nick Streit is the owner of Taos Fly Shop and a co-owner of The Reel Life in Santa Fe. He is also the director of Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/biden-administration-should-protect-the-pecos/article_25f935fa-e0df-11ee-a2ee-639a139f439b.html

Some places are simply too special to mine

Op-Ed by Liz Stefanics, Peter Wirth, Ambrose Castellano and Janice Varela

June 24, 2023

In the Pecos Valley, as much as anywhere, water really is life.

Daily, clean water flows downstream from the Sangre de Cristos, nourishing the land, providing drinking water to communities, supporting farms and ranches, and driving a thriving outdoor recreation and tourism economy right in our own backyard.

As elected leaders, we are committed to a region defined by clean water and a healthy environment where all our constituents have access to safe and affordable drinking water. This requires investing in our water infrastructure, planning for the impacts of drought and a changing climate, and prioritizing the health of our forests, watersheds and acequias. As stewards of our natural resources, it means we must also protect them for the next generation. This vision for the future unites us in our opposition to new mining plans for the Pecos River watershed.

In 2019, we learned that the subsidiary of an Australian mining company acquired mining claims on public lands in the headwaters of the Pecos River, including new claims spanning more than 4,000 acres of forested lands high in the watershed, all without consultation or buy-in from local communities, water users or tribes.

Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river, contaminating community water supplies, causing a massive fish kill and driving away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn. New Mexico taxpayers footed the bill for millions in reclamation and cleanup costs, as it so often goes.

Perhaps most concerning, new mining operations would occur in a geologic formation associated with acid mine drainage, posing a serious threat to water quality and aquatic life. While hard rock mining has played an important role in our country's economic prosperity, today water quality in thousands of stream miles is impaired by heavy metals or acidity, and abandoned mines are a major source of these impairments.

Concerns about mining in the region extend beyond Pecos communities. The new claims are located just east of the ridgeline separating the Pecos River watershed from the Santa Fe municipal watershed. The prospect of mining in proximity to Santa Fe's water supply is viewed with an equally cautious eye by city leaders and residents.

Such a threat to water quality in the headwaters of New Mexico's second longest river is unacceptable and warrants prompt administrative action to protect local communities and the environment.

That's why San Miguel County, Santa Fe County and the village of Pecos passed resolutions calling on our federal agencies to initiate a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal for portions of the watershed. New Mexicans from across the region, including tribal leaders, acequia leaders, landowners along the Pecos River, anglers and conservation advocates support this action.

We applaud our congressional delegation for sponsoring the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, a bill to permanently withdraw approximately 166,600 acres of federal lands within the watershed from future mineral entry, thereby safeguarding our communities from risks inherent with new mining activity. An administrative withdrawal will protect the

watershed in the short-term, allowing time for Congress to act.

It's true that we need mineral resources to drive our economy and support the lifestyles to which we have grown accustomed. We must also recognize that some places are simply too special to mine.

An administrative mineral withdrawal will protect Pecos Valley communities and the cultural and ecological resources we cherish. This requires all of us working together, and prompt action by our agency leaders. Together, we can protect the Pecos River.

Authors are state Sen. Liz Stefanics, Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, state Rep. Ambrose Castellano, D-San Miguel and Torrance, and San Miguel County Commissioner Janice Varela. Stefanics represents District 39, which includes parts of Santa Fe, Bernalillo, Lincoln, San Miguel, Torrance and Valencia counties. Wirth, District 25, is from Santa Fe.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/some-places-are-simply-too-special-to-mine/article_2613fd46-1122-11ee-a8af-9fc6a2eec292.html#comments

Protecting Pecos River protects a way of life

Op-Ed by Ralph Vigil
July 23, 2022

The phrase “outstanding waters” is just one way to describe the river my family and countless others have depended on for hundreds of years and countless generations. The Pecos River has sustained life along its banks for thousands of years for humans and much longer than that for the ecosystem it created.

Now, thanks to the recent ruling from the Water Quality Control Commission, the northern part of the Pecos, along with over 125 miles of rivers in Northern New Mexico, were designated as Outstanding National Resource Waters. The commission came to this conclusion citing the river’s recreational, ecological and cultural significance.

As an organic farmer who lives and depends upon the acequias the Pecos River feeds, I am celebrating today. I am celebrating with the coalition of people brought together to protect our outstanding Pecos River. This coalition was made up of people who love our river, many of them for different reasons.

Some love its amazing fishing. Some, like me, are dependent on it for feeding my family and my community. Some fight for the ecosystem and animals that depend on it for life. Some enjoy birding, hunting and kayaking. Whatever reason you love the Pecos, I am thankful you made your voice heard and made a stand.

As chairman of the New Mexico Acequia Commission, we as a commission made the decision to send a letter to the water quality commission. Our traditional way of life depends on the river, but we were only successful because such a diverse, grassroots coalition came together to support the designation. That is something we need to do more in the future.

Conservation of our way of life, our waters and the ecosystem should be something we all agree on. In the past, we may have butted heads, there is no more time for that. The mining and oil industry are on the same page, working together, so we must do the same.

Speaking of the mining industry, this designation is a huge blow to the loathed proposed exploratory mine, the Terrero Mine. This battle is still going on, but there are ways we can continue to push back. Once again, it will take coming together to fight for our communities, our way of life and our wilderness.

Another initiative the Acequia Commission has recently signed off on is support for the Pecos Watershed Protection Act being introduced by Sen. Martin Heinrich with the backing of Sen. Ben Ray Luján. Whatever we can do to protect our outstanding waters, we must do.

Our historic acequias still depend on clean water from the Pecos to irrigate crops and water livestock. Maintaining a healthy watershed and ensuring clean water continues to flow in the Pecos and in our acequias continue to be essential for

protecting the culture and agricultural traditions of the Pecos watershed.

Ralph Vigil is an organic farmer in East Pecos, and the chairman of the New Mexico Acequia Commission.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/protecting-pecos-river-protects-a-way-of-life/article_10f82eac-093d-11ed-b23e-57cd4a16c95b.html

We can all protect the health of the Pecos River

Op-Ed by Addison Binkley

May 28, 2022

I am a student at the May Center for Learning in Santa Fe. Recently, we have been studying water health. Even though we had been originally studying the Santa Fe River, one river got me really interested in water health: the Pecos River.

Do you know what mining upstream of the Pecos River does to the river itself?

The Pecos River has been through many different mishaps. In 1991, a heavy snowmelt washed toxic pollutants from the Terrero Mine into the river. According to stopterrerromine.org, this resulted in over 90,000 fish dying. If this isn't bad enough, did you know the mess it made caused a \$28 million cleanup? About 20 percent of that money came out of your tax dollars.

You might still be arguing that mining gives us a lot of useful materials. As true as that may be, mining does a lot more bad than good. Mining causes ecological imbalance, endangerment of animals, habitat destruction and biodiversity loss.

You might still be thinking, "Though all of this may be true, mining is still crucial for technology growth." You might not have known that mining also uses 72 percent of groundwater on average. The Generation Next article ("Endangered Waters," April 29) clearly stated that even though metals people mine for like copper and gold are less toxic, people have still had to shut down campgrounds and other things that were affected. Not only does mining affect animals, but it also affects people.

The Terrero Mine still affects the Pecos people. If you want to learn more, visit stopterrerromine.org/story-map and listen to people's stories about the mine.

Even after all this, the Comexico corporation still wants to mine in the Pecos area near the site of the cleanup. Visit ournmwaters.com to sign a petition to help the Pecos River. Consider putting these thoughts into action and help stop mining in the Pecos River.

Addison Binkley is a young person concerned about the health of our waters.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/we-can-all-protect-the-health-of-the-pecos-river/article_6bf0fa9e-dbdb-11ec-8978-a3a813c5180e.html

Heinrich's legislation will protect Pecos community

Op-Ed by David Toledo, governor of Jemez Pueblo

November 24, 2020

The Pecos Valley, which contains the Tererro Mine remediation site, is an area sacred to our people. This land still is recovering from irresponsible mining operations in the 1990s that contaminated the Pecos River, causing over 90,000 fish to be killed and around \$36 million spent on remediation. Today, the valley continues to be targeted for exploratory mining operations. Existing toxic mine pollution continues to threaten wildlife habitats, our waterways and cultural sacred sites. We need to make a unified stand now.

Thus far, the U.S. Forest Service in Santa Fe has received over 2,500 comments on their scoping report, a true testament to community interest and support for Pecos and its historic and cultural significance. That doesn't include the support and review letters submitted by other organizations involved.

The hard rock mining industry is governed by legislation that hasn't been updated since 1872, when mining was done on a vastly smaller scale compared to today. Some laws have changed to give tribal communities a seat at the table in decision-making, but not nearly enough. Under this outdated law, mining companies have no legal obligation to pay for reclamation or remediation, and can extract minerals from our lands without paying federal royalties. That places the burden of cleanup on states and tribal

communities. The exploratory drills include up to 30 holes in an area of five to seven acres, and the estimated amount of water needed for the project would be 977,500 gallons using existing well water, according to Santa Fe National Forest geologist Larry Gore.

We've seen the impact of mine pollution all over the West, from the 2015 Gold King Mine spill in Silverton, Colo., to the decades of acid mine drainage at Montana's Zortman-Landusky Mine near the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. This pollution devastates public water systems, poisons wildlife, negatively disrupts local economies and contaminates sacred sites — and cleanup is all too often a decadeslong process.

The state of New Mexico is fortunate to have committed leaders like U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, who has spoken out on the need to hold the mining industry accountable. The legislation he has introduced is intended to protect the Pecos Valley and its people. Our vision is to save the existing natural balance between the forest land and the clean mountain waters that flow and not wait decades for the land to heal if the drilling moves forward.

As the holder of the Abraham Lincoln cane and the state of New Mexico cane for the

Pueblo of Jemez, recognizing a government to government relationship, I urge Congress to support Heinrich's legislation — Senate Bill 4599, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act. This is another great step forward to ensure a healthy ecosystem for the Pecos Valley and the people who call it home, as is the resolution of support for 1872 Mining Law reforms that the All Pueblo Council of

Governors passed earlier this year. If our federal leaders support these necessary reforms and legislation, we have a fighting chance to protect the people and cultural heritage of Pecos and ensure a clean healthy ecosystem for generations to come.

David Toledo is the governor of Jemez Pueblo.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/heinrichs-legislation-will-protect-pecos-community/article_4b601aa6-2dfb-11eb-a0d7-a711953a02ae.html

Support the protection of the Pecos River watershed

Letter to the Editor by Lela McFerrin

January 29, 2024

The Pecos Canyon, cherished for its diverse outdoor activities, is facing grave danger from proposed exploratory drilling on Jones Hill and the potential of a full-scale mining operation. This jeopardizes the entire Upper Pecos Watershed, which is the headwaters of the Pecos River. The watershed and river are integral to our community and history. The Upper Pecos Watershed is a whole, interconnected system.

The Pecos River has raised generations of kids and continues to do so. The pandemic underscored its role as a natural haven. Its value transcends any potential mining

benefits, deeply impacting our local economy and community experiences. Our leaders are acting to protect the Pecos River's headwaters from hardrock mining through an administrative mineral withdrawal, respecting our local leaders and community's wishes. We strongly support the U.S. Forest Service's and Bureau of Land Management's efforts in safeguarding this precious resource.

Lela McFerrin

*Vice President, Upper Pecos Watershed Association
Pecos*

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/support-the-protection-of-the-pecos-river-watershed/article_9446a31a-becc-11ee-b915-d71155a29fc7.html

Show up for Pecos

Letter to the Editor by Morika Vorenberg Hensley

September 6, 2023

Since 2019, mining claims in the upper Pecos watershed west of Terrero have increased from 20 to 236, while the permitting process to begin exploratory drilling for gold, copper, zinc, lead and silver is ongoing. Each claim presents the risk of an exploratory drilling site, which could become a full mining operation. As new claims push further west, they encroach on the proposed Thompson Peak Wilderness area, and, just beyond, the Santa Fe municipal watershed.

The positive side is that Santa Feans have a special opportunity to be good neighbors and support the proactive protection of the upper

Pecos watershed through administrative and legislative action. It is the perfect time to work together across watershed boundaries to safeguard the present and future of the land we love before further devastation occurs. Our fates are intertwined. Learn more at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Jemez Room, Santa Fe Community College, 6401 Richards Ave. Visit stopterreromine.org for more information.

Morika Vorenberg Hensley
executive director
Santa Fe Watershed Association

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/worried-about-climate-crisis-heres-what-to-do/article_44ef2834-4b7a-11ee-a9c2-8791f4cb7d93.html

Protect the watershed

Letter to the Editor by Mark Lujan

August 2, 2023

Clean water flowing from the Sangre de Cristo mountains has sustained acequia-irrigated farms and traditional communities for generations and generations to come. The waters of the Pecos River nourish lands and people who utilize the water each year. This gift of clean water requires things we must do, such as taking care of our watersheds for future generations and ensuring mining companies never pollute streams where our water originates.

As New Mexicans, we understand that water is life, and our federal leaders need to protect the headwaters of the Pecos River from hardrock mining by initiating an administrative mineral withdrawal and honoring the wishes of our local leaders and communities. The U.S. Forest Service should support this decision. They owe it to New Mexico's acequia communities.

*Mark Lujan
Mayordomo, West Pecos Acequia
Association, Pecos*

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/city-parks-deserve-better-care/article_99ac501e-3012-11ee-b08e-a38c9a0d3880.html

Save what's special

Letter to the Editor by Barbara Ellis, Santa Fe
July 28, 2023

Our local elected representatives got it right in their piece (“Some places are simply too special to mine,” My View, June 25) when they wrote Pecos Canyon and the surrounding watershed is the wrong place for a new mine. The area is still recovering from past mining activities that polluted the Pecos River and cost taxpayers tens of millions in cleanup costs. Today, the area is one of our most popular outdoor destinations, generating significant revenue for the state and local communities through tourism and outdoor recreation.

Congressional action, including passage of the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, would safeguard this special place for future generations. In the meantime, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and the U.S. Forest Service should initiate an administrative mineral withdrawal, protecting the watershed until Congress takes action. Some places are too special to mine. The headwaters of the Pecos River, at the doorstep to the Pecos Wilderness, is one such place.

Barbara Ellis
Santa Fe

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/trashy-roadways-are-unacceptable/article_73937ac2-2c9f-11ee-b364-eb3c6ccf4583.html

Protect the Pecos

Letter to the Editor by Gary Moran

July 20, 2023

I commend *The Santa Fe New Mexican* for its recent endorsement of protections for Pecos Canyon and the surrounding watershed (“New urgency to halt return of mining in the Pecos,” Our View, May 7). In 2019, we learned an international mining company had acquired thousands of acres of mining claims in a region where our organization is supporting efforts to improve stream health and restore a unique population of Rio Grande cutthroat trout. New mining in the watershed threatens everything we have been working to restore.

The Pecos is one of our state’s most popular fishing destinations, drawing anglers from

across the state to fish and camp and enjoy time in a beautiful environment.

But the area is much more than a fishing destination. It’s a source of clean water for communities and farms, a place to connect with nature, and a watershed with deep cultural value. It’s a place we must protect for future generations, and a mineral withdrawal would do that.

Gary Moran
President, Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Santa Fe

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/the-road-dont-go-there-on-cerrillos/article_c7d3f32c-25c5-11ee-ad53-cb7c3d1ac2d7.html

House measure would support mining, mineral leasing halt in Upper Pecos watershed

By Margaret O'Hara

February 20, 2025

The Upper Pecos watershed attracts hikers, wildlife enthusiasts, anglers and outdoors people of all kinds — and for good reason, said fly fishing guide Adrian Akin.

In addition to participating in local chapters of the freshwater conservation organization Trout Unlimited, Akin leads expeditions for Santa Fe fly shop The Reel Life, estimating he brings a half-and-half mix of locals and tourists to the near-pristine upper Pecos River.

The area is special, he said. It's resilient.

"It's in very good condition for what it's been through. ... It's a really big part of a lot of outfitters operations up there," Akin said.

Lawmakers on Thursday moved one step closer to calling for long-term protections for the Upper Pecos River watershed, which encompasses a sizable chunk of the Santa Fe National Forest's Pecos Wilderness Area.

House Joint Memorial 5, sponsored by Rep. Anita Gonzales, D-Las Vegas, would support federal administrative action to withdraw certain lands from mining and mineral leasing and call on Congress to pass the Pecos Watershed Protection Act to protect portions of the area from mineral development.

In a 7-1 vote Thursday, the House Agriculture, Acequias and Water Resources Committee voted to advance the memorial to the House floor.

The memorial, Gonzales said, sends a clear message about protecting the place: "As a community, we're coming together, just to show support for the land."

The Upper Pecos watershed has been through a lot in recent years; it's been "getting beat up for some time," Pecos farmer and acequia parcianta Ralph Vigil told the committee.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/legislature/house-measure-would-support-mining-mineral-leasing-halt-in-upper-pecos-watershed/article_cc30ae74-efae-11ef-8e8f-9fdd79752509.html

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



Advocates for protecting the Pecos watershed from mining worried after public meeting is postponed

By Cathy Cook

March 3, 2025

PECOS — Advocates are worried about a federal proposal to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed from mining for the next 20 years after the Bureau of Land Management postponed a public meeting meant to collect feedback on the proposal.

More than 50 people gathered in the Pecos Village Hall on Wednesday night. They were supposed to attend a meeting hosted by the Bureau of Land Management about potentially withdrawing mineral rights from 164,000 National Forest lands and 1,330 acres of BLM-managed lands near the Pecos River headwaters. When the BLM meeting was postponed, advocacy group New Mexico Wild held a community meeting instead to gather letters in support of the mineral withdrawal.

“We want our future generations to continue to thrive here. Pecos is very special, not just for us, but for Jemez Pueblo, Tesuque Pueblo, who have been doing their own work behind the scenes to say that this place is special to them as well,” said Ralph Vigil, a northern organizer for NM Wild and a Pecos farmer.

BLM postponed the meeting a week before it was set to take place and has not set a new

date yet. The agency is still encouraging the public to submit comments on the proposal until March 17. The two-year process for deciding if mining should not be allowed on the land was started by former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and former President Joe Biden in December.

The people in Pecos Village know how a mine can leave a legacy of contamination long after closing. The Tererro Mine operated from 1926 to 1939, mining lead and zinc north of Pecos Village. After the mine closed, mine and mill waste was used to fill campgrounds, trailheads and at the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery. The mine waste led to water contamination, which in 1991 killed off more than 90,000 trout at the hatchery.

A different mining company, Comexico LLC, applied for exploratory drilling permits in 2019 to look for gold, copper, zinc, lead and silver, and has acquired mining claims throughout the Pecos headwaters.

Pecos Mayor Ted Benavidez said he is concerned about the long-term health and economic impacts of mining near the Pecos River. Camping and fishing near the river are significant economic drivers for the village.

“I believe that we all need to work together to keep the Pecos River,” he said. “It’s one of the best fishing areas around. People love it.”

Representatives from both of the state’s U.S. senators and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández attended the community meeting. The three sponsored legislation in the last session of Congress, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, to grant permanent protection for the

watershed. The entire delegation advocated for the mineral withdrawal.

“New Mexicans who have been united for years in calling for protections for this cherished watershed deserve to have their voices heard. The withdrawal process would protect clean water and safeguard this region from harmful mining pollution,” Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., said in a statement.

https://www.abqjournal.com/news/article_d17aa7b0-f632-11ef-a28f-5785f2efc762.html

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



Upper Pecos gets temporary protection from mining

By Cathy Cook

December 14, 2024

More than 165,000 acres of public land in the Upper Pecos watershed will be protected from mining for the next two years, and the protections could be extended for another 20 years.

Still, advocates are pushing for more state-level protections for New Mexico waterways because federal water protections have grown more uncertain.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland initiated a two-year temporary withdrawal of 164,483 acres of National Forest land and 1,327 acres of Bureau of Land Management land from new mining claims or federal mineral leases Thursday. During those two years, BLM and the U.S. Forest Service will study the area, starting the process for proposing a 20-year withdrawal, which could then be renewed.

“Our community knows all too well the devastating impacts of mining contamination, as we are still grappling with the environmental and health consequences from mining activities over a century ago. The scars left behind serve as a stark reminder of what is at stake,” Pecos Mayor Telesfor Benavidez said in a statement.

“This two-year pause on new mining claims allows us to safeguard our water, land and

way of life while prioritizing the health and safety of our residents. The Pecos River is the heart of our community, sustaining agriculture, outdoor recreation and clean drinking water for future generations.”

The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission also decided to protect Pecos headwaters, as well as water in the Rio Grande, Rio Chama, Cimarron and Jemez watersheds on Tuesday by designating 250 miles as outstanding national resource waters under the Clean Water Act. The decision protects those waters from degradation, with exemptions for specific activities like acequia operations or watershed restoration projects.

When Clean Water Act jurisdiction shrunk after the 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, it had a dramatic impact on New Mexico’s waters, according to Steven Fry, policy and project specialist with nonprofit Amigos Bravos.

“We have so many intermittent, ephemeral streams, and so up to 95% of our waters and about 85% of our wetlands lost protections when that decision came down. And because we don’t have a state program, all those waters could suddenly be polluted into without needing a permit,” Fry said.

Mining and the Pecos River

Mining started near the northern New Mexico Village of Pecos in the 1890s. In pursuit of lead, copper, zinc, gold and silver, American Metal Co. opened the Tererro Mine in the early 1900s in Pecos Canyon. The mining process used acid and left behind piles of waste rock.

“Every time it rains, that acid drainage gets into Willow Creek, and Willow Creek is about 100 yards from the main stream of the Pecos,” said Lela McFerrin, vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association. “Over the years, we had fish kills. Ninety thousand fish were killed in the 11-mile stretch that goes from the old mine down to the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery, which is still in existence.”

Cleaning up the area cost the company and the state millions, McFerrin said.

In 2019, an Australian mining company filed for a permit to explore mineral deposits near Jones Hill, 8 miles southeast of the Tererro Mine site. The community responded by organizing, McFerrin said, trying to protect the area from more mining.

“Water is the blood of our Pueblo and all nearby communities. We cannot place our life-giving waters in the hands of foreign-owned mining corporations,” Pueblo of Tesuque Gov. Milton Herrera said in a statement.

All that organizing has also been backed by New Mexico’s federal congressional delegation. In 2024, Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández introduced the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which would permanently protect the withdrawal area in Santa Fe and San Miguel counties from new mineral claims. All five members of the Democratic

congressional delegation welcomed the temporary protection announcement.

The two-year withdrawal is only the first step in a long process to protect the area from more mining, according to McFerrin.

Home to the state fish

The Upper Pecos watershed is an important source of clean water for downstream communities such as the Village of Pecos, said Dan Roper, New Mexico state lead for nonprofit Trout Unlimited. It is also one of the most popular places in the state for outdoor recreation and trout fishing, he said.

“The watershed is home to a unique population of Rio Grande cutthroat trout that is New Mexico’s state fish. And so in recent years, it’s been a priority area for New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to restore native trout populations,” Roper said.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife decided this week not to list the Rio Grande cutthroat trout as endangered, in part because of the significant effort that state and federal agencies have put in to protect the species. New Mexico only has two native trout species.

State clean water protections

Environmental advocates also celebrated permanent state protection of 250 miles of water in northern and central New Mexico watersheds this week.

“We’re often so focused, especially in the summer months, on whether there is water or not in our rivers that we don’t think about how important it is to make sure the water that we do have is clean and of high quality,” said Brittany Fallon, a policy manager with Western Resource Advocates.

The new outstanding national resource waters designation from the Water Quality Control Commission applies to water quality. The designation does not impact water rights or existing land uses. It means when people apply for permits to build near the waters or do mining near the waters, they have to demonstrate they will not hurt water quality, Fry said.

“These are the critical headwater streams that are protecting our main stem rivers. They provide exceptional habitat for wildlife and recreation,” Fry said. “A lot of these streams are upstream of communities that use irrigation or drinking water supplies. They’re really the lifeblood of our watersheds, and so having the headwater streams be protected ensures that downstream water quality is also improved.”

New Mexico is one of three states that does not have a state service water permitting program. Instead, it relies on the EPA to issue discharge permits. But in 2023, the Clean Water Act’s jurisdiction shrunk. So, there has been a push from environmental advocates to

create a new state program to start doing some of that permitting.

Several bills will be considered in the upcoming state legislative session to help create that program, Fry said.

“But we’re still a few years away from actual implementation, and so this is a mechanism that we’re using to protect these waters in the short term,” Fry said.

Federal water quality protections could be further diminished under another Donald Trump presidency. In his first term, Trump revised the Navigable Water Protection Rule in an attempt to narrow which waters are protected under the Clean Water Act. The president-elect also campaigned on deregulation in the most recent election cycle.

“Our federal protections are no longer guaranteed, and if we can shore those up at the state level, all the better for New Mexicans,” Fallon said.

https://www.abqjournal.com/news/article_86be7130-b991-11ef-8164-3f2524bfd44f.html



Secretary of the Interior temporarily withdraws Pecos watershed from mining claims

By Isaac Cruz

December 13, 2024

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland has initiated a two-year segregation period for the upper Pecos Watershed in Santa Fe. This move protects about 165,000 acres of public lands from new mining claims and new federal mineral leases.

The Bureau of Land Management says it is now working with the U.S. Forest Service to propose that the secretary implement a 20-

year withdrawal to help secure the area's water and air quality, cultural resources, wildlife habitats and more. That proposed withdrawal would protect lands in San Miguel and Santa Fe Counties, including Dalton Canyon, Macho Canyon, Wild Horse Creek, Indian Creek and Doctor Creek. The Bureau of Land Management says it will be opening a 90-day public comment period on that proposal.

<https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/secretary-of-the-interior-temporarily-withdraws-pecos-watershed-from-mining-claims/>

Interior secretary announces 2-year hiatus on new mining claims on upper Pecos

By Alaina Mencinger

December 12, 2024

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced Thursday she is temporarily withdrawing a 165,000-acre portion of the upper Pecos watershed from further mining development, a decision applauded by watershed advocates who also worry it could be undone by the next president's administration.

The affected areas around the Pecos River's headwaters include land in Santa Fe and San Miguel counties and numerous tributaries north of the village of Pecos, including Wild Horse, Macho and Doctor creeks.

The scope is limited. The land would be withdrawn from new mining claims and new federal mining leases for just two years. But during that period, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service will kick off a process to examine whether to extend that withdrawal period by 20 years. The Forest Service manages most of the affected lands.

Existing "valid" mining claims would not be affected, according to the announcement.

Concerns about new mining in the Pecos exploded in 2019, when an Australian mining company proposed new mining development near Terrero. The company has since filed more than 200 mining claims.

The BLM and Forest Service proposal will be subject to a 90-day public comment period after an announcement is published in the *Federal Register*, which is expected in the coming days. But by the end of public comment, there will be a new secretary of the interior — President-elect Donald Trump has tapped North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum for the role.

Lawmakers want more

A permanent withdrawal would take an act of Congress. In 2023, Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández sponsored legislation in their respective chambers to do just that.

The full New Mexico delegation was quick to applaud Haaland's announcement — and urge the passage of the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which would permanently withdraw the 165,000 acres from mining development and create an 11,600-acre new wilderness area.

"This two-year protection will safeguard the lands, waters and way of life in the Pecos," Luján said in a statement. "I commend Secretary Haaland for her leadership on this issue, and I remain committed to passing the Pecos Watershed Protection Act to protect the parts Pecos Watershed from all mineral development and ensure future generations

can continue to benefit from this critical watershed.”

Dan Roper, New Mexico program lead for Trout Unlimited, said the “window is closing” on passing the bill in this Congress.

“We’re confident we’ll see a lot of New Mexicans engage in the public comment period in support of the mineral withdrawal, and this administrative effort will move forward, while people continue to push for permanent protections in Congress,” Roper said.

The area is one of the most popular trout fisheries in the state, Roper said, and has a significant population of Rio Grande cutthroat trout, an iconic New Mexico species that has seen its distribution diminish due to habitat loss and invasive species.

Roper said no hard rock mining is under way in the area affected by the hiatus, although mining companies have staked claims in the watershed.

‘It’s everything for us’

The legacy of mining in the Pecos is fraught. In the 1990s, a spill from a closed mine spewed contamination into the Pecos River, killing fish several miles downstream and affecting local water supplies.

“Our hope is that the effort to protect this watershed is something that can transcend administrations,” Roper said. “Since the beginning, this effort has been one of the most widely supported mineral withdrawals in our experience,” he said, adding that support comes from local landowners, individuals who hold acequia water rights,

the village of Pecos, two county commissioners and New Mexico’s entire delegation.

“There’s very robust support for protecting the headwaters of the Pecos River,” Roper said.

Earlier this week, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission unanimously voted to protect more than 250 miles of waterways around the state, including parts of the Pecos watershed, as Outstanding National Resource Waters under the federal Clean Water Act.

Ralph Vigil learned to swim in the Pecos River and grew up fishing in the area. He later became involved with acequias, leading the New Mexico Acequia Commission for about 14 years. He was heartened by Thursday’s news but wants to see a permanent protection put in place. And he has some concerns about what will happen to the effort once Trump takes office.

“It’s everything for us,” Vigil said. “It’s basically the lifeblood of our community.”

The 2019 Terrero mining proposal pulled together a diverse group of stakeholders to oppose the project, Vigil said; groups that once were “battling” now work together.

“As a farmer, I realized that I couldn’t farm and provide healthy food for my community and use water from my acequia if it was contaminated by mining again,” Vigil said. “In the past, I fought against some of these conservation groups that wanted to put wilderness in the Pecos. But I knew that we had to find a way to work together.”

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/interior-secretary-announces-2-year-hiatus-on-new-mining-claims-on-upper-pecos/article_7a915e54-b8ab-11ef-9831-a7e18793bbd5.html



Feds temporarily withdraw new mining claims and leases in New Mexico's Upper Pecos

By Danielle Prokop
December 12, 2024

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland paused new mining claims or leases for two years on 165,000 acres of public lands in northern New Mexico's Upper Pecos watershed Thursday, starting a process that could shield the area from mineral extraction for decades longer.

The pause allows time for the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service to jointly seek a 20-year ban on new mining claims in the area, which encompasses federal land in San Miguel and Santa Fe counties.

Halting new mining claims and leases would secure the region's water and air quality, cultural resources for the Pueblos of Jemez and Tesuque, maintain critical habitats and water for agriculture and communities, a press release from the Interior Department said.

The administrative action is the latest in a flurry of activity of approving [solar](#) and [wind projects](#) and [land transfers to tribal governments](#) in the waning days of President Joe Biden's presidency.

New Mexico's all-Democrat congressional delegation has introduced legislation for years seeking to permanently stop new mining in the region, which only Congress has the power to do. The most recent was [S.](#)

[3033](#) brought by Democratic Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján. The bill passed a crucial committee vote, but its future is uncertain.

Heinrich called the temporary protection a "major victory" for groups concerned about the area.

"The Upper Pecos Watershed has an unfortunate history of poorly managed mining and development projects that have put New Mexicans and our ways of life and cultures at risk," Heinrich said in a written statement.

An important caveat is that already-existing mining rights are not impacted by the pause, meaning mining may continue in the area. The Interior Department's pause does add another step for mining companies with rights to get approval – called a validity exam.

An Australian mining company, [New World Resources](#), has proposed exploratory drilling in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Their proposal includes the old Terrero mining operation and nearby deposits, which had a [devastating spill in 1991](#), five decades after it closed and that New Mexico agencies are [still cleaning up](#).

The Terrero project has not received any permits, yet, as federal decisions on their mining operations were delayed by the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon fires. For any drilling to start, the plan still requires approval from federal and state agencies. The Stop Terrero Mine Coalition – which includes

agriculture, local and tribal governments, conservation and hunting groups – said in 2023 they are concerned the project has more than 230 mining claims in the greater Pecos headwaters.

<https://sourcenm.com/briefs/feds-temporarily-withdraw-new-mining-claims-and-leases-in-new-mexicos-upper-pecos/>



Federal government begins process of protecting Pecos River watershed from future mining claims

The latest developments could lead to a 20-year pause on mining in the area

By Hannah Grover

December 12, 2024

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, in coordination with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, withdrew the Pecos River watershed from mining claims for two years on Thursday, and paved the way for a 20-year withdrawal.

The mineral withdrawal applies to 165,000 acres of public lands in the Upper Pecos watershed near Santa Fe, much of which is national forest lands. This includes multiple tributaries of the Pecos River including Dalton Canyon, Macho Canyon, Wild Horse Creek, Indian Creek and Doctor Creek.

Haaland has directed the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service to begin a process that could lead to a 20-year pause on new mining claims.

Community members have been pushing for the end of new mining in the Pecos watershed for decades out of concerns that future mines may harm the riparian ecosystem by degrading water quality.

“While mining will continue to play a role in New Mexico’s economy, this announcement is a recognition that some places are simply too special to mine. Pecos Canyon and the headwaters of the Pecos River is one such place,” Dan Roper, New Mexico state lead for Trout Unlimited, said in a press release. “This area is one of the state’s most popular fishing destinations, and the watershed is an important water source for downstream communities and irrigators.”

These concerns are not unfounded. In 1991, a spill from a closed mine killed fish in an 11-mile stretch of the Pecos River. In recent years, a company [acquired mining claims](#) in the area.

The Pecos River’s tributaries and nearby wetlands were added to New Mexico’s list of Outstanding National Resource Waters in 2022 and members of the state’s congressional delegation introduced legislation in the past that would lead to a permanent withdrawal from mineral leasing.

Only Congress can permanently stop mining in the area.

Earlier this month, all five members of the congressional delegation requested that the U.S. Forest Service take steps to prevent future mining in the Upper Pecos River watershed.

“The Pecos River is not only an essential source of water for communities throughout New Mexico but is also deeply tied to our state’s cultural heritage,” they wrote in a letter to Randy Moore, the Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service.

“Traditional acequias — community-operated irrigation canals — rely on the river for water, supporting agriculture that sustains families and livelihoods. Pueblos use the land for fishing and hunting as well as ceremonial purposes. Any contamination of the watershed from mining would directly harm water quality, threatening local economies, fish and wildlife, and the health of the people living along the Pecos. These rural communities have made it clear: they do not want mining operations that could endanger the environment, their way of life, and the long-term sustainability of the region.”

<https://citydesk.org/2024/federal-government-begins-process-of-protecting-pecos-river-watershed-from-future-mining-claims/>



Federal agencies give nod to bill banning mining around Pecos

New legislation would increase wilderness areas in Santa Fe National Forest, but unclear its future impact on Terrero mine fight

By Danielle Prokop

October 26, 2023

Two federal agencies committed their support Wednesday of a bill brought by the New Mexico Congressional delegation to ban mining development in nearly 163,000 acres of federal land in the Upper Pecos watershed.

Most of the land – 161,162 acres proposed for withdrawal – is owned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service in the Santa Fe National Forest surrounding the town of Pecos. Another 1,600 acres have mineral rights managed by the U.S. Interior Department’s Bureau of Land Management. It would also designate another 11,599 acres as part of the Thompson Peak Wilderness Area.

Deputy secretaries from both agencies gave their written support for [U.S. Senate Bill 3033](#) at Wednesday’s Public Lands, Forests and Mining subcommittee hearing.

In her opening remarks, Principal Deputy Director Nada Wolff Culver said the withdrawal and protection of Pecos wilderness would align with “the administration’s conservation and environmental justice goals.”

Wolff Culver’s position marks a change from the previous administration, when Bureau of Land Management officials [testified against the bill](#).

Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) noted the area’s farmers, ranchers, hunters and nearby Pueblos are “united by their reliance” on the Pecos river and the forested watershed.

“The last thing this area needs is new mines that would pose a threat to the Pecos River itself,” Heinrich said. Local governments including Jemez Pueblo, Tesuque Pueblo, San Miguel and Santa Fe counties and the Village of Pecos, have written letters or passed resolutions supporting the effort.

This is the third time Heinrich has introduced the bill. He’s joined this session by co-sponsor Sen. Ben Ray Luján. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández put forward an identical bill in the House.

Old wounds, new threats

The region has a history. The Terrero Mine and its mill operated between 1927 and 1939 on the Pecos River, pulling mostly zinc and lead, but also copper, silver and gold from the mountains.

The mine's most devastating spill came 50 years after its closure. Floods from heavy snowmelt in 1991 sent tailings with sulfuric acid and metals downriver. The spill buried Willow creek in sludge and killed tens of thousands of fish in the Pecos River and Lisboa Springs hatchery. The event pushed federal officials to declare it a Superfund site.

Cleanup has taken decades and [cost tens of millions of dollars](#). The state was [still paying \\$80,000 per year](#) in 2019-2022 according to a New Mexico Environment Department presentation.

In 2019, mining company Comexico LLC, which is owned by Australian company New World Cobalt, [announced a proposal for "exploratory drilling"](#) in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. This would include the old Terrero mine operation and nearby deposits. New World Cobalt told its investors in April 2019 that mineral potential in New Mexico was "an outstanding opportunity" to develop on adjacent potentially gold-rich deposits.

New World Cobalt officials called the Terrero acquisition a "potential game-changer" that represented "unrivaled new growth and development opportunity."

Even if withdrawn, the land would still be subject to existing rights. In its written comment, the U.S. Forest Service noted that "mean[s] mining and other associated activities can continue within the withdrawn

area as long as valid rights were established at or before the withdrawal and remain valid."

The Stop Terrero Mine Coalition – which includes diverse groups from agriculture, local and tribal governments, conservation and hunting groups – said this year they are concerned Comexico [has more than 230 mining claims](#) in the greater Pecos headwaters.

The Terrero project has [not received any permits](#), yet. The process has largely stopped, waiting on federal agencies to issue their reports on the proposals.

The U.S. Forest Service has not issued an environmental assessment, said Sidney Hill, a spokesperson for the New Mexico Energy Minerals Natural Resources Department.

"Once the report is released, [the Minerals and Mining Division] can proceed with its technical review of the project and schedule its public hearing," Hill wrote in an email.

In June, the New Mexico delegation sent a [letter](#) to both agencies to temporarily limit activities – such as hard-rock mining – in the Upper Pecos watershed.

In a response [letter](#), Forest Chief Randy Moore said the agency was "evaluating the potential risk of mineral development in the Upper Pecos Watershed and whether our current laws and regulations are adequate for its protection."

<https://sourcenm.com/2023/10/26/federal-agencies-give-nod-to-bill-banning-mining-around-pecos/>



Legislation would end mineral leasing in the Upper Pecos watershed

By Hannah Grover
October 11, 2023

U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján introduced [legislation](#) that seeks to withdraw portions of the Pecos River watershed in northern New Mexico from federal mineral leasing.

The Democratic senators who represent New Mexico cited a mine spill that occurred in the 1990s and killed fish in a more than 11 mile stretch of the river as a reason why the withdrawal is needed. That mine spill resulted in lengthy and expensive cleanup.

“The Pecos Valley is home to a remarkably diverse community of farmers, producers, hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists who are united by the beauty and health of the Pecos River and the expansive watersheds that feed into it,” Heinrich said in a press release. “Unfortunately, this region has a history of poorly managed mining and development projects that have put these New Mexicans, and their way of life and cultural identity, at risk.”

He said the legislation would prevent future mine spills.

“That is how we make sure this watershed can remain healthy and intact for future generations,” Heinrich said.

Heinrich has also championed legislation in the past to update mining laws that have been on the books since the 1800s.

Luján also described the watershed as a valuable resource for New Mexicans.

“The Pecos Watershed is a vital resource for northern New Mexico communities, and it’s critical to protect and maintain the watershed for generations to come,” he said.

U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, a Democrat who represents the district where the withdrawal would occur, is sponsoring the bill on the House side.

“As the Pecos River flows from high mountain snowmelt, it provides the water needed for life, for the recreational and cultural traditions of the surrounding valley and the communities it traverses for miles,” she said. “In New Mexico, we know that agua es vida – water is life, and we must protect the Pecos from any new mining toxic waste

spills. I stand with the people who live and rely on the waters of the Pecos. The Pecos Watershed Protection Act will ensure that dangerous mining accidents do not happen again and our watersheds remain healthy for generations.”

This is not the first time such legislation has been introduced. Heinrich initially introduced the Pecos Watershed Protection Act in 2020.

<https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2023/10/11/legislation-would-end-mineral-leasing-in-the-upper-pecos-watershed/>

N.M. lawmakers reintroduce bill that would ban mining in Pecos watershed

By Scott Wyland

October 9, 2023

New Mexico delegates are reviving a bill to bar mining in the Pecos watershed, partly in response to renewed opposition to a foreign company seeking to extract metals in an area where a defunct mine's massive toxic spill is a harsh, lingering memory.

Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján are reintroducing the Pecos Watershed Protection Act in the Senate, while U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández is pushing a House version of the bill, with the hope it will gain more traction this time.

Their efforts come a month after a letter from the Santa Fe County Commission urged them to revive the bill to ban new mining claims in the watershed.

The immediate aim is to block Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of New World Resources of Australia, from getting a mining permit. Comexico applied for a state permit several years ago to do exploratory drilling and has since obtained mining claims for 4,000 acres.

The region still lives in the shadow of a closed mine spilling toxic waste into the river in the early 1990s, killing fish for 11 miles, contaminating local water supplies and driving away tourism. The recovery was long, slow and costly.

“Unfortunately, this region has a history of poorly managed mining and development projects that have put these New Mexicans and their way of life and cultural identity at risk,” Heinrich said in a statement.

The bill would help prevent future mining accidents, he said, adding “that is how we make sure this watershed can remain healthy and intact for future generations.”

Heinrich first sponsored the bill in late 2020. He teamed up in June 2021 with fellow Democrats Luján, Leger Fernández and Rep. Melanie Stansbury of Albuquerque to advance the legislation, but it died in a Senate committee.

An anti-mining bill would have a tough go in the Republican-controlled House. But the congressional delegates think it's worth another try, especially with state leaders and community activists strongly behind the protections.

The Stop Tererro Mine Coalition wants the ban to cover nearly 170,000 acres of federal land in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Santa Fe and San Miguel counties and the village of Pecos have passed resolutions in support of barring mineral extraction in the watershed. Several lawmakers and Gov.

Michelle Lujan Grisham also have voiced support for the no-mining zone.

“We must protect the Pecos from any new mining toxic waste spills,” Leger Fernández said in a statement.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/n-m-lawmakers-reintroduce-bill-that-would-ban-mining-in-pecos-watershed/article_476768f0-66b5-11ee-ba90-0f741d2ae0c0.html

Coalition rallies support to oppose exploratory mine near Pecos

By Nicholas Gilmore
September 13, 2023

Hilario Romero, who has ties to Northern New Mexico going back generations, said he doesn't eat fish from the Pecos River anymore.

"It's so sad to say that," Romero told a crowd at Santa Fe Community College on Wednesday evening. "I throw them back."

Romero is concerned about contaminants in the river from past mining operations that stretch back to the 19th century. He — and many others — are worried a proposed mining venture could ruin the river for future generations.

On Wednesday, they set out to convince Santa Feans to join their cause to stop a proposed Tererro Mine, arguing it could pose risks for the Santa Fe River watershed as well.

The coalition of community and environmental advocacy groups hoping to stop another mineral extraction project in the Santa Fe National Forest near Pecos includes the Sierra Club, the state Acequia Commission, the Santa Fe Watershed Association, the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and others.

"This is a historic coalition," Acequia Commission Chairman Ralph Vigil told

attendees at the town hall event. "Acequia leaders, traditional community members, tribal members — because we care about our water. ... *Agua es vida.*"

Plans for exploratory drilling in the area were announced in 2019, when a U.S. subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd. submitted an application for a permit to the state Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. The company hopes to perform exploratory drilling to determine levels of gold, copper, zinc, lead and silver in an area southwest of Tererro, near Indian Creek.

The application is pending, a department spokesman said Wednesday, adding the department is awaiting an environmental assessment from the U.S. Forest Service. After that is done, the department will need to determine whether the application is complete, hold public hearings and seek approval from the Forest Service.

Just for an exploratory drilling permit, the application still awaits the better part of a "long process" before any decision will be made, the spokesman said.

The project will also require a permit from Santa Fe County.

The coalition is aiming for federal action known as an “administrative mineral withdrawal,” which would prevent new mining activities for minerals in the area. That could be done administratively, for 20 years, by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, or permanently if Congress passes a law.

Four members of the state’s congressional delegation wrote a letter to Haaland in 2021 asking her to take action “until permanent protection can be secured legislatively.” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham also expressed her opposition to the proposed mine in a letter to the Forest Service in 2019.

Both letters noted contamination from previous mining activities, including a 1991 snowmelt that brought contaminants from mining waste into the Pecos River, killing around 100,000 fish. Lujan Grisham estimated the cleanup to have cost \$36 million so far.

Haaland’s office has declined to comment on the issue.

Janice Varela, a San Miguel County commissioner who grew up in the area and has advocated against new mining in the Pecos River watershed for years, said reclamation of the site, which includes groundwater sampling and removal of contaminated soil, is ongoing.

A liner was installed decades ago to collect pollutants has seen the end of its useful life, she said.

“The liner has a 30-year life expectancy and that time is up,” Varela said. “It’s really hard to see your homeland destroyed for greed because they just don’t give a crap.”

Sally Paez, an attorney with New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, said new mineral claims are being made that are getting “closer and closer” to the ridge that separates the Pecos River watershed and the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed. The group has hired a hydrologist to study the area, but it still doesn’t know if there is an underground connection between the two water supplies.

Even if Santa Fe’s watershed isn’t directly impacted, Paez said, the Pecos River is “everybody’s cherished playground,” and contamination could harm the region.

A major problem, Paez said, is the Mining Act of 1872, which allows rights to mineral deposits on federal lands for exploration and extraction without the payment of royalties. She said there is interest in changing the law among many of the Pecos advocates and some in the state’s congressional delegation; New Mexico’s two U.S. senators [introduced legislation earlier this year](#) to overhaul the law.

“Under the current rules, we could go out right now with a headlamp and stake our claim,” Paez said. “Once you’ve done exploratory drilling, our agencies don’t really have the power to say no [to mining].”

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/coalition-rallies-support-to-oppose-exploratory-mine-near-pecos/article_a4cc832e-51af-11ee-9273-2b8bfd89786.html

Santa Fe County Commission supports Pecos mining ban

By Maya Hilty

September 12, 2023

A movement to protect the Pecos River watershed has been gaining momentum since 2019, when a foreign mining company applied for a state permit to begin exploratory drilling for metals.

The Stop Tererro Mine Coalition wants Congress or U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to prohibit mining on nearly 170,000 acres of federal land in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, most of it managed by the Santa Fe National Forest.

“Nobody wants to see a mine here,” coalition member Ralph Vigil said. “Nobody wants it at all.” Vigil chairs the New Mexico Acequia Commission and owns a small organic farm.

He described the fight for a mineral withdrawal as an uphill battle.

“You know politics,” Vigil said. “But I think we have what we need.”

The Santa Fe County Commission on Tuesday voted to send a letter to New Mexico’s congressional delegates, urging them to reintroduce the Pecos Watershed Protection Act.

U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan, and U.S. Reps. Teresa Leger

Fernández and Melanie Stansbury, all Democrats, introduced the bill in 2021 to permanently ban new mineral claims in the Pecos watershed. The bill died in a Senate Committee. A growing number of advocates hope for a better outcome if the measure gets a second chance.

The commissioners’ letter also asked the delegates to designate a swath of land near the Pecos River headwaters as wilderness.

Garrett VeneKlasen, a conservation director with New Mexico Wild, said Tuesday the designation would give it the “highest level of landscape protection” and would prevent mining.

Adjacent to the popular Pecos Wilderness, the proposed Thompson Peak Wilderness has been recommended for designation by the Santa Fe National Forest. That’s because it is an untouched and roadless area, said Lela McFerrin, a Stop Tererro Mine Coalition member and vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association.

The proposed wilderness area also covers many of the mining claims filed by Comexico LLC, McFerrin said.

Comexico is a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining firm New World Resources that has gained ownership of mining claims across over 4,000 acres in the area.

The company's plans to mine for minerals spurred protest among Pecos residents in 2019, largely over concerns about the effects to their water supplies. And in 2021, a national nonprofit listed the Pecos River as one of the most endangered in the nation because of the threat of new mining.

The commission's action came ahead of a town hall meeting the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition is holding Wednesday at Santa Fe Community College to rally people around the preservation effort, another step toward building support.

Santa Fe and San Miguel counties and the village of Pecos passed resolutions this summer in support of a mineral withdrawal.

Several lawmakers in the state also have called for the mineral withdrawal, as did Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham in May.

The County Commission and others also have asked Haaland to temporarily ban new mineral claims on the land, which she could do for up to 20 years. A spokeswoman said

Tuesday the Interior Department had no comment on Haaland's position.

In their letter to New Mexico's congressional delegates, commissioners wrote, "The risks to headwaters of the Pecos River from mineral exploration and development are both real and urgent."

The letter continued, "Contamination from past mining in the region and impacts on water quality have long been concerns for Pecos Valley residents. In the early 1990s, toxic waste from past mining activities near Tererro entered the river and contaminated community water supplies, caused a massive fish kill, and drove away tourists, resulting in an economic downturn."

In its resolution declaring support for the Pecos, the commission noted environmental devastation wrought by the old Tererro mine dating back to the 1880s.

Protecting the land is essential, the resolution states, because it provides water to communities and farmers; holds "deep cultural significance" to pueblos; provides outdoor recreation, including fishing and camping; and provides habitat for wildlife.

"The health and well-being of these watersheds protect all of us," Commission Chairwoman Anna Hansen said.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/santa-fe-county-commission-supports-pecos-mining-ban/article_5415801a-4f5d-11ee-82e1-77755dcc233f.html



Lawmakers seek information about ending mining in the Upper Pecos

By Hannah Grover

June 11, 2023

Three members of New Mexico's congressional delegation are asking the U.S. Forest Service for procedural information as the agency for procedural information as the agency considers withdrawing the Upper Pecos watershed from mineral development.

U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, along with U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, sent a letter to the federal agency requesting information about how the Forest Service will assess the potential risks of future mining in the watershed.

The three requested in October that the area be withdrawn from mineral development.

In April, Forest Service Chief Randy Moore responded to the October request in the form of a letter.

“The Forest Service understands your concerns about mineral exploration in the Upper Pecos Watershed community and is currently assessing the need for an administrative withdrawal,” the letter states. “The Southwestern Region is evaluating the potential risk of mineral development in the

Upper Pecos Watershed and whether our current laws and regulations are adequate for its protection. Due to the complexity of mineral withdrawals, the anticipated timeline and outcome are uncertain. The Forest Service remains committed to protecting our valuable water resources and will keep you and your staff updated as more information becomes available.”

In Thursday's letter, the Democratic lawmakers asked for a “description of the steps involved and the criteria that will be used in the Forest Service's assessment” and also requested information about how the agency will engage with local stakeholders, including Tribes and elected officials, landowners, acequias, farmers, ranchers and business owners.

“Mining in and around sensitive watersheds has caused tragic consequences time and time again. In 1939, the original Tererro mine in the Upper Pecos Watershed was closed after 13 years of operation, but the damage was already done,” the lawmakers' letter states. “Decades of acidic runoff and heavy metal pollution ensued. In 1991, toxic runoff ran

into the Pecos River and a deadly concoction of sulfuric acid, aluminum, and zinc killed approximately 100,000 Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout and knee-capped the local economy.

Cleanup of the Superfund site has cost New Mexico and its taxpayers at least \$8 million and remediation is not close to done.”

<https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2023/06/11/lawmakers-seek-information-about-ending-mining-in-the-upper-pecos/>

Can a mine near the Pecos River be stopped?

By Alicia Inez Guzmán

January 19, 2023

“Pecos Mine Site Reclamation Project. No Trespassing,” the sign on the fence reads. As Ralph Vigil takes in the warning, he once again has a sinking feeling that the past is about to repeat itself.

Nearly 100 years ago, the old Tererro mine tore up this area, causing decades of harm to the forests, waterways and aquatic life. Standing amidst a landscape that has never fully healed, Vigil and other locals now turn their attention to the future. Eight miles from where they stand, a multinational corporation is hoping to mine untold tons of ore, threatening the fragile ecosystem once again. The name of the new venture: Tererro VMS Project.

“We gotta fight this,” Vigil says. “Our fight is for madre tierra.”

In June 2019, news of the proposal hit like a blow: Comexico, an American subsidiary of the Australian company New World Resources, sought to drill exploratory cores in the southern end of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, a remote and dense tangle of Ponderosa pines, douglas fir and rambling creeks about 15 miles north of Pecos. The landscape holds legendary trout streams and picture-postcard vistas. It also holds an estimated 5.7 million metric tons of gold, silver, zinc, copper and lead.

Exploration would start as a relatively small operation in the Santa Fe National Forest — spanning less than 10 acres — but a full-scale mine could eventually sprawl across hundreds or thousands more acres and overwhelm the winding two-lane highway with trucks and machinery commuting up and down the mountain.

Within a week of hearing about Comexico, Vigil — a Pecos resident, organic farmer and chairman of the New Mexico Acequia Commission — was sitting down with community members and environmentalists, sketching out a plan of resistance. The coalition that emerged was historic, in his words. Groups that didn’t normally see eye to eye — acequia advocates, Indigenous leaders, environmentalists, outdoorsmen and women and government officials — all joined together under one banner: Stop Tererro Mine.

The past, they believed, was a harbinger of what was to come. The old mine operated a mere 13 years before it was shuttered in 1939, but the damage it exacted endured for generations. Willow Creek, at the foot of Elk Mountain, ran the color of rust for decades owing to the unusable ore — or waste rock — that was left to languish along its banks. Periodic rains and spring thaws sent acidic runoff into nearby waterways, polluting them with heavy metals.

The most devastating day came in the spring of 1991, when the toxic runoff rushed into the Pecos River, the lifeblood of the region. Sulfuric acid, aluminum and zinc wiped out 90,000 Rio Grande cutthroat trout at the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery downstream and another 10,000 in the river. The disaster almost wiped out an entire local economy built around angling, hunting and camping.

A cleanup of that site, and of El Molino, a mill on the outskirts of Pecos, followed. The area was contaminated enough to be designated a federal Superfund site, but residents, public officials and others believed the cleanup could be done better — and without the stigma of a Superfund designation — if it was undertaken differently.

As a result, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), several other state agencies and Freeport-McMoRan, the company held responsible, agreed to a cleanup through a consent order. The remediation has cost New Mexico taxpayers at least \$8 million, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has estimated: “Money is spent annually on studies and sampling with no end in sight,” she added. Much has been restored in the past 30 years, but the process is still not complete.

Questions about the old mine have lingered ever since, including whether the contaminated water could have caused illness or death in downstream communities, like Pecos. But no health studies were ever conducted as part of the legal agreement, making it almost impossible to find out.

“Whether we’re Hispano, Pueblo, or just people who love to hunt and fish and hike, that’s what unites all of us around this thing: We all want to turn on the tap and not have

poison water,” said Garrett Vene Klasen, a Stop Tererro Mine coalition member and conservation director for NM Wild, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the state’s wilderness.

Core goals

Hiking along a rough Forest Service road by Indian Creek — one of several waterways near the proposed exploration site — coalition member Stephen Nelson recalls how the water ran yellow in the late 1970s, during Conoco’s exploration of the so-called Jones Hill Deposit, named for 19th-century prospector Johnie Jones.

Conoco ended up abandoning the project. But its explorations rendered much of the data that Comexico is now using to direct its own venture, which involves drilling an estimated 30 bore holes — up to 4,000 feet deep — into Jones Hill in the first phase. The long-term goal is to exploit all of the region’s many riches.

Comexico declined to answer specific questions from Searchlight New Mexico; the company will address public comments at a hearing in the future, exploration manager Pat Siglin stated by email.

But according to Comexico’s website, “the company’s ultimate objective” is to develop a “centrally located processing facility that is fed by ore from multiple deposits” and to lay the foundations of a “significant” new camp. To put it into perspective, Comexico intends to extract more than double the amount of ore that was processed at Tererro all those years ago.

The area holds undeniable promise. According to Dennis McQuillan, a retired geologist who worked at NMED and participated in Tererro’s long-term

remediation, the “gold-rich Jones Hill ore body is part of a cluster of volcanic massive-sulfide (VMS) ore bodies in the region that are collectively the largest of their kind in New Mexico.”

Besides gold, the area holds deposits of copper, zinc, lead and silver, all forged by ancient volcanoes over millennia. And all are in demand. The United States Geological Survey includes zinc — used in building materials like gutters and galvanized nails — in its 2022 list of critical minerals. (The Biden administration recently recommended expanding domestic mining of these minerals to combat the “over-reliance on foreign sources.”)

Traditional Pueblo cultural sites, acequias, a vibrant recreation industry, habitats that support at-risk and endangered species — all would be imperiled if the project moves forward, coalition members argue. They cite the old Tererro Mine as a cautionary tale.

“Mining would benefit a rich corporation and a few people that are gonna make money on it, but not the community and not our heirs in our future,” said Janice Varela, a local watchdog and San Miguel County commissioner. “Our livelihoods are at stake.”

Old law rears its head

The coalition’s battle isn’t just against Comexico, though. It’s also against the General Mining Act of 1872, which grants the right to prospect and mine on federal lands. The majority of the company’s mining claims are within such federal property — the Santa Fe National Forest.

“That mining law is what needs to be changed, because no tribes were invited to the table when it was made,” said Michael Martinez, a member of Ohkay Owingeh

Pueblo and the Reserved Treaty Rights Lands Coordinator for Tesuque Pueblo. “They would’ve all said no.”

Lands stretching all the way to Lake Katherine in the Pecos Wilderness make up a broader “Pueblo world,” said Joseph “Brophy” Toledo, a spiritual leader at Jemez Pueblo who also has roots in Tesuque Pueblo and the historic Pecos Pueblo. Ceremonies are still performed there, Toledo, an herbalist, added. “That is a very sacred place to my people.”

“Our anatomy is the same as Mother Earth’s. And when you look at yourself as an Earth person, everything that is on Mother Earth is part of you. When mining companies come in and they start drilling, it’s like them drilling through you... They’re going through all your veins, your arteries, and they’re going through the heart.”

Signed by Ulysses S. Grant to encourage westward expansion, the 1872 law is widely reviled and has been characterized as a “sustained, systemic swindle.” But it’s been baked into the system for so long that it’s almost impervious to revisions. In 2020, the All Pueblo Council of Governors passed a resolution supporting “federal legislation to reform the 1872 Mining Act to protect Pueblo lands, sacred sites and water resources.” But the U.S. House bill they were backing failed to make it out of committee.

“The law really needs to be improved so that mining rights and claims can be denied when the environmental consequences are so high,” said Sally Paez, staff attorney at NM Wild.

But until Congress overhauls it — a revamp the Biden administration admits is needed — the archaic law will continue to rear its head. It did so last year when the Santa Fe National

Forest proposed an 11,600-acre Thompson Peak wilderness management area that would have barred development on 1,300 acres claimed by Comexico. The company challenged the decision by evoking the takings clause of the Fifth Amendment, or the “taking of property rights without just compensation,” as its November 2021 objection read.

The effect of the objection was chilling. The Santa Fe National Forest’s original proposal would have largely prevented Comexico’s access to its minerals. After Comexico’s challenge, however, the SFNF cited a discrepancy in its analysis and accommodated the company’s claims. In the agency’s final record of decision, the Thompson Peak proposed wilderness had shrunk by 2,000 acres.

“Comexico is asserting the right to prospect, and federal mining laws and regulations require the Forest Service to allow mineral exploration and development on National Forest System lands,” Julie Ann Overton, SFNF spokesperson, explained by email. “We have no choice.”

‘Death by a thousand cuts’

The 1872 Mining Act is a formidable foe, but the Stop Tererro Mine coalition has alighted on a strategy to fight it, according to Lela McFerrin, vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association. The plan is to weigh down the largely bureaucratic permitting and approval process with even more bureaucracy.

Among the actions to date: In 2019, Santa Fe County passed a mining ordinance with strong environmental protections; San Miguel County followed suit in 2021. Numerous tribes — from the Jemez, Tesuque and Santa Clara Pueblos to the Hopi and the

Comanche — registered disapproval or called for government-to-government consultations to stop the project. Along with local community organizations, they demanded a full environmental assessment, which significantly slowed the permitting process.

A long list of top government officials also lined up in opposition. The state’s congressional delegation is currently lobbying for an “administrative mineral withdrawal” from the Department of the Interior, which would take any future mineral claims off the table and prevent other companies from following in Comexico’s footsteps. And in 2022, the Pecos River and all its tributaries were designated Outstanding National Resource Waters, “the highest level of protection against degradation” under New Mexico’s water quality standards.

In addition, the coalition is developing a proposal that includes a package of land protections. One involves a wilderness designation at least 4,000 acres larger than SFNF’s recommended Thompson Peak area. Once completed, that proposal will go directly to New Mexico’s congressional delegation to be crafted into legislation (ultimately, Congress will decide the extent of the protections). Going to court isn’t off the table either.

“We call it death by a thousand cuts,” McFerrin said.

As of now, Comexico’s plan of operations is on hold because Santa Fe National Forest staffers, preoccupied with the Hermit’s Peak Calf Canyon wildfire, have not been able to complete the environmental assessment.

The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department will render its

final decision on Comexico's exploration only after the SFNF releases that report and a public hearing is held. And while the SFNF can't prohibit mining outright, the agency can implement measures that would mitigate its environmental impacts, Overton said. That can include, for example, limiting exploration to times in the year when the Mexican spotted owl isn't breeding.

In the end, approval for the exploration is all but guaranteed, come spring or summer, as James Duran, acting forest supervisor of the SFNF, assured Comexico in a letter last August. But even if the proposal is approved, the coalition is hoping that at least one of its roadblocks will mire the process in so much red tape, or make it so costly, that mining ultimately becomes impractical.

Aerial views

In early December, Ralph Vigil invited coalition members to board a six-seater plane that would take them above Jones Hill and neighboring Thompson Peak, Comexico's primary targets for exploration. Tribal members, acequia parciantes, congressional staffers, county commissioners, and environmentalists crammed into EcoFlight's Cessna 210, in one of three waves.

As people milled around the Santa Fe Airport lobby waiting to board, the conversation turned to wilderness designations. These serve to keep landscapes wild and untouched while preserving cultural resources and

sacred sites, according to NM Wild. But while the designations keep out motorized vehicles and machines, some say they have historically kept out locals, too. Case in point, the Pecos Wilderness. Its designation made it almost impossible to gather firewood — and thin trees and underbrush — unless one wanted to ride in on horseback with a hand saw.

And lack of thinning by the U.S. Forest Service both within and outside of the wilderness has left the area with unchecked growth. From the skies this was obvious. Passages of dense greenery — too dense, many commented — alternated with stretches of desolation, bald areas wiped out by one wave after another of catastrophic wildfire.

The coalition doesn't want Aldo Leopold's version of wilderness — untrammeled and unpeopled. What members seek instead are lands that thrive because they are accessible, not to mention safe from another chapter of extraction.

Until then, it's painful to watch distant companies like New World Resources be given the benefit of the 1872 Mining Act, coalition members lamented. Many felt as if the Australian company had more say on the future of their lands and water than they did.

"They're not here. Their roots aren't embedded in the ground," said Martinez. "Ours are."

<https://searchlightnm.org/can-a-mine-near-the-pecos-river-be-stopped/>



State gives ‘outstanding’ designation to northern NM waters, enhancing pollution rules

By Megan Gleason

July 13, 2022

The state will soon enact heightened protection against any unauthorized water pollution or other damages across hundreds of miles of rivers and streams in northern New Mexico.

On Tuesday morning, the Water Quality Control Commission, a state water pollution control agency, unanimously passed the designation of Outstanding National Resource Waters for the Upper Pecos watershed as well as segments of Rio Grande, Rio Hondo, Lake Fork, East Fork Jemez River, San Antonio Creek and Redondo Creek.

This is the highest level of protection against water degradation the state can give.

These bodies of water will have unique protection against degradation — anything that harms water quality, pollutes, drops heavy metals, increases temperature or clouds water.

Pollution levels that were allowed per state health standards prior to this passage are no longer allowed. And anyone found violating these standards can be fined or taken to court by the state.

These efforts have been years in the making. A petition must be filed with the Water

Quality Control Commission for any consideration for waters to be classified and protected as Outstanding National Resource Waters, and petitions for these waters stem back to 2020 and 2021.

Tannis Fox, senior attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center, was counsel to the authors for the separate but similar petitions. She said about 180 miles of the Upper Pecos watershed and around 125 miles of other streams and rivers in northern New Mexico will be protected.

Petitioners

The Village of Pecos, San Miguel County, the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, the New Mexico Acequia Association and Molino de la Isla Organics LLC authored the Upper Pecos watershed [petition](#). The Outdoor Recreation Division of the N.M. Department of Economic Development [petitioned](#) the other protected water body segments.

One of the petitioners, Director of N.M. Outdoor Recreation Division Axie Navas, said this change could be used to help get more funding to protect watersheds or even as a marketing tool so people know New Mexicans are proud of their waters.

Any time there could be impacts to water quality, such as through restoration, road construction or discharges, organizations

must go through the Environment Department or Water Quality Control Commission to get permission, Fox said.

Other human activities that could hurt water quality outlined in the petitions include mining, waste disposal, development and transportation. One of the petitioners, Ralph Vigil, owner of the organic farm Molino de la Isla Organics, said the Upper Pecos watershed has been threatened by mining in the past.

Mining operations in the late 1920s and early '30s severely damaged the Upper Pecos watershed, he said, killing fish and contaminating the water.

Now, there's another proposed exploratory mine near Thompson Peak that wants to extract minerals out of the watershed. This designation will protect against that.

"We had to put some protections so that this doesn't happen to us again, especially from the mining community," Vigil said.

Pre-existing uses are allowed to continue, Fox said. Some examples Vigil gave include irrigation and grazing. In addition, the Village of Taos Ski Valley has a wastewater discharge permit in the Rio Hondo but will be allowed to continue that discharge, Fox said.

Significance of the waters

A body of water can receive the designation if it [provides](#) one of any number of benefits, like being a cultural resource, existing within a national or state park or not being significantly altered by human activity.

"These streams represent some of the most ecologically diverse waters in our state, as well as some of the most aesthetically beautiful and recreated on streams in the

state," Fox said. "All of these waters are just majestic."

The Upper Pecos watershed area is sacred to Pueblos nearby as well as other inhabitants of the area, Vigil said. His family has been in New Mexico for eight generations.

"It's a special and sacred place to us with our acequia systems and our agricultural practices and our cultural practices," Vigil said. "So I know there's a lot of people that this river means a lot to as far as recreation is concerned as well."

Pueblos' water importance

The Upper Pecos watershed provides water and is culturally significant to the Pecos Pueblo and the Pueblo of Jemez, according to the petition for the Upper Pecos watershed.

The Jemez River waters are considered culturally sacred to the Jemez and Santa Clara Pueblos, and headwaters are a water source for farms on the Jemez, Zia and Santa Ana Pueblos, according to the Outdoor Recreation Division petition. Waters of the Rio Grande, Rio Hondo and Lake Fork are sacred water sources for the Taos Pueblo, as well.

Navas said she was honored to work with all the counties that take pride and ownership in their bodies of water.

"We're really excited about it because so much of these waters, the portions of these rivers are just enormously significant to individuals who live in these communities, traditional practices, cultural practices and then of course the outdoor recreation companies that make their livelihood from taking people out on adventures on these pristine waters," Navas said.

There was a significant amount of public support. For the northern New Mexico rivers and streams, Navas said the petition received over 50 resolutions of formal support and over 2,200 public supportive comments. The Upper Pecos watershed petition also had many voices supporting it, including Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján as well as Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez.

N.M. Environment Department spokesperson Matthew Maez wrote via email that “today’s decision brings much needed protections to New Mexico’s most precious resource — our water.”

In the final deliberation stage, Commissioners Larry Dominguez and Bill Brancard brought up concerns about the designation taking effect on private land, and action Colorado could take to protect its side

of the Rio Grande and the Village of Taos Ski Valley’s wastewater discharge permit.

Fox said all of these concerns were addressed in the evidence presented to the commission previously and are not issues. Both commissioners voted to pass the petitions.

Navas said now is the time to get the word out about the passage to all of the supporters.

“The quality of water and doing this now is not basically for us. This is for our grandchildren and for our future generations to be able to enjoy in such the same way that we did,” Vigil said. “So it was a very huge victory.”

The state must go through a formal publication process now before the classification becomes official. Maez said this will likely go into effect in September.

<https://sourcenm.com/2022/07/13/state-gives-outstanding-designation-to-northern-nm-waters-giving-protection-from-pollution/>

Northern N.M. waterways granted protections

By Scott Wyland
July 12, 2022

A state board unanimously approved safeguarding 305 miles of waterways in Northern New Mexico, an action conservationists hailed as a milestone in protecting a vital resource under threat from climate change and human encroachment.

The state Water Quality Control Commission on Tuesday backed two petitions — one focused on the Upper Pecos Watershed and another on parts of the Rio Grande and other tributaries — encompassing a sizable area deemed valuable for wildlife habitat, ecosystems, drinking water, tribal heritage and outdoor recreation.

“This is a great victory for New Mexico water today,” said Tannis Fox, an attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center, which represented petitioners. “We’re protecting some of the most ecologically significant waters in our state.”

Aside from supplying habitat for a plethora of animal and plant life, the waters support ranchers, farmers and acequias, Fox said.

A diverse coalition backed the “outstanding national resource waters” designations, including tribal leaders, state and local governments, acequia communities, environmentalists, outdoor recreation groups, ranchers and other businesses.

The designations can’t stop activities such as mining and wastewater treatment, but they will keep them from degrading the water, Fox said.

The Pecos Watershed portion covers 180 miles, including 14 miles of the Pecos River and 40 acres of wetlands. The other will protect 125 miles of waterways — the Rio Grande, Rio Hondo, Lake Fork, East Fork Jemez River, San Antonio Creek and Redondo Creek.

WildEarth Guardians first proposed protections for the watershed and streams more than a decade ago, and progress was stalled under former Republican Gov. Susana Martinez before being revived in recent years, said Madeleine Carey, a conservation specialist for the group. “It’s awesome to have it come to fruition after all this time,” Carey said.

In addition to benefiting habitat and recreation, the protections will safeguard a key source of household water, she said, noting most drinking water in the West comes from national forests. The newly protected areas are a recreation hub, drawing anglers, campers, hikers, cyclists and bird watchers.

In New Mexico, climate change, forest fires and human activities are degrading streams and stressing fish populations, so protections

such as these are much-needed, said Nick Streit, owner of Taos Fly Shop.

“In an era when we’re losing so much good fishing to some of these big factors like climate change, this is a big win for us,” Streit said.

Streams that were free-flowing and filled with fish when he was a child have become depleted from climate change and human encroachment, whether it’s a new subdivision or golf course or livestock overgrazing, he said. If developers want to build homes near the protected streams, they’ll have to come

up with a plan to prevent sediment from flowing into the water, Streit said.

The Rio Grande section is home to the cutthroat trout that shares its name as well as the Rocky Mountain bighorn, elk, mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats and golden eagles.

Fox said the designated areas are a refuge for endangered species, such as the Mexican spotted owl, Jemez Mountain salamander, New Mexican meadow jumping mouse and spotted bat.

“These areas are really abundant ecologically,” she said.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/northern-n-m-waterways-granted-protections/article_ae6798ae-022f-11ed-83f7-6f881178fdf6.html

Precious resource under threat: New Mexico's waters

By **Lotte Carter, Generation Next**
April 28, 2022

Campgrounds closed. Tens of thousands of fish dead. Fears that children playing outside could be harmed by soil and water contaminated with lead.

This was the state of portions of the Pecos River east of Santa Fe after snowmelt carried contaminants from abandoned mining operations to the river in the early 1990s. The heavy-metal waste poisoned the water, soil and plants, and killed 90,000 trout in weeks — and the contamination costing upward of \$36 million to clean up.

Today, an Australian company is trying to open a mine in the same area, and local environmental groups are warning the move is one of several across the state that could worsen already intense pollution in New Mexico rivers. Advocates hope better education and more personal responsibility will help keep future pollution statewide at bay. This summer, New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission is expected to decide whether to rule a 180-mile stretch of the upper Pecos as Outstanding National Resource Waters, a designation that would protect the area from future pollution-causing activities.

In April 2019, New World Cobalt subsidiary Comexico LLC gained 20 federal exploratory permits in the area with plans of prospecting

for gold, copper and zinc. Although gold and copper are less chemically toxic than the lead mined in the 1930s, all mining produces chemical waste. This chemical waste, if not properly cleaned up, would flow into the surrounding waters with winter snowmelt and travel downstream to the different communities that rely on that water.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and others opposed the proposed reopening of the area to mining, and in 2021, Sen. Martin Heinrich reintroduced a bill that would halt mining in the area altogether.

“Resumption of mining in the upper Pecos Valley presents unacceptable risks to an area still recovering from damages inflicted by past mining activities,” Lujan Grisham wrote to the U.S. Forest Service chief after New World Cobalt applied for a state permit for mining exploration in 2019.

Chemical pollution reaches beyond metal waste from lead and zinc, and it's not just a problem in the upper Pecos. One of the largest water contaminants is E. coli from animals, especially in the Rio Grande, according to the founder of watershed policy and education organization River Source, Rich Schrader. This E. coli, while still a natural pollutant, comes from the fecal matter of just about any warm-blooded animal.

In the 2000s, scientists used biological source tracking to find the main animals responsible for the bacteria and found 33 percent of this *E. coli* was coming from the natural birds of the wetlands, but the next largest amount, at 2 percent, came from domestic dogs, and their owners who failed to pick up after them.

In the Rio Grande, *E. coli* is common in the water people drink and swim in, a large cause of this being fecal matter from domestic pets. Following the studies, the city of Albuquerque spent the next 12 years aggressively campaigning, with techniques from posters to cartoons about picking up after pets. Numbers decreased to 8 percent from the initial 22 percent.

According to the predictions of nonprofit environmental organization WildEarth Guardians, the effects of climate change are likely to diminish the flow of the Rio Grande by as much as 50 percent. Pollution is set to concentrate in the remaining water and seep deep into the soils. The slow deterioration rate of soil, stone and silt means many pollutants residing within them will remain, long after any community or government cleaning efforts are completed.

Besides just pollution, Schrader said heavy groundwater use is putting the state's water at risk. As groundwater wells diminish the natural springs, pollution is able to concentrate and create serious issues in the water quality. As water is overused and diminished, problems such as improperly operating septic tanks can cause concentrated contamination of the waters within a heavily populated area.

"I'm ... really getting tired of measuring the same problem," Schrader, who works with local children to measure water pollutants in Santa Fe, said. Schrader and the students he

works with often identify chemicals like caffeine and traces of personal care products like soap in local bodies of water. He insists small steps are key to preserving and rehabilitating water in New Mexico — from picking up trash along waterways to planning gardens with water quality in mind.

Schrader suggests people consider mixing compost with "soil-building" seeds like sainfoin or hairy vetch, nitrogen-fixing legumes, into their gardens.

"If you have healthy soils, you generally have healthy hydrologic movement of water through your lands," Schrader said.

Watering the mix just once a week also improves the soil's water-retention abilities during droughts, and the addition of these plants cools the soil and sequesters carbon, he added. It doesn't stop there. Schrader said local residents can help take control of water health through revegetation techniques, erosion control techniques and permaculture.

While many local organizations, from River Source to WildEarth Guardians, continue to advocate for keeping local water clean and plentiful, advocates note a problem lies in just how many of these organizations exist while the problems persist. Schrader wonders, if there were designated classes taught to the students of New Mexico on the water situation, if kids could be instilled at an early age with consistent passion for conservation, this new generation, and the generations after them, could put an end to the problems people pour into their water.

"Every drop in the bucket really counts," he said. "The challenge is, there's just such a big disconnect with the idea of our personal behavior and how the land gets managed, how water gets impacted by our behaviors."

Lotte Carter is a junior at Capital High School.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/teen/precious-resource-under-threat-new-mexicos-waters/article_4f4ff8da-c110-11ec-a199-b7fd78ead937.html

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



Coalition seeks Upper Pecos water protections

By Theresa Davis

April 11, 2022

For centuries, the Upper Pecos watershed has supported agriculture, Indigenous land uses and river recreation. Now a northern New Mexico coalition is seeking an Outstanding National Resource Waters designation for 180 miles of the Upper Pecos and its tributaries. The state's highest level of protection under the federal Clean Water Act would prevent pollution from harmful mining, real estate development and overuse. New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission will consider the petition during a Tuesday hearing. Frank Adelo, the Upper Pecos Watershed Association president, said a designation would maintain the river's water quality. The group is asking for a designation that would cover the lengths of the main river and each of its tributaries from the Pecos wilderness boundary downstream to the Dalton Canyon day use area. "I grew up next to the river, and it's really a crown jewel of our waterways," Adelo said. "I've also seen what rivers are like in other parts of the country that haven't had these protections, so we know how valuable these kinds of protections are." Petitioners also include the Village of Pecos, San Miguel County, the New Mexico Acequia Association, and the Pecos farm Molino de la Isla Organics. The groups say that the watershed merits a designation because of its ecological, cultural and recreational significance. Other supporters include U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, Rep. Teresa

Leger Fernández, American Rivers, Amigos Bravos, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and New Mexico Wild.

If approved, new activities or projects that need water quality permits would not be allowed to impact regional water quality. "Let's say someone wants to develop 50 acres of fancy houses with septic tanks, they would have to prove that nothing they are doing would degrade the quality of the water in the river," said Lela McFerrin, the UPWA vice president. The standard would only affect new uses, not existing activities like livestock grazing. Dan Roper, a Trout Unlimited angler conservation program coordinator, said a designation would "raise the bar" for regional water quality. "We think that's important in this watershed, because it's a place where things like outdoor recreation and fishing and agriculture are so important to the local communities that depend on the Pecos," Roper said. New Mexico Game and Fish and the state Outdoor Recreation Division support an Outstanding Waters designation.

In a letter to the commission, Game and Fish director Michael Sloane said wildlife in the popular recreational area needs clean water "to survive and thrive." "The upper Pecos watershed is home to some of the few remaining populations of New Mexico's native Rio Grande cutthroat trout," Sloane said. "Additionally, these cold and clean

waters are home to brown trout, rainbow trout and brook trout, making these waters excellent places for both fishing and recreating." New Mexico currently has three Outstanding Waters designations for the Rio Santa Barbara headwaters, Valle Vidal and all Forest Service wilderness area waters. All comments submitted to the commission prior to Tuesday's meeting were in favor of the designation. No individual or group filed a

protest of the petition. Adelo said the protections would go a long way to preserve waters that have seen a big visitor increase during the pandemic. "We saw a ton of people come up to our area to seek refuge and solace and comfort from the craziness that we've seen in the past two years, and I think it's important to protect these places and maintain that water quality," he said.

https://www.abqjournal.com/news/local/coalition-seeks-upper-pecos-water-protections/article_4425e75b-66ce-5422-af1e-e84b137b19a8.html

New Mexico senator's conservation bills move forward in Congress

By Scott Wyland

June 18, 2021

Two of U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich's conservation bills — one to ban new hard-rock mining in the Pecos watershed and the other to create a wilderness area near Taos — are gaining momentum.

The New Mexico Democrat presented the bills this week to a Senate Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee in Washington, D.C., arguing both are necessary to protect two areas of great ecological and cultural value.

The bills will go to a committee hearing to be debated and possibly revised, known as a markup. Whatever versions of the bills make it out of committee will move to the Senate floor for a vote.

The Pecos bill would prevent the leasing, patent and sale of all publicly owned minerals in the watershed, including oil and gas, gold, silver, copper and other hard-rock minerals. Heinrich drafted it in response to an international company exploring mineral extraction in the area.

“The last thing this community wants is an international corporation threatening their water quality,” Heinrich told the Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining.

Area residents are fighting hard to prevent new industrial activity, Heinrich said, and to protect the “irreplaceable water resources” that make their way of life possible.

“I'm proud to join their efforts with this legislation because water is — hands down — the most valuable resource in my state,” Heinrich said.

In the 1990s, the community fell victim to a disastrous toxic waste spill from a closed mine that killed fish for 11 miles in the Pecos River and cost millions of dollars to clean up, Heinrich said.

No one in the region wants a repeat of the incident, which created a cancer-causing plume in the river, Lela McFerrin, vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, said in a phone interview.

McFerrin, who strongly supports the bill, said she hopes it passes before Comexico LLC, based in Colorado, obtains a mining permit.

Comexico, a subsidiary of New World Resources, an Australian company, is pursuing a permit to do exploratory drilling for three years, she said.

If the company finds a lode it wants to mine, it could stake a claim and apply for a mining permit, she added.

In a Senate hearing last year, when Heinrich first introduced this bill, he acknowledged that under an 1872 law, those with existing claims can't be denied their right to mine.

However, a federal forest manager said the government is allowed to regulate how the minerals are extracted.

Heinrich expressed certainty his proposed bill would head off Comexico's mining efforts.

"It would be very important for us and the Pecos community ... and the Pecos River all the way down to Texas," McFerrin said of the legislation. "You can lose this river. It's serious."

Heinrich's second bill would designate Cerro de la Olla as a wilderness area.

It's now part of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, but making it a

wilderness would prevent road-building in the historic setting where people have hunted, gathered herbs and collected firewood for generations.

"Cerro de la Olla, with a peak of nearly 10,000 feet, is the home of some of the best elk habitat in Northern New Mexico," Heinrich told the subcommittee.

The bill is supported by a wide coalition, Heinrich said, including ranchers, hunters, business owners and veterans, as well as Taos Pueblo, the Taos County Commission and the town of Taos.

Neither Taos Pueblo's governor nor the town manager returned calls seeking comment on the legislation.

The bill also would extend the monument's boundaries to encompass a private parcel the owner would like to see added to the monument through the federal land conservation fund, Heinrich said.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/new-mexico-senator-s-conservation-bills-move-forward-in-congress/article_190352cc-d03e-11eb-9020-fbc364870c5c.html

C A R L S B A D
CURRENT-ARGUS

Protections for the Upper Pecos Watershed could mean cleaner water in southeast New Mexico

By Adrian Hedden

June 3, 2021

Ralph Vigil's farm in Pecos, New Mexico depends on the Pecos River as it has for 13 years, the same river that runs across almost the entire eastern side of the state, crossing its southern border with Texas in the southeast corner.

What happens in the headwaters of the Pecos where Vigil grows vegetables like lettuce and tomatoes has a direct impact, he said, on the rest of the river – even hundreds of miles south cities like Roswell or Carlsbad.

"Our watersheds are extremely important to a lot of our traditional communities in New Mexico. The health of that watershed is vital," Vigil said. "If we don't have healthy watersheds, we don't have healthy communities beneath them."

The northern portion of the Pecos River could gain state protections as conservationists sought to prevent development in an area they argued was biologically diverse and crucial to New Mexico's environment.

The Upper Pecos Watershed covers about 400 square miles of the Pecos River and its tributaries, centered in San Miguel County in northern New Mexico. The southern portion of the river runs through Carlsbad and the Permian Basin area into West Texas.

It's the beginning of the larger Pecos River, which flows through the eastern part of the state down to its southern border with Texas – a key water supply for southeast New Mexico cities like Roswell, Carlsbad and Artesia.

Water quality up there is tied to the rest of the river which southeast New Mexico's farmers and ranchers depend on.

And it could be threatened by ongoing mining interests such as the recently proposed Tererro Mine by a Colorado company Comexico which is a subsidiary New World Resources from Australia.

During just the exploratory phase of the project, Comexico wants to drill 30 holes, 500 to 4,000 feet deep which could contaminate the Upper Pecos Watershed, environmentalists warned and impact ecosystems in the area.

Water users like that, Vigil said, have little interest in local communities aside from extracting minerals beneath them.

"If we have mining interests and other interests involved and destroying, they don't have any interest except for what's below. It's not a wise use of our watersheds," he said. "All the communities it touches all the way up here and then down where it dumps

into the Rio Grande, we need to keep it healthy. "

Taking action to protect the Pecos

A group of local government and conservationists created a petition calling for New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission to list the watershed as an outstanding national resource water (ONRW), which could preserve the cleanliness of the water while allowing recreation, agriculture and other traditional uses.

The petition was created by a coalition of entities including the Village of Pecos, San Miguel County, New Mexico Acequia Association, the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, and Molino de la Isla Organics.

"An ONRW designation is one of the most effective tools available to state leaders when it comes to protecting our waters and ensuring that the communities that depend on them have access to clean water for traditional uses, outdoor recreation, and more," the petition read.

The protection would apply to only the Upper Watershed near Pecos, New Mexico, a village about 30 miles east of Santa Fe.

But Rachel Conn, a consultant on the project and projects director with Amigos Bravos, a statewide conservation group based in Taos, said water quality in the headwaters could impact water availability and cleanliness in areas like Carlsbad.

"Protecting the water quality in the headwaters ensures there's clean water flowing down to the rest of the state," she said. "And that in turn relates to the amount of water that's available. If the water is too polluted, it's not useable."

Even worse, the eastern region of the state along the river suffered from worsening drought conditions in recent months, exacerbating water scarcity and increasing the need to conserve, Conn said.

The U.S. Drought Monitor showed San Miguel County was in "extreme drought" – the second-highest designation – but following the river south into DeBaca, Chaves and Eddy counties there the worst drought class "exceptional drought" set in.

That means depleted surface water and increased fire danger problems that could be mitigated by protecting the river where it starts in the Upper Pecos Watershed.

"You're getting all the benefits of protecting the headwaters, but what happens between the headwaters and the lower parts of the river is not affected," Conn said. "There's a big political difference."

The goal is not to block all uses on the river, she said.

'We see the connections' to the river

An ONRW listing would allow uses like fishing, recreation and agriculture, she said, while ensuring the river's water quality is preserved. The designation does not impact ongoing uses of the river, but would prohibit new or increasing sources of pollution.

"We see the connections and relationships people have with the river as part of the farming and ranching activities they and their families have engaged in for generations," Conn said. "That's part of protecting the river. It's an intimate relationship with the watershed that results in stewardship. I don't see them as separate."

New Mexico's Democrat Congresspeople recently called on the State of New Mexico to place an ONRW designation on the Upper Pecos Watershed, penning a letter to the Water Quality Control Commission in March.

U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan along with U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez signed the letter, calling the designation a way to protect New Mexico's waters but also support the State's rich history of use along the river.

"The iconic Upper Pecos watershed is the lifeblood of the region's economy, ecosystem and way of life," the letter read. "We support

this this ONRW designation to protect traditional agriculture and a way of life for our children and grandchildren and ask you to please support this nomination."

A month before, Heinrich and Lujan introduced the Pecos Watershed Protection Act that would remove all federal-managed minerals in the water shed from being leased or extracted, an effort to protect the Upper Pecos from the impacts of hard-rock mining.

"The Pecos watershed is one of those places where the community has come together and said that the river at the heart of this valley, and at the heart of this community, is literally the most important thing we can protect and pass on to our heirs," Heinrich said.

<https://www.currentargus.com/story/news/local/2021/06/03/protections-sought-upper-pecos-watershed-northern-new-mexico/7436981002/>

Pecos River labeled among most endangered waterways due to potential mining

By Victoria Traxler

April 13, 2021

American Rivers, a Washington, D.C.-based conservation organization, ranked the Pecos River No. 5 in its new report on the nation's most endangered waterways — largely due to the threat of a potential new mining operation.

With a rich cultural history and heavy influence on local wildlife and recreation, the Pecos River is crucial to protect, the organization said in its 2021 report, released Tuesday.

Local environmental groups have opposed a proposed mining operation in Santa Fe National Forest near Terrero, which one advocate described as “the nail in the coffin” for the river.

Mike Fiebig, director of the Southwest River Protection Program for American Rivers, said waterways chosen for the list are those facing immediate threats with opportunities for change in the coming year.

The Pecos River has been devastated by contaminants in the past.

A heavy snowmelt in 1991 washed toxic pollutants from the shuttered Terrero Mine into the waterway, killing more than 90,000 fish and resulting in a \$20 million cleanup, according to American Rivers.

Now the river faces a new threat.

Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Resources Ltd., proposed the Tererro Exploration Project in 2019 and has an application pending before the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division. The company plans to mine more than 5,000 acres, drilling up to 30 holes, 4,000 feet deep, in search of ore for metals like copper, zinc, lead and gold.

“This is a river that was damaged in the past, was restored, is sacred to a number of people and culturally important — and important for wildlife,” Fiebig said.

The organization's goal, he said, is “basically preventing the past from repeating itself.”

Frank Adelo, president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, said the Comexico project would be the biggest mining operation since the Terrero Mine in the 1930s, which resulted in nearly 2 million tons of ore being removed. Comexico is looking at mining up to 5 million tons of ore, he said.

“I'm born and raised here,” Adelo said. “There's enough challenges on this river with climate change and what we've seen with

catastrophic wildfires in the past few years, diminished snowpack, etc. This would be the nail in the coffin if they were ever to develop a mine of this size.”

Joey Keefe, a spokesman for New Mexico Wild, which also opposes the mining project, said education and outreach are important in raising public awareness, but it’s also important to hold government officials accountable.

Advocates are calling for the state Mining and Minerals Division to deny the exploratory mining application and are urging the U.S. Forest Service to assess the

environmental impacts of the mining proposal. They also have asked state lawmakers to pass legislation to permanently protect the river.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham wrote a letter to the head of the U.S. Forest Service in 2019 stating she was “deeply concerned” about the mining project’s potential impacts.

“The importance of the river from a recreation point and from a spiritual standpoint was certainly made clear this past year,” Adelo said.

“The only solution really is no mine at all.”

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/pecos-river-labeled-among-most-endangered-waterways-due-to-potential-mining/article_3e6a57d4-9c97-11eb-9926-8bfbf901b7c7.html

Sen. Heinrich reintroduces three conservation bills

By Scott Wyland

February 4, 2021

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, a New Mexico Democrat, is reintroducing three conservation bills with the hope they will gain traction under a bluer Senate and the Biden administration.

Heinrich is jump-starting bills to restrict hard-rock mining in the Pecos watershed, bar mining on four federal sites in Sandoval County and designate a section of a national monument as a wilderness area.

He said the bills had already stood a good chance of being enacted into law even under a GOP-controlled Senate and the Trump administration because of the hearty community support behind them.

But the measures should really gain steam under the new political dynamic, he said in an interview this week.

He added, “The [Democratic] majority definitely improves our chances to move it in this Congress.”

Introducing these bills early allows him to take advantage of the favorable political shift, Heinrich said.

But he noted Democrats have only a narrow Senate majority, so it will require working with Republicans to create a bipartisan

package. “And I feel good about being able to make the case for any of these bills to be in such a package.”

The Pecos bill would prevent the leasing, patent and sale of all publicly owned minerals in the watershed, including oil and gas, gold, silver, copper and other hard-rock minerals.

It was crafted in response to a community outcry over Comexico LLC, based in Fort Collins, Colo., looking to explore mineral deposits in the area.

Prospective hard-rock mining in the area called up bad memories of a disastrous toxic waste spill from a closed mine in the 1990s that killed fish for 11 miles in the Pecos River.

The spill created a cancer-causing plume in the water, damaged crops along the river and cost taxpayers millions of dollars to clean up, said Lela McFerrin, vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association.

“These are the issues we are concerned about,” said McFerrin, who supports Heinrich’s bill. “There’s only pockets of clean water in this world now, and this is one of them.”

Comexico is a subsidiary of New World Resources, based in Australia, and has no stake in any harmful effects that mining might have on the river or the community, said Ralph Vigil, chairman of the New Mexico Acequia Association.

“It doesn’t tie into what we are going today,” said Vigil, who noted the area’s economy is based on farming and outdoor recreation, not mining.

Heinrich’s proposed mining ban on federal lands in Sandoval County is in response to the Bureau of Land Management opening the Buffalo Tract to gravel mining in 2012.

Residents worried that gravel operations would cause health risks and degrade the land, Heinrich said.

Sandoval County, the town of Bernalillo, the Merced De Comunidad De San Antonio De Las Huertas, the Pueblo of San Felipe, the Pueblo of Santa Ana and Placitas residents are opposed to gravel mining.

Heinrich introduced this legislation in 2016. It passed by a voice vote during a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing.

Aside from barring mineral development on the four lands, including the Buffalo Tract and Crest of Montezuma, it would keep the lands under federal management.

The third bill would designate Cerro de la Olla as a wilderness area. It’s already part of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, and making it a wilderness would prevent road building there, Heinrich said.

People in this area near Taos have hunted, gathered herbs and collected firewood for generations around Cerro de la Olla, Heinrich said.

The proposed legislation, backed by community members, nonprofit groups and tribes, would preserve the traditional land uses while protecting critical habitat for elk, bears and other wildlife, he said.

Vigil said the wilderness destination would be good for the people in that area.

“If we don’t take care of the land that provides us life, there’s not going to be anything left for anybody,” he said.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/sen-heinrich-reintroduces-three-conservation-bills/article_2bc52118-663c-11eb-8b65-7fdacaa68b1e.html

Pecos residents protest mine proposal

By Robert Nott

December 12, 2019

Pecos villagers made it clear Thursday night that they remain opposed to a proposed mining project in their valley.

“I don’t think we want this thing here,” said Pecos resident Nina Rabstock during a community meeting on the issue hosted by Santa Fe National Forest officials at Pecos High School.

Her comment drew applause from the roughly 250 people in attendance. And when another resident asked how many people would take part in peaceful, nonviolent actions to stop the operation — even if it led to jail — about three-fourths of the crowd stood up.

Earlier this year, the Australian-based New World Cobalt mining company and its American subsidiary, Comexico LLC, put in a request to conduct exploratory mining on two acres of Santa Fe National Forest near Terrero (spelled Tererro by many of the locals) north of Pecos.

New World Cobalt’s leaders say they plan to mine for copper, zinc and gold.

Pecos residents say it’s a bad deal that will harm the community of 1,300 residents and the surrounding environment.

The conflict between small-town villagers and those looking to mine the land is an age-

old one in the West, one often fought on a battlefield made of water, land and environmental rights.

That battle has been exacerbated by fears that any mining operation in the region could contaminate the village’s water supply. Earlier this year, the Associated Press reported millions of gallons of water containing arsenic, lead and other contaminants made its way from mining sites into nearby waterways without being treated in at least nine states, though New Mexico was not one of them.

The site of the proposed operation is about two miles from the Pecos River. Many Pecos residents still recall the 1991 contamination of their water when a heavy snow sent leftover mining waste running into rivers and streams.

The exploratory operation would drill up to 30 holes in an area of five to seven acres. The estimated amount of water needed for the project would be 977,500 gallons. Santa Fe National Forest geologist Larry Gore told the assembly that the operation would use “existing well water” for the project.

Pecos residents, farmers, environmentalists, acequia organizations and others questioned the plan when it was announced. They again expressed concern Thursday about the environmental impact on the land, water and

animals of the region and extra traffic on the road leading to the mining area.

They also say the proposed project would impact recreational activities, including hunting and fishing, in the region.

Pecos resident Robin Reindle said if the exploratory mission yields positive results, New World Cobalt would implement a broader mining operation in the valley, one that is “much worse and bigger, and that’s the thing all of us are concerned about.”

According to an investor page on New World Cobalt’s website, it is still conducting ground geophysics studies in the area with “very positive results.” The website speaks of a possible “high grade, gold rich” deposit that could lead to a larger mining camp being built in the area.

Emotions ran high at times during the two-hour meeting, with Reindle asking forest service officials if they could live with themselves if “yellow stuff starts pouring into our streams” because of the mining.

“We don’t want you here. We don’t want you drilling in the earth here,” teacher Ben Gillock told two Comexico officials in attendance.

After the meeting, Mike Haynes, managing director and CEO of New World Cobalt, said he “appreciated hearing from the people of this community.” He said his company “does not expect any contamination” issues, and if it goes forward with the operation, it will

“reclaim the area to the highest possible standards.”

Under the terms of the General Mining Act of 1872, Santa Fe National Forest officials cannot stop the operation. But they can require New World Cobalt to take preventive safety measures for the forest. Earlier this year, a federal judge in Arizona limited timber activities in New Mexico’s five national forests until further studies on the status of the endangered Mexico spotted owl can be conducted. As a result, the mine’s exploratory operation cannot take place during the owl’s breeding season — March and April.

Gore said New World Cobalt has to provide financial assurance in the form of a bond to ensure it restores the mining area to its original, natural form once its project is complete. Gore said the forest service “doesn’t know” how much that figure would be.

Terrero began as a mining town in the late 1800s, and mining operations continued there through the 1930s. The mine has been largely abandoned since then.

Gore said the forest service is collecting public comments on the mining proposal until Jan. 17. He said it has already received 400 to 500 comments.

Comments can be sent by email — comments-southwestern-santafe-pecos-lasvegas@fs.fed.us — or via mail sent to Santa Fe National Forest, Pecos-Las Vegas District, P.O. Drawer 429, Pecos, NM 87552.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/pecos-residents-protest-mine-proposal/article_3e91f222-1c36-11ea-9573-73b6794b6267.html

Heinrich seeks to protect Pecos watershed from new mining, drilling

By Scott Wyland

November 18, 2020

New federal claims to extract minerals, including oil, gas and metals, would be barred in the Pecos watershed under a bill introduced by a New Mexico senator.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich said he seeks to avoid accidents in the area, such as a disastrous toxic waste spill from a closed mine in the 1990s that killed fish for 11 miles in the Pecos River.

“The people who live in the Pecos Valley don’t want to see new mines along the Pecos River because they’ve experienced firsthand what the devastation of a mine spill looks like,” Heinrich told the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining at a Wednesday hearing.

Heinrich spoke at the hearing two days after introducing the bill.

The proposed legislation would prevent the leasing, patent and sale of all publicly owned minerals in the watershed, including oil and gas, gold, silver, copper and other hard-rock minerals.

The bill would not prevent people with existing claims to extract minerals, so residents could still see mining activity if it became law.

The difference is the claims would have to be proven valid under an 1872 mining law — something that isn’t currently required, a Heinrich spokesman said.

U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management officials attending the hearing said the Trump administration opposes the bill because it would halt most mineral extraction in the area.

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, who chairs the subcommittee, asked how restrictions on mining minerals might conflict with the 1872 law.

Chris French, deputy director of national forest systems, said the government can’t deny those with claims to mine under the law, but it can regulate how they extract the minerals.

Some companies want to explore potential mineral deposits in the area, mainly metals, French said.

Heinrich asked French whether the Forest Service could deem the Pecos Valley unsuitable for mining and halt it altogether.

French reiterated that existing mining claims can be denied.

Heinrich said he doesn't dispute people's right to use established claims.

But he argued that people who reside in the valley don't make a living at hard-rock mining. Outside corporate interests are the main mineral extractors, he said.

Area residents work as farmers, fly-fishing guides and recreational vendors, Heinrich said, adding that some are afraid they'll lose their livelihoods if mining degrades or ruins the watershed.

"So the only way those folks can protect their watershed from new mines is this kind of legislation," Heinrich said. "And that's why we're here today."

Some regional leaders and conservation advocates expressed support for the bill.

"The Pecos River is a clean, pristine mountain water source supporting not only the wildlife, flora and fauna in our area, but is the source of some of the cleanest water in the state," said Lela McFerrin, vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association, in a statement. "Unfortunately, the legacy of hard-rock mining from the old Tererro mine is a sad commentary on the effects of mineral extraction in the entire western United States."

San Miguel County Commissioner Janice Varela called the 1872 mining law antiquated and destructive to the area.

"The protections will benefit people, wildlife and our economic future," Varela said.

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/heinrich-seeks-to-protect-pecos-watershed-from-new-mining-drilling/article_b6b34c5e-290c-11eb-9a21-63611e5ef86f.html

Governor Opposes Pecos Mine

Michelle Lujan Grisham asks the National Forest Service for full environmental impact statement

By Leah Cantor

September 26, 2019

A proposal by a foreign mining corporation to begin prospecting for renewed mining activities near Pecos has been met with substantial [opposition from local communities](#) and municipalities concerned about potential environmental impacts on the surrounding watershed.

Now, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is lobbying against the idea in [a letter](#) sent to the chief of the United States Forest Service in Washington, DC, on Thursday, September 26.

"My administration has heard from many New Mexicans who are deeply concerned by the prospect of mining resuming in the Pecos Valley, which contains the Tererro remediation site," Lujan Grisham wrote, drawing attention to the volume of public comments received by the governor's office in recent months.

Lujan Grisham expressed her own opposition to the proposed mining exploration in the Pecos on the grounds that previous mining activities at the old Tererro site have cost the state millions in initial and ongoing remediation efforts and caused significant ecological and human health hazards in the region.

New Mexico contributed \$7 million to the \$36 million spent in remediating the site, which continues to cost the state money in monitoring and sampling efforts "with no end in sight," Lujan Grisham stated in the letter. This year alone, she wrote, the state will spend an estimated \$1 million on environmental upkeep of the old site.

Renewed mining efforts present "unacceptable risks to an area still recovering from damages inflicted by previous mining activities," she wrote, calling on the Forest Service to conduct a full environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act to evaluate the potential consequences of a new exploration project, adding that "the Forest Service's approval of this industrial activity would clearly be a major action, which could significantly and negatively affect the quality of the environment in the Pecos Valley for ecological, recreational, and economic activities."

Lujan Grisham also called out the company behind the proposed new Tererro project, New World Cobalt (Comexico LLC), for likely underestimating the number of acres that will be disturbed by the construction of

30 drill holes and pads used for preliminary mineral exploration. The New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division has estimated the project will cause a greater acreage of disturbance than claimed by the company.

The governor's letter comes just weeks after both Santa Fe and San Miguel counties passed new mining regulations that strengthen environmental protections and hold companies responsible for a greater extent of the environmental assessments and remediation efforts required.

Before New World Cobalt can break ground in the Pecos, the firm must submit cultural, biological and hydrological reports to the Forest Service and to the New Mexico

Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department detailing potential impacts of its proposed activities. The reports are under review by the Forest Service and go next to the state's Mining and Minerals Division to continue the application. The MMD is currently accepting comments from the public as well as state and federal agencies in regards to the initial exploration proposal.

Once the reports have been submitted, New World Cobalt will have to conduct public meetings and collect comments during a public scoping period. Local community organizers tell SFR they expect these meetings could take place by the end of the year.

<https://www.sfreporter.com/news/2019/09/26/governor-opposes-pecos-mine/>

Pecos Prospectors

Opposition mounting as foreign mining company wants to dig for gold, copper and zinc on public lands

By Leah Cantor

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Ralph Vigil, the chairman of the New Mexico Acequia Commission, stands at the edge of the fields of his acequia-irrigated organic farm, looking out on the national forest that stretches to the peaks of the Pecos Wilderness. It's a place where people spend weekends hiking, fishing and camping along the mountain road that also leads past the scar of the old Tererro mine. The spot is where 2 million tons of ore were excavated in the 1920s, leading to the contamination of nearby wetlands and \$28 million in remediation and environmental clean-up costs partially paid by taxpayers.

Nearby, a new mining proposal threatens to repeat history.

Comexico LLC, a Colorado subsidiary of Australian mining company New World Cobalt Ltd, wants to start prospecting in the area for gold, copper and zinc. It has secured the rights to 20 federal mining claims on 400 acres in the Jones- Hill and Macho Canyon areas of the Pecos Ranger District in Santa Fe and San Miguel counties and has secured interest in 4,300 acres of surrounding national forest.

The potential consequences have Vigil and others raising red flags.

This season, the old Tererro site is a grassy hillside arrayed in wildflowers. But Vigil remembers when it was a mess of rocky debris, open mine shafts and abandoned buildings. He remembers when the Pecos River ran yellow with acidic mineral runoff after heavy spring rainstorms in 1991, killing the trout in the river and 90,000 fish at the Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery downstream. Even today, though reclamation efforts have helped camouflage the damage, it is still a Superfund site leaching poisons into the surrounding watershed.

"We have to protect the right to clean and healthy water. I mean, that should be our most essential right other than the right to breathe, even before freedom of speech or any other freedom we should have the freedom to clean water because that's what sustains life for all of us," says Vigil, his brow furrowed as he gazes north towards the mountains where the streams that feed the Pecos acequia system originate. "It's not just about turning on a faucet, it's about where does that water come from when that fountain turns on? It's up there, it all starts up there. A lot of people don't understand that."

In June, Comexico submitted a plan of operations to the Santa Fe National Forest and the state Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's Mining and Minerals Division. It also applied for an exploratory permit for core drilling operations on up to 2.2 acres on Jones Hill.

According to the [investor page of New World Cobalt's website](#), the company hopes "that mine development [at Jones Hill] can be advanced as quickly as practicable," and has plans for "aggressively exploring" prospects in the surrounding area, including in Dalton Canyon and Doctor Creek.

The company states that drilling could begin as early as October. However, Santa Fe National Forest Service Geologist Larry Gore tells SFR by phone that's a highly unrealistic timeline, partly due to the complexities of the terrain and wildlife habitats of the area and public pushback, but also because Comexico "keeps changing their proposal," delaying the permitting process.

Julie Anne Overton, the Officer of Public Affairs for the Forest Service, is also quick to point out that the 1872 Mining Act prohibits the Forest Service from stopping any mining activity on federal land. Overton says the Forest Service is in the process of deciding what level of assessment will be required for the new Tererro mine site.

[The Upper Pecos Watershed organization](#) is leading a coalition in the hopes of stalling the process if not stopping it altogether by demanding the most rigorous environmental and cultural review assessments called for by law under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The coalition includes Pecos residents and business owners, environmental advocacy

groups, and traditional land users such as Vigil and members of the Pecos, Tesuque, and Jemez pueblos whose lands could be affected by the mine.

At the proposed mine site on Jones Hill, Garrett VeneKlasen, the northern field coordinator for [New Mexico Wild](#), points out the little pink prospecting flags that mark out the possible locations of 30 drill holes, each 500 to 4,000 feet deep, that the company will use to assess mineral deposits.

"I really could not think of a worse place for a mine," says VeneKlasen, explaining that the mountain is at the headwater for four distinct watersheds and is home to endangered and threatened species, including the spotted owl, Rio Grande cutthroat trout and the flowering Holy Ghost ipomopsis, a plant only found wild in the Holy Ghost Canyon of the Santa Fe National Forest.

Part of the problem, he says, is that Comexico is planning to contract third-party analysts to conduct required assessments.

"The Forest Service has no plans to conduct its own surveys and is relying on experts who are getting paid by a foreign company that stands to make millions if not billions of dollars," VeneKlasen says. "How can they not see this as a clear conflict of interest?"

Overton confirms that the agency often relies on biological and archaeological surveys done by third-party contractors when they "don't have the available staff to conduct surveys internally." However, both Overton and Gore say outside consultants, even if hired by the mining company, must be reviewed by the department and meet Forest Service standards.

Though counties have no jurisdiction over federal land, in June the Board of Commissioners of San Miguel County passed a resolution in opposition to Comexico's application. The Santa Fe County Commission is set to discuss it soon, a spokeswoman tells SFR.

Tribal concerns are geared more toward the possible disturbance of cultural sites of the Pecos and Tesuque pueblos located in the area, says Roger Fragua, a member of the Jemez Pueblo and a descendant of the Pecos Pueblo.

Fragua is careful to clarify that his role in the coalition is as a member of Climate

Advocates/Voces Unidas (CAVU), an environmental media organization covering the mine, and not as an official representative of any of the impacted pueblos.

"This is an opportunity for the federal government and industry to do the right thing. We are still early enough in the process for proper [tribal] consultation to occur," he says.

The permit process going forward could take months, Forest Service officials tell SFR. The next step is scoping public opinion.

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