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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL

53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2017

INTRODUCED BY

DISCUSSION DRAFT

FOR THE LAND GRANT COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOREST SERVICE AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE DESIGNATIONS THAT DO NOT AFFECT MEANINGFUL ACCESS FOR TRADITIONAL USES FOR LANDS PROPOSED TO BE PART OF AN EXPANDED PECOS WILDERNESS AREA AND FOR ANY OTHER WILDERNESS PROPOSALS IN NEW MEXICO AND TO INCLUDE TRADITIONAL FOREST-DEPENDENT, "GATEWAY" AND LAND GRANT COMMUNITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY DESIGNATION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THESE LANDS.

WHEREAS, for generations, small, rural and historically isolated communities in New Mexico have depended on the health of the surrounding forests, grasslands and rivers as their primary sources of food, medicine, fuel, building materials and water; and

WHEREAS, the health and vitality of these communities have

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1 traditionally been more dependent on the health of their
2 environment than on commerce with urban centers; and

3 WHEREAS, as a consequence of this dependence on natural
4 systems, New Mexico developed a multitude of cultures that are
5 rooted in a connection to land and water; and

6 WHEREAS, in recent decades, traditional forest-dependent,
7 "gateway" and land grant communities have experienced
8 increasing restrictions on, and denials of, their traditional
9 access to and use of adjacent lands and waters; and

10 WHEREAS, as these restrictions and denials have grown, the
11 traditional economy of these communities has been undercut, and
12 many formerly self-reliant families have become at least
13 partially dependent on government assistance; and

14 WHEREAS, a national forest should not only be a place that
15 families visit, it should also be a partner that they work with
16 on a daily basis to ensure that the next generation does not
17 lose understanding of natural systems, including the importance
18 of periodic grass fires, the value of beaver dams and the care
19 that humans need to take when using wild lands; and

20 WHEREAS, the health and safety of traditional forest-
21 dependent, gateway and land grant communities remain dependent
22 on the health of their surrounding lands, particularly with
23 regard to the quantity and quality of water flowing from them
24 and their susceptibility to catastrophic wildfire; and

25 WHEREAS, the Pecos and other wilderness areas sit within

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1 national forest lands that border several traditional forest-
2 dependent, gateway and land grant communities throughout New
3 Mexico, and the United States department of agriculture forest
4 service will be evaluating proposals to expand the Pecos and
5 other wilderness areas; and

6 WHEREAS, a wilderness designation is one of the most
7 restrictive land management alternatives available for national
8 forest land; and

9 WHEREAS, in some cases, these wilderness designations have
10 affected the ability for traditional forest-dependent, gateway
11 and land grant communities to meaningfully access certain
12 traditional uses; and

13 WHEREAS, all five national forests in New Mexico, which
14 are the Carson, Cibola, Gila, Lincoln and Santa Fe national
15 forests, are currently undergoing a forest plan revision
16 process to update their forest management plans; and

17 WHEREAS, each national forest is federally required, as
18 part of the forest plan revision, to inventory and assess all
19 forest system lands to determine which, if any, lands have
20 wilderness character and, upon identification of such lands,
21 evaluate them for determining how those lands should be
22 managed; and

23 WHEREAS, in the past, these evaluations did not include
24 considerations for socioeconomic or cultural impacts on
25 traditional forest-dependent, gateway and land grant

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1 communities; and

2 WHEREAS, New Mexico recently experienced the creation of
3 alternative land management protections, for the Rio Grande del
4 Norte national monument, that specifically retain certain
5 traditional uses, such as harvesting pinon nuts and wood
6 gathering, and in which adjacent gateway communities were
7 provided a meaningful role in the development of the land
8 management plan;

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
10 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that special care be exercised with regard
11 to changing and developing the land management methods for the
12 national forest lands to maintain local cultural values, to
13 ensure watershed health, to protect meaningful access for
14 traditional uses and to allow government agencies to respond to
15 wildfires; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States department
17 of agriculture forest service be requested to provide
18 traditional forest-dependent, gateway and land grant
19 communities, Indian pueblos and acequias with a meaningful role
20 in the development of appropriate and beneficial designations
21 and management plans for lands under its jurisdiction; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States department
23 of agriculture forest service be requested to engage in an
24 immediate dialogue with all of the traditional forest-
25 dependent, gateway and land grant communities of all of the

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1 national forests in New Mexico with regard to potential
2 alternative designations for all lands proposed to be evaluated
3 for possible inclusion in the Pecos wilderness and for other
4 proposed wilderness designations now and in the future; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
6 transmitted to the regional forester for region 3 of the United
7 States department of agriculture forest service; the forest
8 supervisors for each of the national forests within New Mexico;
9 the principal executive office holder for each of the Indian
10 tribes, pueblos and nations within New Mexico; the chairs of
11 the land grant council and the acequia commission; the members
12 of the New Mexico congressional delegation; and the governor.