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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
November 18, 2011

New Mexico Legislature
Land Grant Committee
New Mexico State Capitol Bldg.
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Chairman Garcia and Committee Members,

I want to thank you for your hard work on this committee. Your representation of New Mexico's land grants and the communities and cultures associated with them is important to addressing the longstanding issues that have impacted land grants throughout history. Like you, I share a deep understanding and passion for practically addressing these issues.

Land grants and acequias are the lifeblood of our rural communities and we need to protect them for future generations. This means advocating for the necessary policy changes to address past injustices, as well as, ensuring the current land management agencies are aware and responsive to the needs of communities that are associated with the land.

During the time I have served northern New Mexico as Representative of the Third District, I have communicated frequently with individual land grants and with regional councils. In addition, on August 26th, 2010 I held a Land Grant policy meeting at Northern New Mexico Community College and invited all New Mexico land grants to participate. Many concerned individuals and representatives from various land grant councils participated in a policy discussion focused on federal policy changes that are needed to address the issues land grants and local communities face. A multitude of ideas were discussed at the policy meeting and an in depth impromptu history lesson by Mr. Paul Martinez of Taos, NM was also included in the discussion.

Two of the main themes at the meeting that were of particular significance were the ideas of consultation and access to land for traditional uses. Many land grant representatives expressed that there is a need for U.S. Forest Service and other governmental agencies to consult with local land grant boards or representatives on policy and land management decisions. They also feel like there needs to be better recognition by governmental agencies of traditional uses of the forest in order to properly develop land management decisions.

With these two ideas, I worked with my staff on a concept paper for a piece of federal legislation to be introduced during the 112th Congress. A copy of this concept paper is enclosed with this letter for your review. In July of 2011 this concept paper was presented to the New Mexico Land Grant Council and New Mexico Acequia Association. This concept paper outlines the development of a bill called the **Traditional Use Consultation Act**. More specifically, the draft legislation addresses issues that land

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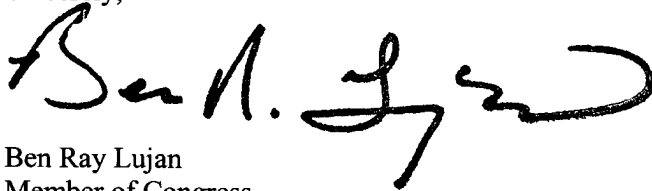
grants and acequias face with regard to consultation with federal agencies, NEPA, The National Forest System, and problems with maintaining local acequia systems that reside on public lands.

My staff presented this concept paper to Paula Garcia of the New Mexico Acequia Association, Arturo Archuleta of the New Mexico Land Grant Council and Dr. Garcia y Griego, Director of the University of New Mexico's Land Grant Studies Program to get their feedback on the concept legislation. Both organizations asked for time to review the concept and follow up with comments and recommendations to the proposed bill. Thus far, the New Mexico Acequia Association has responded and I am awaiting a response from the Land Grant Council.

This proposed legislation is only one step in addressing a multitude of issues that impact local land grants. There is much more that needs to be done and I will continue working with local land grants and rural communities on restoring, preserving and protecting our cultures and traditions directly connected to land use.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented please feel free to contact Aaron Trujillo in my Washington D.C. office at aaron.trujillo@mail.house.gov or 202-225-6190. Thank you again for your work on these critical issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Ray Lujan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress