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SENATE MEMORIAL 13

**48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2007**

INTRODUCED BY

Mary Jane M. Garcia

A MEMORIAL

SUPPORTING ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION OF THE RIO GRANDE IN SOUTHERN  
NEW MEXICO BY ENCOURAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK TOGETHER TO  
SECURE WATER FOR RESTORATION.

WHEREAS, the governor has declared 2007 to be the "year of  
water"; and

WHEREAS, the Rio Grande has been the lifeblood for human  
cultures in New Mexico for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS, the Rio Grande provides important habitat for  
hundreds of plant and animal species; and

WHEREAS, the lower Rio Grande ecosystem in southern New  
Mexico has been compromised by the construction and operation  
of two federal water projects since 1916; and

WHEREAS, approximately two-thirds of the native fish  
species historically found in the Rio Grande below Caballo dam

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1 have disappeared, along with more than ninety-five percent of  
2 the original wetlands and riparian bosque; and

3 WHEREAS, the water of the lower Rio Grande is fully  
4 appropriated for agriculture; and

5 WHEREAS, there is growing interest in restoring the Rio  
6 Grande to ecological health; and

7 WHEREAS, a healthy Rio Grande ecosystem benefits New  
8 Mexicans by providing a renewable supply of clean water for  
9 cities and farms, preserving the natural heritage, helping to  
10 avoid additional listings of endangered species and  
11 contributing to the quality of life in communities along the  
12 river; and

13 WHEREAS, every kind of restoration project, from planting  
14 trees, creating wetlands or opening former meanders, entails  
15 the consumption of some amount of water and needs to be  
16 supported by water rights; and

17 WHEREAS, the lower Rio Grande has no legal rights to its  
18 own water; that is, no water is currently available for  
19 restoration projects; and

20 WHEREAS, the statutorily defined purposes for which water  
21 could be acquired as part of the New Mexico strategic river  
22 reserve do not apply to the lower Rio Grande at this time due  
23 to the lack of endangered species, compact delivery obligations  
24 or court settlements requiring water; and

25 WHEREAS, mechanisms currently exist that could be used to

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1 achieve voluntary transfers of water to support restoration  
2 efforts, including purchase, lease and donation of water and  
3 water rights;

4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE  
5 OF NEW MEXICO that it support ecological restoration of the  
6 lower Rio Grande by urging all stakeholders to work together to  
7 obtain through voluntary mechanisms the water needed to support  
8 restoration efforts intended to benefit the Rio Grande  
9 ecosystem in southern New Mexico; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT copies of this memorial be  
11 transmitted to members of the lower Rio Grande water users  
12 organization and the Paso del Norte watershed council.