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SENATE MEMORIAL 21

50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2011

INTRODUCED BY

Tim Eichenberg

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND FISH TO WORK WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF CONDUCTING LIMITED-ENTRY BOW HUNTS FOR ELK IN THE BACKCOUNTRY OF BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT.

WHEREAS, Bandelier national monument in the Jemez mountain range was established in 1916 and is comprised of nearly forty thousand acres; and

WHEREAS, by 1916, unregulated hunting had eliminated elk from the Jemez mountain range, and other wildlife game species were on the brink of elimination in the Jemez mountains as well; and

WHEREAS, today, elk have been restored to the Jemez mountains and have grown rapidly in population, largely through conservation efforts funded by hunters; and

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1 WHEREAS, hunting on public lands is an important
2 management tool to ensure the health of the ecosystem,
3 particularly in the absence of some species of large, natural
4 predators; and

5 WHEREAS, in October 1976, nearly seventy percent of the
6 backcountry of Bandelier national monument became a designated
7 wilderness area, allowing greater focus on the restoration of
8 elk and other endangered wildlife; and

9 WHEREAS, today, these remote areas of the backcountry see
10 few visitors, but they could offer a unique backcountry
11 experience to hunters; and

12 WHEREAS, on other land managed by the national park
13 service, overpopulation of wild ungulates has been shown to
14 cause long-term habitat degradation; and

15 WHEREAS, instances of habitat degradation of aspens and
16 other native plant species that are heavily browsed by elk have
17 been documented in Bandelier national monument, putting the
18 regeneration of aspen stands at risk; and

19 WHEREAS, a proposed transfer of the management of Valles
20 Caldera national preserve to the national park service includes
21 a requirement that a hunting program be established at Valles
22 Caldera national preserve; and

23 WHEREAS, given that Valles Caldera national preserve is
24 contiguous to Bandelier national monument, establishing a
25 hunting program in the backcountry of Bandelier national

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1 monument should also be considered; and

2 WHEREAS, a limited-entry bow hunt for elk in the
3 backcountry portions of Bandelier national monument could
4 provide an important management tool for preserving the
5 ecological integrity of the monument lands and could help to
6 redistribute elk onto surrounding national forest lands; and

7 WHEREAS, the department of game and fish is charged with
8 managing wildlife in trust for the public; and

9 WHEREAS, the national park service oversees and manages
10 all of the national parks, including Bandelier national
11 monument and, potentially, Valles Caldera national preserve;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
13 OF NEW MEXICO that the department of game and fish be requested
14 to work with the national park service to determine the
15 feasibility of conducting limited-entry bow hunts for elk in
16 the backcountry of Bandelier national monument; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the feasibility study consider
18 the appropriateness of requesting federal legislation to permit
19 the United States secretary of the interior to allow
20 limited-entry bow hunting of elk to preserve the ecological
21 health of backcountry areas and to provide expanded hunting
22 opportunities in Bandelier national monument for New Mexico
23 residents; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of game and
25 fish formulate a report of the findings and recommendations of

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1 the feasibility study and present the report to the appropriate
2 interim committee by October 2011; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of game and
4 fish transmit the feasibility study findings to the members of
5 the New Mexico congressional delegation for further
6 consideration; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
8 transmitted to the superintendent of Bandelier national
9 monument, the United States secretary of the interior, the
10 director of the department of game and fish and the members of
11 the New Mexico congressional delegation.