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SENATE MEMORIAL 60

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPORTANCE OF PECOS CANYON AND THE UPPER PECOS WATERSHED AND
OPPOSING EXPLORATORY DRILLING PROJECTS PROPOSED FOR THAT AREA.

WHEREAS, Pecos canyon is the ancestral homeland of the
Pecos Pueblo; and

WHEREAS, the people of the Pueblo of Cochiti, the Pueblo
of Jemez, Kewa Pueblo, the Pueblo of Pojoaque and the Pueblo of
San Felipe continue to exist as sovereign communities in and
around the Jemez and Sangre de Cristo mountains; and

WHEREAS, Pecos canyon attracts tens of thousands of
visitors every year to hike, camp, fish, picnic, bird-watch,
hunt and generally recreate; and

WHEREAS, local businesses in the village of Pecos and the
surrounding communities rely upon recreational visitors; and

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1 WHEREAS, local outdoor recreation businesses rely upon the
2 pristine waters of the Pecos river and the solitude offered by
3 Pecos canyon and its surrounding wild lands; and

4 WHEREAS, the headwaters of the Pecos, Gallinas and Mora
5 rivers and dozens of their tributaries are key water sources
6 for acequias; and

7 WHEREAS, the headwaters of the Pecos, Gallinas and Mora
8 rivers and dozens of their tributaries are key water sources
9 for farmers, the village of Pecos, the city of Las Vegas and
10 other surrounding communities; and

11 WHEREAS, Indian creek, Doctors creek and Macho creek
12 contain populations of the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, the
13 state fish of New Mexico; and

14 WHEREAS, Pecos canyon is home to the Holy Ghost ipomopsis,
15 a federally endangered plant, and the Mexican spotted owl, a
16 federally threatened species; and

17 WHEREAS, numerous species of cats, bears and ungulates
18 reside in Pecos canyon; and

19 WHEREAS, climate change has adversely affected New Mexico
20 and will continue to have adverse effects on New Mexico; and

21 WHEREAS, mining contributes to greenhouse gas emissions at
22 the source and as a consequence of increased industrial
23 activity in general; and

24 WHEREAS, the Pecos wilderness is one of the most visited
25 wilderness areas in New Mexico, enticing tens of thousands of

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1 visitors every year; and

2 WHEREAS, in 1991, a spring snow melt event carried
3 contaminants from a previous mining operation into the Pecos
4 river, killing over ninety thousand fish; and

5 WHEREAS, the cleanup of the 1991 contamination event has
6 cost the taxpayers of New Mexico at least twenty-eight million
7 dollars (\$28,000,000); and

8 WHEREAS, the village of Pecos has recovered from this
9 contamination event and established itself as a destination for
10 outdoor enthusiasts; and

11 WHEREAS, the cleanup of the previous mining operation is
12 ongoing; and

13 WHEREAS, there is a pending application with the mining
14 and minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural
15 resources department for permission to undertake exploratory
16 drilling with up to thirty drill pads and holes at eighty-four
17 potential locations in the area of Pecos canyon and the upper
18 Pecos watershed; and

19 WHEREAS, exploratory drilling operations often adversely
20 affect the surrounding environment, including ground and
21 surface waters; and

22 WHEREAS, United States Senator Martin Heinrich opposes the
23 exploratory drilling in the Pecos canyon area; and

24 WHEREAS, Assistant Speaker of the United States House of
25 Representatives Ben R. Lujan opposes the exploratory drilling

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1 in the Pecos canyon area;

2 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
3 OF NEW MEXICO that Pecos canyon and the upper Pecos watershed
4 be deemed an inappropriate place to conduct an exploratory
5 drilling operation and for activities associated with an
6 exploratory drilling operation; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
8 transmitted to the governor and the secretary of energy,
9 minerals and natural resources.