

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2023

Chief Randy Moore
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Moore:

Thank you for your April 11, 2023 letter responding to our request that the Forest Service, in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management, protect the Upper Pecos Watershed through a mineral withdrawal. You indicated in your letter that the Forest Service is evaluating the potential risk of mineral development in the Upper Pecos Watershed and the extent to which current laws and regulations are adequate for the protection of the watershed.

As you conduct your assessment, please provide a description of the steps involved and the criteria that will be used in the Forest Service's assessment. Additionally, please outline how the Forest Service will involve local stakeholders, including tribal leaders, local elected officials, landowners, acequia parciantes, farmers and ranchers, and business owners in the assessment process.

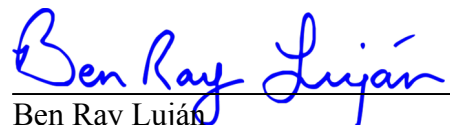
Mining in and around sensitive watersheds has caused tragic consequences time and time again. In 1939, the original Tererro mine in the Upper Pecos Watershed was closed after 13 years of operation, but the damage was already done. Decades of acidic runoff and heavy metal pollution ensued. In 1991, toxic runoff ran into the Pecos River and a deadly concoction of sulfuric acid, aluminum, and zinc killed approximately 100,000 Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout and knee-capped the local economy. Cleanup of the Superfund site has cost New Mexico and its taxpayers at least \$8 million and remediation is not close to done.

Rural communities rely on streams and rivers for economic activity, recreation, and irrigation, and drinking water. The people of the Upper Pecos Watershed should not have the threat of another toxic spill looming over them. We urge you to move forward with a mineral withdrawal in this area and look forward to your responses.

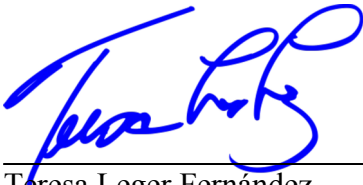
Sincerely,



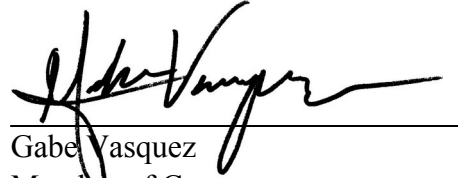
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



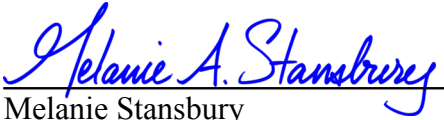
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress