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**United States Senate**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150  
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May 23, 2025

Mr. Tom Schultz  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Schultz:

For decades, the community in the Upper Pecos Watershed of New Mexico has been united in an effort to protect the river basin from the very real threat of mine waste pollution. Everyone in the community can agree that the Pecos River is an invaluable lifeline. With headwaters in Northern New Mexico, the Pecos supports a wide range of uses from recreation and agriculture to traditional use by the Pueblos in the area. Unfortunately, this region has a history of poorly managed mining projects. The area is still recovering from a devastating 1991 mine spill, which threatened the health and economic survival in the immediate community and for hundreds of miles throughout the state. Thanks to decades of hard work and millions of dollars, this watershed is once again one of the cleanest and most productive in the state – though the remediation is not complete.

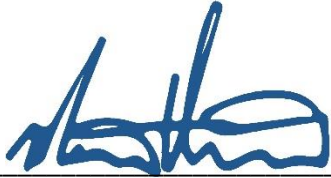
To New Mexicans who are facing a threat to their way of life and cultural heritage, there is no doubt that this area should be permanently protected. The spill in 1991 left scars on the landscape and with those who depend on the river. We celebrated when the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management announced last year that they would be pursuing a 20-year mineral withdrawal in the basin. The long-overdue action by the last administration was a major victory for the Pecos Valley.

However, I am concerned by the Forest Service's decision to reverse the temporary protection and discontinue the process for a longer-term withdrawal. This decision was made without proper community engagement or review of the hundreds of positive comments that were submitted during the public comment period. The Administration also cancelled a public forum that would have allowed for discussion of the administrative withdrawal and demonstrated to your agency that this community is united by the beauty and health of the Pecos River.

Therefore, I would like to extend an invitation to you to visit New Mexico and the Pecos area so you can hear firsthand from local leaders, Tribes, community members, farmers, business owners, recreationists, and others while experiencing the beauty of this watershed. While there, you can see why this river is so valuable and witness the very real threat of mining pollution that still exists.

I am including letters and invites from local and tribal leaders that show the widespread support for this effort in the area. They represent just a few of many examples of community support for protecting the Pecos. Thank you for your attention to this request and I hope I can see you in New Mexico soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Heinrich', is positioned above a horizontal line.

MARTIN HEINRICH  
Ranking Member