

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2024

Scott Stewart
Forest Legacy Program Manager
Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Stewart,

We are writing to share our support for the proposed investment of Forest Legacy Program funds for the Vermejo River Watershed Conservation Project. This project would bolster collaboration between Indigenous communities, non-government organizations, and the State of New Mexico.

This project covers 32,580 acres of pristine timberland, including 7.2 miles of the Vermejo River and will conserve a diverse ecological system and the wildlife that live there. Protecting this system will safeguard a crucial drinking water resource for people across the eastern half of the State. Continued management of this land will support local businesses through ongoing ranch management activities and through the active management of game populations, the hunting of which contributes more than \$600 million in annual economic spending across New Mexico.

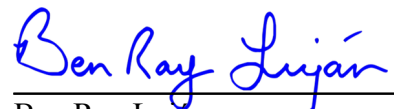
This investment of Forest Legacy Funds directly enables a variety of co-benefits, including the conservation of an additional 17,469 adjacent acres and the creation of New Mexico's first Indigenous-led land trust, which will increase equitable access to funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The project will contribute to the vibrancy of local communities, protect biodiversity, and keep forest ecosystems intact.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress