

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 2, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We thank you for your leadership on so many issues important to New Mexico and the country. We write to request that you begin the process of administratively withdrawing 4,288 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land near Las Placitas, New Mexico, including an eponymous tract shaped like a buffalo, from all forms of mineral development. Withdrawing the land from mineral development is a priority for the communities in the area to protect and conserve these lands, which have both cultural and ecological significance. Their withdrawal aligns closely with the Administration's goals of conserving important lands and consulting with our communities.

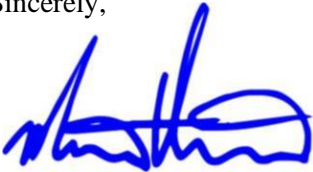
As the former Representative for this area, we know that you are aware of how important the conservation of these lands is to these communities. Sandoval County already has six gravel mines, including four of the state's largest. The location of the proposed mine is on lands that are ancestral to surrounding Pueblos, are key wildlife corridors for deer, elk, wild turkey, and pronghorn antelope, and could have cumulative environmental health and other impacts on the nearby residential communities.

Residents adjacent to the proposed development, including two Pueblos and surrounding neighborhood associations, are strongly opposed to the environmental, public health and other damage that additional mining would bring. In fact, the BLM received more than 17,000 public comments on its draft Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan including these tracts of land, thousands of comments more than are generally received for similar projects.

We support permanent withdrawal and will continue to pursue our legislation, S. 180 and H.R. 5805, to permanently withdraw these lands while maintaining the authority of BLM to sell, lease, or exchange the surface rights. As our legislation continues to move through the process, an administrative withdrawal would protect the area from mineral development until a permanent withdrawal can be enacted.

The Pueblo of Santa Ana, the Pueblo of San Felipe, and the people of Placitas have been waiting for nearly a decade to have their voices heard. We look forward to working with you to protect the long-term health, well-being, and habitat of these communities.

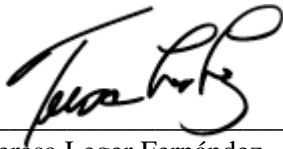
Sincerely,



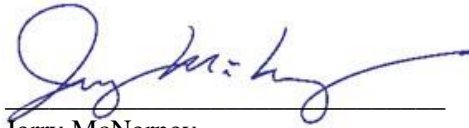
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Melanie A. Stansbury
Member of Congress

Cc: Nada Culver, Deputy Director of Policy and Programs, Bureau of Land Management