



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Praises Preliminary Approval of His Action to Protect New Mexico Roadless Areas

Action Follows Washington Hearing; Governor Richardson First Western Governor to Join Bi-Partisan Effort to Protect America's Last Wild Forests

(Santa Fe, NM) – Governor Bill Richardson praised the preliminary approval today of his petition to protect 1.7 million acres of New Mexico wild areas – 1.6 million acres of roadless national forests in New Mexico, as well as 100,000 acres at the Valle Vidal. This action followed New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) Cabinet Secretary Joanna Prukop's testimony in Washington, DC yesterday before the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee to defend New Mexico's Roadless Petition.

"This action puts us one step closer to protecting these beautiful areas for future generations to enjoy," said Governor Richardson. "By protecting all 1.6 million acres of roadless territory in New Mexico's national forests as well as the Valle Vidal, we are helping to support significant and complex wildlife communities as well as supporting local, rural economies based on recreation, hunting and fishing."

Governor Richardson submitted a Roadless Petition on behalf of the State of New Mexico to the Secretary of Agriculture on May 31, 2006 to protect all inventoried roadless regions totaling 1,597,000 acres. He was the first western Governor to petition the Bush Administration for roadless area protection under a new rule established last year.

"We are very pleased that all elements of our petition were approved, including maintaining roadless status for all 1,698,285 acres," said EMNRD Cabinet Secretary Joanna Prukop. "We look forward to working with the US Forest Service and stakeholders as this process goes forward."

Included in the petition is a 100,000 acre area known as Valle Vidal in the Carson National Forest. The Valle Vidal, now at risk to oil and gas development, is prime habitat for elk and trout, which brings hunters, fisherman and tourists from all around the region to this place of rare beauty. The Valle Vidal was added to the National Forest System after the original roadless inventories were conducted and, to this day, lacks permanent protection.

This action to protect the Valle Vidal builds upon Governor Richardson's other preservation efforts, including declaring all its world class trout streams as Outstanding National Resource Waters under the Clean Water Act.

The Federal Advisory Committee was appointed by the Bush Administration. Their decision today was to approve the petition and pass it on to the next step, putting it before the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for the initiation of a federal rulemaking process.

For more information, including the state petition, go to: www.wildlife.state.nm.us.

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