



SAN MIGUEL COUNTY
RESOLUTION NO. 03-14-23-B: Commissioner
SUPPORTING THE PERMANENT PRESERVATION OF THE CAJA DEL RIO
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE & WILDLIFE AREA

WHEREAS, San Miguel County has an incredible array of public lands that encompass a stunning wealth of landscapes that are enjoyed by residents and non-residents alike. The national public lands model is a remarkable asset for both San Miguel County and New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, San Miguel County includes the Pecos National Historic Park, the ancestral home of Pecos Pueblo, a powerful and prominent Pueblo that was a center of great trade among the Pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley and Western Apache; and

WHEREAS, after various hardships during the colonial period, the people of Pecos Pueblo sought refuge at the Pueblo of Jemez and today the descendants of the Pecos Pueblo reside with Jemez and are one with the people, Pueblo, and culture; and

WHEREAS, Jemez Pueblo actively maintains the connection to Pecos Pueblo and the Second Lieutenant Governor for Jemez Pueblo also serves as the Pecos Pueblo Governor, a tribal leadership role created when Pecos and Jemez merged in 1838; and

WHEREAS, the Pecos Eagle Society, a traditional religious society from Pecos Pueblo, annually returns to its aboriginal homelands at Pecos to perform ceremonial rites at shrines that exist to this day; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio located on 106,883 acres of the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") and U.S. Forest Service ("USFS") public lands in north-central New Mexico acts as an important area of spiritual connection, grounding and travel between the Jemez and Pecos Pueblos providing a sense of memory and self-identity that speak to the sacred connection between land, water, wildlife and people since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio is considered one of America's most iconic landscapes and an area of profound cultural, historical, archeological, and ecological significance; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio is a landscape of dramatic topography whose geological processes stem from the Rio Grande rift and whose boundaries stretch from the boundary of the Rio Grande to the southern and western boundaries of the La Bajada Escarpment, Santa Fe River, and Canada Ancha; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio contains two dynamic watersheds — the Santa Fe River Canyon and the Rio Grande corridor from Buckman to Cochiti Lake — and both watersheds have critical cultural, hydrological, ecological, agricultural, and economic significance; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio is one of the most remarkable natural landscapes in the American Southwest with cactus forests, birds ranging from burrowing owls to bald and golden eagles, herds of deer and elk, and black bears and cougars; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio has been critical habitat to wildlife throughout northern New Mexico for millennia and a wide variety of bird and animal species continue to use the area as a migratory corridor, breeding grounds and an area of relocation during wildfires and changing climates; and

WHEREAS, in connecting various mountain ranges and wildlife habitats, the Caja del Rio acts as a lynchpin of wildlife connectivity and is essential for maintaining wildlife movement throughout the Upper Rio Grande; and

WHEREAS, preserving the Caja del Rio's historic and cultural context is critical for sustaining San Miguel County's rich and diverse history, cultures, traditions, heritage, and the vibrant community we are blessed to collectively share; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio plateau has been inhabited by Native and Indigenous communities since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio is recognized by various Pueblos' traditional leadership as a significant region of cultural properties where Pueblo ancestors built housing structures, ceremonial kivas, roads, irrigation infrastructure, petroglyphs, and other cultural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio contains a dense concentration of thousands of sacred sites, structures, petroglyphs, irrigation systems, and other cultural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Pueblos maintain an ongoing connection and use of the Caja del Rio landscape and its cultural resources, and sacred sites through story, song, pilgrimage, and prayer, and preserving the landscape's historic and cultural context is critical for ongoing cultural religious access and use; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio landscape has a revelatory, sacred, and communal Pueblo connection. This communal connection brings memory back to be a conduit of self- understanding that we are all one earth people who with the four legged, winged, finned, pollinators and aquatic micro invertebrates are together connected as one in the sacred web of life. This communal connection then also extends to the traditional local Hispanic community and broader northern New Mexico communities who also see this landscape as spiritual and sacred; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio also represents the key landscape demarcation between what the Spanish colonial world termed the Rio Abajo and Rio Arriba regions of New Mexico and where the people of Northern New Mexico's Traditional Hispano villages maintain deep ties and living roots in the Caja del Rio cultural landscape as "Ejido" (communal) through perpetuation and practice of traditional uses of flora and fauna and by pilgrimage and prayer; and

WHEREAS, San Miguel County acknowledges the importance of traditional Hispano communities, including Jacona, Agua Fria, La Cieneguilla, La Cienega, and La Bajada, that remain deeply connected to the Caja del Rio and act as living repositories of traditional ecological and cultural knowledge of the area; and

WHEREAS, San Miguel County recognizes the importance of traditional livestock production on the Caja del Rio plateau and supports continued responsible range management as has been conducted through the

cooperation of cattle growers and livestock permittees, traditional merced and acequia communities as political subdivisions of New Mexico, and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, portions of the Caja del Rio have tremendous potential for sustainable outdoor recreation and to create jobs and enhance local economies so long as these regulated activities do not adversely impact the cultural, hydrological, and ecological resources of the landscape. San Miguel County recognizes the importance of multi-use recreational access; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio is still used by the Pueblo Nations and traditional Hispano communities to exercise traditional land use values including: hunting, fishing, grazing, wood gathering, pinion harvesting, herb and plant gathering, sacred pilgrimage, and the historic community use of the land in other traditional ways; and

WHEREAS, also the Caja del Rio contains a major and historically significant travel corridor along the National Historic Trail of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, an important trade route that ran from Mexico City to the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico, from 1598 to 1881; and

WHEREAS, various petroglyphs and archeological sites found along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro and throughout the Caja del Rio speak to the arrival, presence, history, culture and influence of the Spanish in the area; and

WHEREAS, residents and spiritual leaders throughout San Miguel County and the United States recognize the sacred value of the Caja del Rio and utilize the area as a place of prayer, silence, solitude, worship and sacred pilgrimage; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1900s the main travel corridor of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro along the Caja del Rio transformed to become famous for its iconic stretches of New Mexico Highway 1 and ultimately Route 66; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio also serves as a critical landscape in creating a historical, cultural, and ecological corridor connecting to Bandelier National Monument and the adjacent sites of Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument, El Rancho de los Golondrinas and the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance has listed the Caja del Rio as one of the "most endangered places" in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, there are many significant threats to the Caja del Rio's land, water, wildlife, and cultural and archeological antiquities including, but not limited to: petroglyph defacement, vandalism, and theft, illegal shooting and poaching of wildlife and livestock, illegal dumping, theft of stock tanks, unlawful OHV usage and habitat fragmentation from illegal roads, unmanaged/unlawful recreation, and recent sales of federal lands by the BLM for other public purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio's cultural and wildlife resources remain under significant threat from the Los Alamos National Labs proposals to run a major transmission line cutting across the Caja del Rio landscape as well as the proposal for the development of a major highway to be created through the area; and

WHEREAS, the federal agencies with jurisdiction over the area have provided insufficient management and resources to patrol, monitor, and protect the many antiquities within the Caja del Rio; and

WHEREAS, traditional land use permittees wish to work collaboratively with the federal agencies and ask these agencies to recognize the historical and cultural significance of traditional uses within New Mexico's Hispano communities and honor such uses in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, Pueblo Nations with a deep connection to the Caja del Rio would like the federal government to provide the protections needed to preserve and protect traditional Native sacred sites as well as maintain Pueblo access and co-stewardship of these sites; and

WHEREAS, the Caja del Rio should become an important experiential learning "classroom" for the area's surrounding youth and a place to teach children the cultural, historical, ecological, geological, hydrological, and biological aspects of this remarkable landscape; and

WHEREAS, the permanent protection of the Caja del Rio will help New Mexico reach the goals of "America the Beautiful" initiative and the State's Executive Order 2021-052 focused on protecting biodiversity and conserving lands and waters by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the America the Beautiful initiative encourages locally led and voluntary efforts to conserve, connect, and restore lands, waters, and wildlife upon which we all depend, and protection efforts are locally driven and led, characterized by community collaboration, and support the priorities of Tribal Nations, while also engaging other local stakeholders.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners of San Miguel County:

1. Supports the permanent protection, long-term preservation, and responsible stewardship of the Caja del Rio landscape;
2. Supports the collaboration and stewardship of the Caja del Rio among responsible federal agencies, sovereign Tribal Nations and traditional Hispano communities, for the permanent protection and preservation of this precious natural and cultural landscape;
3. Supports all efforts to empower sovereign Tribal Nations and traditional Hispano communities in performing meaningful cultural interpretation, environmental education, and historical preservation of this treasured landscape;
4. Supports the strong stewardship and responsible management of wildlife and the wild environs of the Caja del Rio Plateau, for the benefit of the public today, and for future generations;
5. Supports the continuation and sustainment of traditional uses of the Caja del Rio including hunting, fishing, grazing, wood gathering, pinion harvesting, herb and plant gathering, scared prayer and pilgrimage, and the historic community use of land in other traditional ways; and
6. Opposes new development and construction of highways, power transmission lines, or other infrastructure encroachments on the landscape of the Caja del Rio.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of the County Commissioners of San Miguel County hereby requests that the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress initiate the process to bring permanent protections to the Caja del Rio.

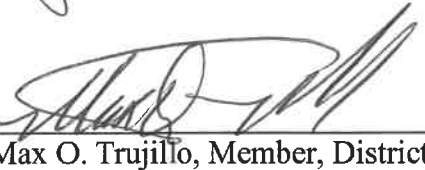
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners of San Miguel County requests that the County Manager forward this Resolution to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management Director, the U.S. Forest Service National Director, New Mexico's Senators and

Representatives in Congress, the New Mexico Governor, State Senators and Representatives in the New Mexico Legislature representing San Miguel County, New Mexico Counties' Executive Board of Directors, and other elected officials representing political subdivisions wholly or partially within the boundaries of San Miguel County.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED ON THIS 14TH DAY OF MARCH, 2023.


Harold M. Garcia, Chair, District 1

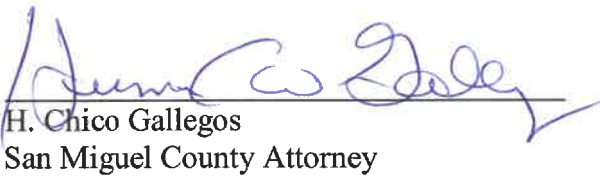

Janice C. Varela, Member, District 2


Max O. Trujillo, Member, District 3

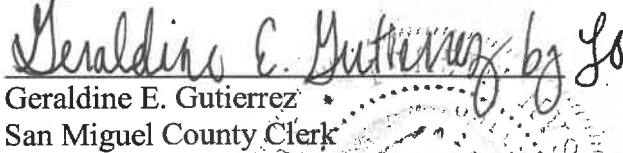

Martin Sena, Vice-Chair, District 4


Kenneth Medina, Member, District 5

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:


H. Chico Gallegos
San Miguel County Attorney

ATTEST:


Geraldine E. Gutierrez
San Miguel County Clerk

