



October 31, 2019

James Melonas
Forest Supervisor
Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane
Santa Fe, NM 87508

James Duran
Forest Supervisor
Carson National Forest
208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos, NM 87571

“But ask the animals, they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; Ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; And the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know, that the hand of the Lord has done this; In God’s hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being;” Job 12:7-10

“The animals are our teachers.” Joseph Brophy Toledo, Jemez Pueblo

“The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees and earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise...then we can build a noble environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we shall perish.” Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Thai Monk

Dear Supervisors Melonas and Duran,

As spiritual leaders, we recognize that the Creator entrusts each of us to be keepers of the earth, to be responsible stewards of creation, and to enjoy the beauty and sacredness of the land, water and wildlife. From the majestic encounter with Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep scaling steep cliffs in the Carson National Forest, to the joy that comes from watching a golden eagle soar high above the Santa Fe National Forest, such sacred encounters leave us with a profound appreciation of creation and the Creator. In a state of incredible beauty and biodiversity, we recognize that New Mexico’s wildlife has much to teach us and we affirm the important role that each species has in the larger interdependent web of life.

Accordingly, we write to you to express our strong support for protecting critical wildlife habitat and key wildlife corridors in the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests. As part of the Upper Rio Grande, one of the most intact wildlife landscapes in America, the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests are not only home to amazing wildlife like Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, majestic herds of elk, mule deer, and pronghorn as well as a diverse array of birds, reptiles and amphibians, but also connect a diverse tapestry of human communities whose rich history, culture and sacred traditions are all rooted in the area’s land, water and wildlife.

Protecting essential wildlife habitat and key migration routes in the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests is a critical step in helping address the world’s and America’s wildlife crisis. According to the recent United Nation’s Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report, one million species worldwide are now threatened with extinction within the next few decades. The current rate of species extinction is ten to one hundred times higher than the average rate of extinction over the past 10 million years. In the U.S., over one third of our nation’s wildlife are at risk of extinction by 2050 and states have identified over 12,000 species in need of conservation. As interfaith leaders, we recognize that failure to protect critical habitat that allows wildlife to flourish and move on the landscape can result in the collapse of ecosystems as well as endangers vulnerable human communities, threatens cultural identities, traditions and spiritual practices and jeopardizes one of the most important things that makes New Mexico “the Land of Enchantment.”

In light of the fact that the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests are currently revising their forest plans that will set the management direction of each forest for decades, we are asking that both forests adopt strong forest-wide prescriptions to protect critical wildlife habitat and promote wildlife connectivity. Along these lines, we also encourage the Santa Fe and Carson to follow the best available science by continuing to include the following special wildlife management areas in their final forest plans:

The Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretative Area

Bordering Bandelier National Monument and connecting various western mountain ranges, the Santa Fe National Forest's "Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area" is a place of profound cultural, historical and spiritual significance. Recognized by the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance as one of the State's "most endangered places," this management area contains thousands of significant archaeological sites as well as various Native American sacred sites. The Caja del Rio is also home to historic trails, such as the Camino Real del Tierra Adentro. The management area contains numerous wildlife corridors critical to the survival of various species and will help protect important wildlife habitat for elk, mule deer, black bear, and cougar as well as various birds including western burrowing owls, golden eagles and grey vireo.

The San Antonio Management Area

In the Carson National Forest and located northwest of Taos, the San Antonio Management Area is comprised of 148,000 acres of rolling grassland surrounded by conifers, ponderosa pines and aspen stands. This area connects to a critical wildlife area in Colorado and is adjacent to the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. This region contains important migration corridors for mule deer, elk and pronghorn as they travel between New Mexico and Colorado, is home to various terrestrial and aquatic species and is an important area for wintering and calving elk herds.

The Valle Vidal Management Area

Located north of Taos, the Valle Vidal ("Valley of Life") Management Area stretches over 100,000 acres of rolling grassland surrounded by conifers, bristlecone pines and aspen stands. Special management of this area will preserve important wildlife corridors, including migration routes used by elk to reach calving grounds in the Valle Vidal. The area is home to one of New Mexico's largest elk herds and is also home to New Mexico's state fish the Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep

We also write to ask that you recognize Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep as a "Species of Conservation Concern." As one of America's most iconic species, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep symbolize the sheer beauty, strength and spirit of the American West. By recognizing them as a "Species of Conservation Concern," the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests will continue to support the work of various Native tribes by continuing to ensure a successful recovery for this incredible indigenous species. Historically, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep were well distributed across the western U.S. numbering over a million animals. Due to habitat loss, over-hunting, and disease exposure, by the late 1800s the population of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep drastically declined from over a million to only 45,000 sheep remaining today. Since the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests both provide essential habitat for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, prioritizing the management of bighorn sheep will help ensure the survival of this remarkable species.

As spiritual leaders representing various communities throughout New Mexico, we recognize the important role you have in being stewards of New Mexico's sacred land, water and wildlife and as

such we ask that you include the aforementioned special management areas and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep as a species of conservation concern in your final forest plans.

With Gratitude,

<p>Reverend Andrew Black Minister First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe & EarthKeepers 360 Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Joseph Brophy Toledo Flower Hill Institute Jemez Pueblo, NM 87024</p>
<p>Sister Joan Brown, osf Executive Director New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light Albuquerque, NM 87125</p>	<p>Rabbi Nahum Ward-Lev Scholar in Residence Temple Beth Shalom Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend Cheri Lyon Pastor El Pueblito United Methodist Church Taos, NM 87701</p>	<p>Reverend Pamela Shepherd Pastor Taos United Community Church (UCC) Taos, NM 87571</p>
<p>Reverend Dr. William M. Lyons Conference Minister/CEO Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ New Mexico and Arizona</p>	<p>Ruling Elder Nelson Capitan Elder Laguna United Presbyterian Church Pueblo of Laguna, NM 87007</p>
<p>Father Richard Rohr, ofm Franciscan Friar Albuquerque, NM 87105</p>	<p>Senior Chaplain Elizabeth Montoya International Fellowship of Chaplains Las Vegas, NM 87701</p>
<p>Reverend Dr. George Ortiz Honorably Retired Presbytery of Santa Fe Chimayo, NM 87522</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Harry Eberts Pastor First Presbyterian Church Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>
<p>Reverend Susan J. Quass Executive Director New Mexico Conference of Churches Albuquerque, NM 87102</p>	<p>Donald Handrick Resident Teacher Thubten Norbu Tibetan Buddhist Center Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend Talitha Arnold Senior Minister United Church of Santa Fe (UCC) Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>	<p>Charlotte Smith Albuquerque Baha'i Community Albuquerque, NM 87102</p>
<p>Reverend Richard Safford United Church of Angel Fire Angel Fire, NM 87710</p>	<p>Elder Lou Ann Johnson Elder Laguna United Presbyterian Church Pueblo of Laguna, NM 87026</p>
<p>Associate Director Stephen Picha Education Director Ghost Ranch Education & Retreat Center Abiquiu, NM 87510</p>	<p>Reverend Jeffrey A. Finch Pastor Jemez Springs Presbyterian Church Jemez Springs, NM 87025</p>
<p>Reverend Virginia Bairby Pastor Presbyterian Church of Taos Taos, NM 87571</p>	<p>Reverend James R. Campbell First United Presbyterian Church Las Vegas Las Vegas, NM 87701</p>
<p>Mula Akbar Director of Public Relations Albuquerque Islamic Center Albuquerque, NM 87112</p>	<p>The Right Reverend David E. Bailey Bishop of Navajoland Episcopal Church in Navajoland Farmington, NM 87499</p>

<p>Rt. Reverend Joel Garner Abbot Santa Maria de La Vid Abbey Albuquerque, NM 87121</p>	<p>Reverend Erica Lea-Simka Pastor Albuquerque Mennonite Church Albuquerque, NM 87106</p>
<p>Pastor Jason B. McSpadden Pastor Lutheran Church of the Servant Santa Fe, NM 87507</p>	<p>Sister Marlene Perrotte, rsm Mercy Sister Albuquerque, NM 87107</p>
<p>Reverend Roger Scott Powers Pastor St. Andrew Presbyterian Church Albuquerque, NM 87110</p>	<p>Dr. Larry Rasmussen United Church of Santa Fe (UCC) Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend Carolyn Metzler Episcopal Priest Diocese of the Rio Grande Albuquerque, NM 87108</p>	<p>Reverend Lorelei Kay Pastor Westminster Presbyterian Church Gallup Gallup, NM 87301</p>
<p>Reverend Jocelyn Emerson Pastor St Paul's United Church of Christ Rio Rancho, NM 87114</p>	<p>Father Thomas Smith, ofm Conv. Director Holy Cross Retreat Center Mesilla Park, NM 88047</p>
<p>Reverend Dr. Stephen J. Miller Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Albuquerque, NM 87107</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Carolyn D. Pruitt Minister United Church of Christ Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Marjorie Davidson Commissioned Ruling Elder Rio Rancho Presbyterian Church Rio Rancho, NM 87124</p>	<p>Reverend Gail Lindsay Marriner Minister Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe Santa Fe, NM 87508</p>
<p>Johana Bencomo Director of Organizing NM Comunidades en Acción y de Fe (CAFé) Las Cruces, NM 88005</p>	<p>Mary Ellen Gonzales President, Board of Trustees Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend Benjamin Larzelere III Retired Pastor Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>	<p>Reverend Frank Yates Parish Associate First Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87508</p>
<p>Rabbi Paul Citrin Adult Education Teacher Congregation Albert Albuquerque, NM 87110</p>	<p>Reverend Anita Amstutz Chaplain Mennonite Church USA Albuquerque, NM 87106</p>
<p>Reverend Jean Siegfried Darling Coordinator, UU Santa Fe Environmental Justice Team Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe Cerrillos, NM 87010</p>	<p>Reverend Todd Wynward Accompanying Pastor & Mennonite Minister for Environmental Justice Taos UCC & Mountain States Mennonite Conference Albuquerque, NM 87571</p>
<p>The Reverend Victoria S. Ubben Ordained clergy Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Reverend Tiffany Curtis Pastor First Christian Church of Santa Fe (Disciples of Christ) Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend H. Blaine Wimberly Pastor Zia United Methodist Church Santa Fe, NM 87507</p>	<p>Sister Maria Isabel Galbe Sister Religious of the Assumption Catholic Sister Chaparral, NM 88081</p>
<p>Reverend Joene Herr Pastor Christ Lutheran Church Santa Fe Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>	<p>Sister Diana Wauters Sister Religious of the Assumption Catholic Sister Chaparral, NM 88081</p>

<p>Deacon J. Andy Dimas St. Anne Catholic Church Santa Fe Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Richard W. Murphy Retired Episcopal Priest Santa Fe, NM 87707</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Conrad M. Rocha Stated Clerk/ Executive Synod of the Southwest of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Albuquerque, NM 87109</p>	<p>Sister Rose Marie Cecchini, MM Coordinator Office of Peace, Justice & Creation, Catholic Charities Gallup Gallup, NM 87301</p>
<p>Patricia Sheely United Methodist Church Gallup, NM 87301</p>	<p>Advocate Mervyn Tilden Congregant Non-Denominational Church Rock, NM 87301</p>
<p>Reverend James M. Collie Presbytery of Santa Fe PCUSA Albuquerque, NM 87110</p>	<p>Rabbi Neil Amswych Rabbi Temple Beth Shalom Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend Richard Rowe Pastor Presbyterian Church (USA) Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Robert Woodruff Pastor Second Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87111</p>
<p>Reverend Larry Davis Pastor Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA) Farmington NM, 87401</p>	<p>Ms. Linda Popelish Member Morning Light Sangha Gallup, NM 87301</p>
<p>Reverend Lee Walters Interim Co-Pastor Westminster Presbyterian Church (USA) Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Kay E. Huggins Parish Associate Second Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87102</p>
<p>Reverend Hollis Walker Interfaith Community Leader Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>	<p>Nomi Green Ordained Buddhist Order of Interbeing Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Reverend Jeremiah Griffin Rector St. Chad's Episcopal Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87122</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Christine Vogel Interim Co-Pastor Westminster Presbyterian Church (USA) Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>
<p>Reverend Susan Varon Unity of Taos Taos, NM 87571</p>	<p>Reverend James D. Brown Pastor Presbyterian Church (USA) Santa Fe, NM 87508</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Charles Garcia Shepard of the Valley Albuquerque, NM 87120</p>	<p>Ruling Elder Pam Burgess Westminster Presbyterian Church Gallup Gallup, NM 87301</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Louis Knowles Covenant Presbyterian Church Albuquerque, NM 87111</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Kenneth Cuthbertson Las Placitas Presbyterian Church Las Placitas, NM 87043</p>
<p>Reverend Drew Henry Pastor Immanuel Presbyterian Church Albuquerque, NM 87106</p>	<p>Reverend Shannon Webster Jemez Springs Presbyterian Church Jemez Springs, NM 87025</p>
<p>The Reverend Bre Roberts Campus Pastor Luther House, Lutheran Campus Ministry at UNM & CNM Albuquerque, NM 87106</p>	<p>Reverend Matthew Miller Senior Pastor First Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87111</p>
<p>Reverend Bill Humphreys Interim Pastor Las Placitas Presbyterian Church Las Placitas, NM 87043</p>	<p>Ruling Elder Susan K. Smith First Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87111</p>

<p>Reverend Ed Katzenberger H.R. Pastor Albuquerque Mennonite Church & PCUSA Albuquerque, NM 87102</p>	<p>Luke Rembold Youth and Young Adult Ministry Coordinator Presbytery of Santa Fe Albuquerque, NM 87106</p>
<p>Dr. Elizabeth Whitley Christian Education First Presbyterian Church Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87120</p>	<p>Reverend Robert Bos H.R. Presbytery of Santa Fe Albuquerque, NM 87124</p>
<p>Reverend David Whitley Head Pastor Jemez Springs Presbyterian Church Jemez Springs, NM 87025</p>	<p>Ruling Elder Stephen Rhodes Stated Clerk Presbytery of Santa Fe Albuquerque, NM 87104</p>
<p>Reverend Jayne Ruiz Pastor First Presbyterian Church of Belen Belen, NM 87002</p>	<p>Deacon Jayne Ruiz Deacon First Presbyterian Church of Belen Belen, NM 87002</p>
<p>Reverend Dr. Gregory Gaetner Retired Pastor United Church of Santa Fe Santa Fe, NM 87508</p>	<p>Reverend Richard Stoops Pastor and H.R. Presbytery of Santa Fe PCUSA Albuquerque NM 87108</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Stella Webster Elder First Presbyterian Church of Farmington Farmington, NM 87402</p>	<p>Ruling Elder B. James Webster Elder First Presbyterian Church of Farmington Farmington, NM 87402</p>
<p>Reverend Sue Joiner Pastor First Congregational United Church of Christ Albuquerque, NM 87106</p>	<p>Reverend Dr. Donna M. Cavedon Interim Pastor First Christian Church, DOC & UCC Las Cruces NM, 88001</p>
<p>Reverend Seth Finch Pastor Covenant Presbyterian Church (USA) Albuquerque, NM 87112</p>	<p>Reverend Takako Terino Chaplain Menaul School Albuquerque NM 87123</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Dorothy Bowen Elder Placitas Presbyterian Church Placitas, NM 87043</p>	<p>Reverend Laura Niles Finch Pastor Jemez Springs Presbyterian Church Jemez Springs, NM 87025</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Lisa Weinstein Elder First United Presbyterian Church Las Vegas Las Vegas, NM 87701</p>	<p>The Reverend Canon Raymond Raney Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande Santa Fe, NM 87506</p>
<p>Dr. Tamala Bos Elder First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe Albuquerque, NM 87124</p>	<p>Reverend Nancy Benson-Nichol Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Austin, TX 78702</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Kathryn Rhodes Elder Presbytery of Santa Fe Albuquerque, NM 87104</p>	<p>Ruling Elder Mary Loyd Elder Covenant Presbyterian Church Albuquerque, NM 87112</p>
<p>Ruling Elder Dick Loyd Elder Covenant Presbyterian Church Albuquerque, NM 87112</p>	<p>Ruling Elder Kristen Marr Elder First Presbyterian Church of Albuquerque Albuquerque, NM 87124</p>
<p>James Williams Treasurer Westminster Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe (PCUSA) Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Emily Syal Youth and Environmental Ministries Resident United Church of Santa Fe (UCC) Santa Fe, NM 87505</p>
<p>Allie Fuller Presbyterian Young Adult Volunteer EarthKeepers 360 Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>	<p>Patrick Kiptum Candidate for Ministry Westminster Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe Santa Fe, NM 87501</p>

CC: U.S. Senator Tom Udall (NM)
U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich (NM)
U.S. Representative Ben Ray Luján (NM)
U.S. Representative Deb Haaland (NM)
U.S. Representative Xochitl Torres Small (NM)
Regional Forester Cal Joyner, U.S. Forest Service Region 3