

December 17, 2020

Senate Finance Committee  
New Mexico State Capitol  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 322  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

House Appropriations and Finance Committee  
New Mexico State Capitol  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 307  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

CC: Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Economic Development Department Secretary Alicia Keyes, Outdoor Recreation Division Director Axie Navas, Legislative Finance Committee Director David Abbey, Senate President Pro Tempore Mary Kay Papen, Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, Senate Majority Whip Mimi Stewart, House Speaker Brian Egolf, House Majority Floor Leader Sheryl Williams Stapleton, House Majority Whip Doreen Gallegos

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members and House Appropriations and Finance Members,

We write to you today to ask for your support for the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division's 2021 special appropriations request for the Outdoor Equity Fund and the proposed Great New Mexico Trails Package in the upcoming special session. The undersigned conservation and outdoor recreation organizations support funding for these vital programs to create jobs in rural communities, ensure equitable access to the outdoors, leverage federal funding, and bolster the state's growing outdoor recreation economy. Our local communities need swift COVID relief that will allow New Mexican's to safeguard our way of life and build our future.

The \$3.22 million request from the Outdoor Recreation Division for the Great New Mexico Trails Package will bring needed stimulus funding to local communities during this economic crisis. The Outdoor Recreation Division's request contends that this funding will directly create more than 200 jobs in urban and rural communities to begin work on dozens of shovel-ready outdoor recreation infrastructure projects. New Mexico's fast-growing \$2.4 billion outdoor recreation industry accounts for 2.3% of state GDP, and investments in outdoor recreation infrastructure have a high return on investment for nearby, local communities. The Outdoor Recreation Division has identified numerous, existing recipients for this funding and could immediately direct funds to these on-the-ground projects and set us on a path to recovery.

Unlike many Western states, New Mexico lacks dedicated funding for state-wide conservation and restoration programs, hampering the state's ability to leverage federal dollars. This one-time Outdoor Recreation Division's stimulus request will allow the state to leverage newly-available funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Earlier this year, Congress increased

dedicated funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and New Mexico will receive at least \$4.2 million to \$5.6 million annually through the state-side program. Leveraging this federal funding requires a 1:1 match, and state-appropriated funding for the Great New Mexico Trails Package will ensure that low-income communities impacted the most by the economic downturn have access to outdoor recreation infrastructure project funding through the LWCF state-side program. Without this additional funding, the state could struggle to come up with the required non-federal match for Land and Water Conservation Fund funding for outdoor recreation infrastructure through existing governmental gross receipts tax distributions and annual appropriations.

A special appropriation of \$1.025 million for the Outdoor Equity Fund would provide grants to existing youth education programs that applied for funding in the Outdoor Recreation Division's first-annual grant cycle but were not selected due to limited state funds. The first year of the program proved to be an outstanding success and showed strong demand for youth outdoor recreation funding. The program received over \$1 million in grant requests from 84 institutions in 22 different counties, but just \$100,000 was appropriated to the program in the fiscal year 2019. If fully funded to meet existing demand through this one-time request, this program would send tens of thousands of youth outside during a time when socially-distanced education programs are more important than ever, while also ensuring equitable access to nature for the next generation.

The recent establishment of the Outdoor Equity Fund set a national example, and as we reimagine and reinvest in creative education programs during the COVID outbreak, the need for equitable outdoor education funding for rural and urban communities couldn't be clearer. The purpose and work of the Outdoor Recreation Division are critical to the health and wellbeing of New Mexican families as we navigate our daily lives and opportunities to get families outside.

We ask legislators and appropriators to grant the Outdoor Recreation Division's 2021 special appropriations requests to invest in the health and well being of our communities and the next generation of outdoor stewards. These Economic Development Department programs benefit everyday New Mexicans and represent a substantial opportunity to rebuild our economy. Providing stimulus funding now will shorten the economic recovery period and mitigate financial impacts on the lives of New Mexicans.

Thank you for your consideration and continued efforts to support our outdoor way of life.

Sincerely,

The following undersigned organizations.

Marie Blatnik  
Board Member  
Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico

Scott Carpenter  
President  
Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico

Robert Levin  
State Director  
American Canoe Association

Hattie Johnson  
Southern Rockies Stewardship Director  
American Whitewater

Judy Calman  
New Mexico Policy Director  
Audubon Southwest

Oscar Simpson  
Public Lands Chair  
Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico –  
Northwest Chapter

Greg Peters  
Public Lands and Wildlife Advocate  
Conservation Voters New Mexico

Teresa Ana Martinez  
Executive Director  
Continental Divide Trail Coalition

Michael Dax  
New Mexico Representative  
Defenders of Wildlife

James Glover  
Co-Director  
endeavOR New Mexico

Peter Olson  
Owner/Director  
Endurance Santa Fe LLC

Patrick Nolan  
Executive Director  
Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

Allyson Siwik  
Executive Director  
Gila Resources Information Project

Senior Policy Director  
Green Latinos

Ralph Arellanes  
Chairman  
Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico

Carrie Hamblen  
CEO/President  
Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce

Corey Spoores  
Owner  
MST Adventures, LLC

Sherry Barrett  
Chair  
New Mexico Paddler's Coalition

Steve Harris  
Director of Public Affairs  
New Mexico River Outfitters Association

Oscar Simpson  
State Chair  
New Mexico Sportsmen

Mark Allison  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Wild

Jesse Deubel  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Ángel Peña  
Executive Director  
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project

Alexandra Merlino  
Executive Director  
Partnership for Responsible Business

Oscar Simpson  
Public Lands Chair  
Rio Grande Indivisible – New Mexico

Rich Schrader  
Director  
River Sources Inc.

Kyle Klain  
President  
Santa Fe Fat Tire Society

Glenn Schiffbauer  
Executive Director  
Santa Fe Green Chamber of Commerce

Camilla Feibelman  
Director  
Sierra Club – Rio Grande Chapter

Michael Casaus  
New Mexico State Director  
The Wilderness Society

Devon Moore  
Owner  
Tiger Owl Ranch

Dan Roper  
New Mexico Coordinator  
Trout Unlimited

Andre Miller  
Western Lands Policy Analyst  
Western Resource Advocates

Madeleine Carey  
Greater Gila Guardian  
WildEarth Guardians