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Contact:

Brittany Fallon, 401-932-8312, mark@nmwild.org

Joey Keefe, 505-259-4471, joey@nmwild.org

New Mexico Wild applauds legislature for historic American Rescue Plan conservation funding proposal

Legislative finance committee has proposed \$43.5 million for conservation in the state



ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (December 8, 2021) – New Mexico Wild and other nonprofit conservation organizations applaud the New Mexico Legislature for their proposed budget that includes approximately \$43.5 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to conserve New Mexico’s public lands and waters, improve equitable access to outdoor spaces and address a backlog of maintenance projects in state parks.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee met yesterday, December 8, to review the proposed budget included in House Bill 2. The budget will eventually be voted on by both Legislative chambers during the special legislative session currently underway in Santa Fe.

“Legislators have a golden opportunity before them to use federal funds to address the most pressing needs of our public lands and outdoor infrastructure, and we salute them for presenting a draft budget that touches on a wide range of these issues,” **said Brittany Fallon, New Mexico Wild Policy Director.** “During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our public parks and open spaces have been loved to death by those seeking a recreational outlet, and we have yet to make the necessary financial investments to maintain trails, parking lots and visitor facilities. The LFC’s proposed budget aims to boost our growing outdoor recreation economy while ensuring all New Mexico families have equitable access to outdoor spaces. We also want to thank House Speaker Brian Egolf for convening the Climate Summit in October which gave advocates a unique opportunity to highlight the importance of conservation funding to legislators.”

"New Mexico is home to a diverse array of natural resources which are vital in supporting our growing and thriving outdoor industry and the jobs associated with it. House Bill 2 recognizes the need for our state to conserve these wonderful natural spaces and places and sets aside nearly \$50 million for standalone conservation projects to be used to maintain and upgrade our beautiful state parks and national monuments,” **said House Appropriations & Finance Committee Chair, Representative Patty Lundstrom (D-Gallup).** “We must use every tool at our disposal to ensure we are building a stronger New Mexico, and conservation is a critical component of that.”

“Now is the time to make an assertive investment in New Mexico’s natural resources and boost the outdoor economy to help our businesses and communities recover from the pandemic,” **said Senate President Pro Tem Mimi Stewart.** “Right now we have a chance to ensure that the

places we promote for tourism all across New Mexico are given the resources they need to remain attractive destinations for visitors. I'd like to thank Governor Lujan Grisham for her support of the state's outdoor economy; this is a wise use of our ARPA funding.”

In summary, the budget proposal includes:

- \$20 million for the New Mexico State Parks Division to clear a backlog of maintenance projects
- \$10 million for the New Mexico Environment Department's river stewards and surface water programs
- \$10 million for the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, including funds for the Outdoor Equity Fund and trails work
- \$3.5 million for the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Division to address orphaned oil and gas well cleanups

Passing the proposed budget is vital to continue growing the outdoor recreation economy in the state, which the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division found contributes \$1.2 billion to the state's economy and supports 33,500 jobs annually.

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ABOUT THE NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE: The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance or “New Mexico Wild” is a non-profit 501 (C)(3), independent, homegrown, grassroots, conservation organization dedicated to the protection, restoration and continued respect of New Mexico's wildlands and Wilderness areas. With staff and thousands of supporters throughout the state, New Mexico Wild is dedicated to the rights and the value of citizen involvement in protecting increasingly rare wild places within public lands. Just as freedom is every American's birthright so too is Wilderness.