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A MEMORIAL

SUPPORTING ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION OF THE RIO GRANDE IN
SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO BY ENCOURAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK
TOGETHER TO SECURE WATER FOR RESTORATION.

WHEREAS, the governor has declared 2007 to be the "year
of water"; and

WHEREAS, the Rio Grande has been the lifeblood for human
cultures in New Mexico for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS, the Rio Grande provides important habitat for
hundreds of plant and animal species; and

WHEREAS, the lower Rio Grande ecosystem in southern New
Mexico has been compromised by the construction and operation
of two federal water projects since 1916; and

WHEREAS, approximately two-thirds of the native fish
species historically found in the Rio Grande below Caballo
dam have disappeared, along with more than ninety-five
percent of the original wetlands and riparian bosque; and

WHEREAS, the water of the lower Rio Grande is fully
appropriated for agriculture; and

WHEREAS, there is growing interest in restoring the Rio
Grande to ecological health; and

WHEREAS, a healthy Rio Grande ecosystem benefits New
Mexicans by providing a renewable supply of clean water for
cities and farms, preserving the natural heritage, helping to

1 avoid additional listings of endangered species and
2 contributing to the quality of life in communities along the
3 river; and

4 WHEREAS, every kind of restoration project, from
5 planting trees, creating wetlands or opening former meanders,
6 entails the consumption of some amount of water and needs to
7 be supported by water rights; and

8 WHEREAS, the lower Rio Grande has no legal rights to its
9 own water; that is, no water is currently available for
10 restoration projects; and

11 WHEREAS, the statutorily defined purposes for which
12 water could be acquired as part of the New Mexico strategic
13 river reserve do not apply to the lower Rio Grande at this
14 time due to the lack of endangered species, compact delivery
15 obligations or court settlements requiring water; and

16 WHEREAS, mechanisms currently exist that could be used
17 to achieve voluntary transfers of water to support
18 restoration efforts, including purchase, lease and donation
19 of water and water rights;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
21 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that it support ecological restoration of
22 the lower Rio Grande by urging all stakeholders to work
23 together to obtain through voluntary mechanisms the water
24 needed to support restoration efforts intended to benefit the
25 Rio Grande ecosystem in southern New Mexico; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT copies of this memorial be transmitted to members of the lower Rio Grande water users organization and the Paso del Norte watershed council. _____