

SENATE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE MEMORIAL 60

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2020

A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPORTANCE OF PECOS CANYON AND THE UPPER PECOS WATERSHED AND
OPPOSING EXPLORATORY DRILLING PROJECTS PROPOSED FOR THAT AREA.

WHEREAS, Pecos canyon is the ancestral homeland of the
Pecos Pueblo; and

WHEREAS, the people of the Pueblo of Tesuque, the Pueblo
of Cochiti, the Pueblo of Jemez, Kewa Pueblo, the Pueblo of
Pojoaque and the Pueblo of San Felipe continue to exist as
sovereign communities in and around the Jemez and Sangre de
Cristo mountains; and

WHEREAS, Pecos canyon attracts tens of thousands of
visitors every year to hike, camp, fish, picnic, bird-watch,
hunt and generally recreate; and

WHEREAS, local businesses in the village of Pecos and the

1 surrounding communities rely upon recreational visitors; and

2 WHEREAS, local outdoor recreation businesses rely upon the
3 pristine waters of the Pecos river and the solitude offered by
4 Pecos canyon and its surrounding wild lands; and

5 WHEREAS, the headwaters of the Pecos, Gallinas and Mora
6 rivers and dozens of their tributaries are key water sources
7 for acequias; and

8 WHEREAS, the headwaters of the Pecos, Gallinas and Mora
9 rivers and dozens of their tributaries are key water sources
10 for farmers, the village of Pecos, the city of Las Vegas and
11 other surrounding communities; and

12 WHEREAS, Indian creek, Doctors creek and Macho creek
13 contain populations of the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, the
14 state fish of New Mexico; and

15 WHEREAS, Pecos canyon is home to the Holy Ghost ipomopsis,
16 a federally endangered plant, and the Mexican spotted owl, a
17 federally threatened species; and

18 WHEREAS, numerous species of cats, bears and ungulates
19 reside in Pecos canyon; and

20 WHEREAS, climate change has adversely affected New Mexico
21 and will continue to have adverse effects on New Mexico; and

22 WHEREAS, the Pecos wilderness is one of the most visited
23 wilderness areas in New Mexico, enticing tens of thousands of
24 visitors every year; and

25 WHEREAS, in 1991, a spring snow melt event carried

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1 contaminants from a previous mining operation into the Pecos
2 river, killing over ninety thousand fish; and

3 WHEREAS, the cleanup of the 1991 contamination event has
4 cost the taxpayers of New Mexico at least twenty-eight million
5 dollars (\$28,000,000); and

6 WHEREAS, the village of Pecos has recovered from this
7 contamination event and established itself as a destination for
8 outdoor enthusiasts; and

9 WHEREAS, the cleanup of the previous mining operation is
10 ongoing; and

11 WHEREAS, there is a pending application with the mining
12 and minerals division of the energy, minerals and natural
13 resources department for permission to undertake exploratory
14 drilling with up to thirty drill pads and holes at eighty-four
15 potential locations in the area of Pecos canyon and the upper
16 Pecos watershed; and

17 WHEREAS, exploratory drilling operations often adversely
18 affect the surrounding environment, including ground and
19 surface waters; and

20 WHEREAS, United States Senator Martin Heinrich opposes the
21 exploratory drilling in the Pecos canyon area; and

22 WHEREAS, Assistant Speaker of the United States House of
23 Representatives Ben R. Lujan opposes the exploratory drilling
24 in the Pecos canyon area;

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE

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1 OF NEW MEXICO that Pecos canyon and the upper Pecos watershed
2 be deemed an inappropriate place to conduct an exploratory
3 drilling operation and for activities associated with an
4 exploratory drilling operation; and

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
6 transmitted to the forest supervisor for the Santa Fe national
7 forest, the chair of the acequia commission, the secretary of
8 environment, the state engineer, the secretary of Indian
9 affairs, the New Mexico congressional delegation, the United
10 States department of the interior's assistant secretary for
11 Indian affairs, the governor and the secretary of energy,
12 minerals and natural resources.