

**CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**  
**DELEGATION OFFICE**  
**STATE OF NEW MEXICO**  
**HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510**  
**(202) 631-2322**

January 25, 2012

The Honorable Harris Sherman  
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment  
US Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Sherman:

We are writing in support of the proposal submitted by the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), entitled, "*The Zuni Mountain Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project*." The Cibola National Forest applied for this project under the Forest Landscape Restoration Act. With CFLRP funding, they propose to conduct large-scale landscape restoration within the Zuni Mountains in west-central New Mexico over the next 10 years. We were very pleased to learn that the Zuni Mountains' proposal was listed as the top-priority for CFLRP projects in the Forest Service's Southwest Region 3 and the proposal was ranked #5 out of the 26 proposals submitted in 2011.

The \$7.6 million dollar project (total over 10 years) will restore 56,000 acres of forest, support 92 jobs in 2 rural counties, and leverage an additional \$6.7 million in non-CFLRP funds. Compared to the cost of wildfire suppression, which topped \$41 million for the Las Conchas Fire in New Mexico in 2011, restoration treatments proposed under the Zuni Mountain project are nearly six times cheaper and nearly five times cheaper compared to treatment costs of the other top ranked 2011 proposals.

As you are aware, many of New Mexico's watersheds on national forests have supported intensive human use for centuries. The Zuni Mountains in particular saw nearly 100 percent tree removal during the railroad logging period from the 1890s to the 1920s. Today, our forests are being transformed by climate change, catastrophic forest fire, soil erosion, and housing development in the wildland-urban interface. These changes have threatened the "ecosystem services" they provide and have had cascading impacts on New Mexican communities. While these conditions are not entirely unique to the Zuni Mountains, the need for watershed restoration is particularly acute in the Zuni Mountains of west-central New Mexico. In addition to these threats, the Zuni Mountains support the headwaters of the state endangered Zuni Bluehead Sucker, a fish very sensitive to changes in water quantity and at risk from catastrophic wildfire and insufficient water from an overgrown forest.

The proposed restoration project will reduce wildfire risk and wildfire suppression costs, improve forest and watershed health, support rural economies in New Mexico, and leverage non-Federal investments. Funding the Zuni Mountain Landscape project will inspire collaborating businesses, entrepreneurs, and communities to make the long-term and large-scale investments that are necessary to create jobs, reduce treatment costs, and improve forest health problems.


When the project is completed, the threats to the watersheds of the Zuni Mountains will be substantially reduced, creating the prospect for a more sustainable future of our natural and cultural resources on forested public lands in northern New Mexico.

We fully support the Zuni Mountains' request for funding, and we ask that you give their application your thorough consideration within your agency's guidelines.

Sincerely,



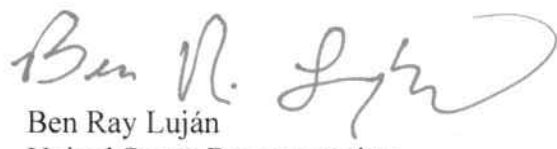
Jeff Bingaman  
United States Senator




Martin Heinrich  
United States Representative



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján  
United States Representative



Stevan Pearce  
United States Representative