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Date:

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

Thank you for your letter of October 18, 2022, requesting the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), protect the Upper Pecos Watershed on the Santa Fe National Forest in New Mexico from future mineral development by initiating the evaluation and administrative withdrawal process for this watershed.

The Forest Service understands your concerns about mineral exploration in the Upper Pecos Watershed community and is currently assessing the need for an administrative withdrawal. The Southwestern Region is evaluating the potential risk of mineral development in the Upper Pecos Watershed and whether our current laws and regulations are adequate for its protection.

Due to the complexity of mineral withdrawals, the anticipated timeline and outcome are uncertain. The Forest Service remains committed to protecting our valuable water resources and will keep you and your staff updated as more information becomes available.

We appreciate your continued support and partnership and look forward to working with you to further protect New Mexico's watersheds. Michiko Martin, Regional Forester of the Southwestern Region, will be contacting your staff directly to discuss this project in more detail. If you have additional questions, please contact Jacob Donnay, Director of Legislative Affairs, at (202) 205-1617 or jacob.donnay@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

RANDY MOORE
Chief

