

# *Representative Joanne Ferrary*

# *Representative Tomas Salazar*

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## **For Immediate Release**

### Contacts:

Representative Joanne Ferrary  
NM House District 37  
(575) 649-1231  
[joanne.ferrary@nmlegis.gov](mailto:joanne.ferrary@nmlegis.gov)

Representative Tomas Salazar  
NM House District 70  
(575) 421-2455  
[tomas.salazar@nmlegis.gov](mailto:tomas.salazar@nmlegis.gov)

Judy Calman  
Staff Attorney  
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance  
505-615-5020  
[judy@nmwild.org](mailto:judy@nmwild.org)

## **New Mexico's State Legislators Renew Call to Interior Secretary Zinke for State's Monuments to be Protected**

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 35 State Legislators from New Mexico reiterated their commitment to protection of New Mexico's newest National Monuments, Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. Both were subjected to President Trump's 2017 Executive Order directing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review and recommend changes to all National Monuments greater than 100,000 acres designated since 1996. New Mexican State Legislators also sent a letter to the Secretary during the initial review period asking that neither Monument be reduced in size.

While Zinke's December 2017 Report did not recommend boundary adjustments to either of New Mexico's Monuments, it did recommend that the Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency charged with managing the Monuments, prioritize certain uses within each Monument.

New Mexico's Monuments are so new that the agency is still in the early stages of creating management plans for them; a process which will take several years and involve significant public input. The May 2018 letter asks the Secretary to allow that public process to go forward without specific minute instruction from D.C.

“When Secretary Zinke accepted this job, he promised to make public input the cornerstone of his time in office,” said State Representative Joanne Ferrary of Las Cruces, NM. “Our National Monuments have provided enormous economic benefits to local communities and have made New Mexico an even better place to live. New Mexicans understand how our public lands should be managed and protected, and the local BLM offices should create plans for the Monuments which reflect the incredible values for which they were designated, not plans designed by D.C. which only focus on certain uses.”

Each of New Mexico’s Monuments were designated to protect a variety of scientific, historical, ecological, cultural, and archaeological sites after decades-long community efforts.

“New Mexicans came together for many years to work for protection of these areas,” said State Representative Tomas Salazar of Bernal, NM. “Land Grants, sportsmen, native tribes, conservation organizations, businesses, veterans, religious groups, elected officials, and many others were involved in the efforts to establish both Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. During the monuments review period, Interior received over 100,000 comments from New Mexico. 98% of public comments about Rio Grande del Norte, and 93% of comments about Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks were in support of preserving the Monuments as-is. Those communities are fully capable of helping BLM create management plans which work for them.”

Zinke’s report did not contain deadlines for recommended actions in the Monument, but his input will become more relevant as the planning processes for the management plans move forward. It also remains possible that President Trump could try to alter the Proclamations for the Monuments, an action advocates believe would be illegal.

The letter can be found here: <https://www.organmountains.org/news/2018-state-legislator-monument-letter/>