

**PUBLIC LANDS DAY**  
**February 20, 2019**

Greetings friends! New Mexico's public lands help define our state, our heritage, and our future. Thank you to the many organizations who helped organize today's event.

Just last week, we had a big win on a historic bipartisan public lands package that passed the U.S. Senate on a vote of 92 to 8. This package includes bills led by me and Senator Heinrich that designate over 270,000 acres for 13 new Wilderness areas in our state, including areas within the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains – Desert Peaks National Monuments. Wilderness designation forever protects lands, waters, and wildlife, and boosts local economies.

The public lands package also permanently reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund -- our nation's most successful conservation program. Here in New Mexico, we have the LWCF to thank for over 1,200 locally-sponsored projects. From soccer and baseball fields to state parks to national wildlife refuges and monuments, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has created outdoor opportunities for New Mexicans and helped protect some of our most iconic landscapes.

I am also pleased to report that we kept poison pill anti-environmental riders out of the final funding bill for the Interior Department and the Environmental Protection Agency. It was the first Senate bill in years that did not include these attacks on the environment. That bill also rejected the Trump administration's proposed devastating budget cuts to the EPA.

But our work is not done. We must continue to safeguard the greater Chaco Canyon area. Our coalition of tribes, pueblos, local residents, and organizations here today have succeeded in forcing the Bureau of Land Management to defer oil and gas lease sales – three times -- within the 10 mile buffer area. Please know that I will continue to push my legislation to protect this sacred area from development of federally-owned minerals . . . and for a regional planning process with meaningful tribal and public input that will ensure better protections -- unlike the current administration's indiscriminate leasing process.

I will also continue to urge passage of my bill that protects America's treasured national monuments against President Trump's relentless attacks on public lands. This month I reintroduced my ANTIQUITIES Act – that reinforces that Congress -- and only Congress -- has the authority to reduce national monument designations.

I know that all of you here today join me in keeping "public lands in public hands." Thanks to each and every ONE of you for your commitment and hard work in defense of New Mexico's public lands.

Tom Udall  
U.S. Senator