



My Turn

Bill would give hunters access to federal lands

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The letter is in regards to U.S. Rep. Martin Heinrich's pending legislation addressing access by hunters, fishermen/ women, hikers, etc. to landlocked public lands managed by the federal government.

For fellow New Mexicans who look forward to hunting season every year there is (hopefully) good news happening thanks to a few of our representatives in Congress, including Rep. Martin Heinrich of Albuquerque, all of whom have recently introduced federal legislation in Washington that would improve access to federal lands that are either landlocked due to being surrounded by private land or are treated as private land by ranchers who lease the land from various government agencies.

Rep. Heinrich's legislation is titled "The HUNT act" which stands for "Hunt Unrestricted on National Treasures." As well Sens. Jon Tester (D-Montana) and John Thune (R-South Dakota) have also introduced legislation aimed at ensuring citizens have access to our public lands.

Heinrich's bill is the most comprehensive, requiring the BLM, Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Park Service to identify and annually publish a list of public lands that lack legal public access. Those lands would then be identified as to their potential for hunting, fishing or other recreational use and if found to be significant the appropriate agency would have to develop a plan to provide public access.

The bill further provides for the funding necessary to actually purchase access routes from willing landowners with federal offshore gas and oil revenues.

For more information the current issue of *The Outdoor Reporter* (published by the New Mexico Wildlife Federation) is filled with details on this pending legislation and the people who run our local government agencies.

As the single most effective ally to sportsmen in New Mexico, The New Mexico Wildlife Federation has been pivotal in getting more tags and more access for New Mexico's hunters.

For a free copy of the "Reporter" contact them at nmwildlife.org or call (505) 299-5404 or pick up a copy at the Taos Fly Shop.

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