

## **My Turn**

# **Thank you from the Village of Questa**

## **Mayor Esther Garcia**

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I was honored to be present for the signing of the designation of the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument in Washington, D.C., on Monday, March 25.

President Barack Obama designated five new National Monuments on this day. Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was by far the largest and encompasses 240,000-plus acres in Taos and Rio Arriba counties preserving all current infrastructures along with traditional uses including grazing, hunting, fishing, herb and firewood gathering. These values are important to the people that have lived in and around this community for so many generations. These protected traditions are now secure with the steps President Obama took last week signing the proclamation to designate the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

It is with great appreciation that I thank the following individuals for their dedication and years of hard work in making this designation a reality: President Barack Obama, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, Sen. Martin Heinrich, Sen.

Tom Udall, Congressman Ben Ray Lujan, Taos County commissioners, Taos Mayor and Town Council, Taos and Mora Valley Chambers of Commerce, Jorge Silva-Banuelos, John Olivas, Max Trujillo, local ranchers, small business owners, many businesses (180-plus) and the dedicated community members of Northern New Mexico.

Rio Grande del Norte began its journey to become a protected landscape in the early 1990 under then Congressman Bill Richardson. Over recent years, Rio Grande del Norte was introduced as a National Conservation Area and was seeking legislative protection.

In the recent years, the legislation was introduced into four separate Congresses with no legislative action to protect the area. Finally on March 25, President Obama utilized his authority under the 1906 Antiquities Act to create the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

Individuals and organizations mentioned above were key in making this designation a reality. From the bottom of my heart along with the gratefulness from my children,

grandchildren, great-grandchildren and those that will follow, the Rio Grande del Norte will now be protected for years to come! Thank you to all that were involved to make this a momentous occasion for me. I will never be able to thank each of you enough for all your hard work and dedication to make this historical day a reality.

I am hopeful each of you had an opportunity to celebrate this past weekend at the Taos Mesa Brewing Company with our federal delegation, local elected officials, prominent individuals, business community and the many local supporters that came together to celebrate the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

*Esther Garcia is the mayor of the Village of Questa and president of the San Antonio del Rio Colorado Land Grant.*