



THE TAOS NEWS

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Columbine-Hondo: NM delegation voices support

Staff report

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Members of New Mexico's congressional delegation continue to push for the designation of 45,000 acres in Taos County as the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness.

The Columbine-Hondo located in the high country north of the existing Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area, is currently a wilderness study area. Local activists are hoping an official wilderness designation would protect the area in perpetuity.

Speaking at a Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing last week, Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-NM, called the Columbine Hondo "one of the most treasured places in New Mexico" and a key attraction in Taos' tourism economy.

"People come to these mountains to hike, camp, hunt, fish, and spend time with their families, and invariably they leave Taos County with their wallets a little lighter," Heinrich said at the hearing.

Heinrich and Sen. Tom Udall, D-NM, are co-sponsors of a Senate bill to designate the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness. A companion bill has been introduced by Rep. Ben Ray Luján, D-NM.

—*J.R. Logan*