



# NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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## **Northern NM sportsmen, businesses applaud Rio Grande del Norte National Monument announcement**

President Barack Obama's announcement today to designate the Rio Grande del Norte as a national monument fulfills a longtime goal of New Mexicans who treasure the area northwest of Taos for its diverse wildlife, iconic Western landscapes and importance to the economy, hunters and anglers, said Max Trujillo of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

"This designation would provide permanent protection that is long overdue for this incredible area," said Trujillo. "It will ensure that the outdoor traditions of northern New Mexicans can continue on into the future, and protect the lands and rivers that so many people rely on for food, recreation and livelihood."

The approximately 240,000-acre area managed by the Bureau of Land Management in northern New Mexico includes the Rio Grande Gorge and 10,093-foot Ute Mountain. It contains valuable elk wintering habitat and some of the best trout fishing in New Mexico. The area's designation as a monument under the Antiquities Act follows unsuccessful efforts to win congressional approval to protect it.

"We've been working on this for 15 years," said Kent Salazar, a former New Mexico Wildlife Federation president and board member. "Hunters and anglers support protecting Rio Grande del Norte. Environmentalists, ranchers and businesses support it. Native Americans have been hunting and fishing in this area forever. There's mountain biking, hiking and fishing in the area. Tourism is a major part of the northern New Mexico economy and Rio Grande del Norte is key to that."

A recent [report](#) by BBC Research & Consulting said the estimated \$17.2 million pumped into the area economy yearly from tourism and spending related to Rio Grande del Norte is expected to nearly double to \$32.2 million because of the new designation.

Protecting the Rio Grande del Norte is vital to the area's culture, heritage and economy, said Taos County Commissioner Larry Sanchez. "Grazing, hunting, fishing, gathering of firewood and piñon and herbs, religious and cultural sites—it would all be protected. Designating Rio Grande del Norte as a national monument would also provide badly needed economic growth for this area," he said.

Existing uses of the land, including grazing, hunting and fishing, will continue with the area's new status. The Rio Grande, classified as a Wild and Scenic River in 1968, will remain open to



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kayaking and other activities. More than 150 area businesses and business organizations endorsed making the site a national monument.

The area contains thousands of archaeological sites, some dating back 11,000 years. It's home to bears, cougars, elk, pronghorn and bighorn sheep and is an important stop along the Rio Grande migratory flyway.

Taos Fly Shop owner Nick Streit praised the designation announcement. "Fishing is an essential pastime in northern New Mexico and Rio Grande del Norte has some of the best in the region. This permanent protection is a welcome decision by residents and businesses alike."

Cisco Guevara, the owner of Los Rios River Runners, a rafting company in Taos, agreed. "Thousands of visitors flock to the Rio Grande del Norte region each year, helping to support our local economy. Designating this area as a national monument can only help our long-term economic outlook," he said.

For more information about Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, visit [www.riograndedelnorte.org/media](http://www.riograndedelnorte.org/media).

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