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VETERANS CHEER ANNOUNCEMENT TO DESIGNATE NEW NATIONAL MONUMENT IN NEW MEXICO

The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument will ensure generations of veterans have crucially needed public lands to visit, as they heal from the wounds of war

Taos, NM - The non-partisan, non-profit Veterans group, the Vet Voice Foundation, is cheering the Obama administration's decision today to declare Rio Grande del Norte a national monument. The group had advocated for the move as a means to protect lands important to returning Veterans needing to heal from the visible and not-visible wounds of war.

"America's veterans join in the applause for President Obama's protection of the new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, which provides outstanding recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and scenery that inspires all of us," said Mark Starr, Iraq War Veteran and Program Director for the Vet Voice Foundation. "These lands also offer veterans the peace and solace needed to reintegrate into our communities after grueling deployments."

The lands making up the new National Monument are located in Taos and Arriba counties totaling approximately 240,000 acres.

This designation came in response to support from the Vet Voice Foundation, local business owners, the Taos County and Mora Valley Chambers of Commerce, sportsmen, local Latino organizations, Native American tribes, and elected officials at the local, state and national levels, including the Taos County Commission, Town of Taos, City of Santa Fe, and nearly the entire New Mexico congressional delegation, all working together.

In addition to the benefits the lands provide Veterans seeking the peace and tranquility they need after returning from war, the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument will permanently protect important historic and cultural resources and

fuel an estimated \$15 million in new economic activity annually for Northern New Mexico.

According to a 2012 economic study commissioned by a coalition of sportsmen's and conservation groups, the national monument designation is expected to boost tourism, outfitting, hunting, and fishing and support ongoing grazing—all activities that benefit the local economy.

Founded in 2009, the mission of Vet Voice Foundation is to mobilize veterans to become leaders in our nation's democracy through participation in the civic and democratic process. VVF seeks to harness the energy and drive of the dedicated men and women who have fought for their country, and put it to work at home and in their communities on the important issues they face, such as health care, jobs, the environment, and housing.

For more information about Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, please visit www.riograndedelnorte.org/media