

May 18, 2010

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján introduced legislation to preserve approximately 236,000 acres of public land in northern New Mexico. The bill is a companion measure to legislation introduced last year by Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall.

“New Mexico’s culture, tradition and land are parts of our unique history that we must pass on to future generations,” said Rep. Ben Ray Luján. “Today, I’m proud to take another step towards preserving our culture, tradition and land while ensuring that New Mexicans can enjoy the bounty of the land for generations to come.

The Rio Grande Del Norte National Conservation Area will include important natural areas such as the Rio San Antonio Wilderness and Ute Mountain as well as other public lands between Taos and Rio Arriba counties and Carson National Forest.

Rep. Luján and his staff have met extensively with local ranchers, conservationists, and other constituents to ensure that the land and traditional uses are protected and preserved for future generations. New Mexicans’ access to the land for grazing and the harvesting of piñon nuts, wild herbs and firewood will also be protected. The bill limits motorized vehicles to designated roads that can be expanded if necessary to protect the land for preservation and traditional uses. It will protect tribal and traditional economic rights while preserving the region for years to come.

“This bill protects important natural and cultural resources in Northern New Mexico. Through his introduction of the measure, I’m glad Rep. Lujan is building support for this bill in the House of Representatives,” said Senator Jeff Bingaman, who chairs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The bill passed that panel in December.

“This bill brings the incredible landscape of northern New Mexico closer to permanent preservation. I applaud Congressman Luján for his work to ensure that this land is available for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations,” Senator Tom Udall said.