

Heinrich Sponsors Bill To Protect Public Land And Support Conservation

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Bill Would Reauthorize The Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Before the August recess, U.S. Representative Martin Heinrich (NM-1) introduced H.R. 3339, a bill to permanently reauthorize the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA). FLTFA allows the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service in the western United States to use the proceeds from sales of certain federally designated areas to protect lands of exceptional conservation value.

Rep. Heinrich's bill would make FLTFA permanent and remove the current restriction that only allows the law to apply to lands that were identified for acquisition or disposal before the legislation was first enacted in 2000. This will allow agencies to plan future land management decisions with the assurance that FLTFA will not expire.

"In New Mexico, we've seen how well FLTFA works," said Rep. Heinrich. "FLTFA funds have been used to protect land at Aztec Ruins National Monument, the Santa Fe National Forest and the Elk Springs and La Cienega BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern."

FLTFA embodies the concept of "land for land," using the proceeds from land sales to acquire key lands. In February, the BLM used FLTFA funds to acquire 2,240 acres just south of Cuba, New Mexico from a willing seller. This area is a crucial wintering ground for deer and elk.

"New Mexico families have long histories of using public lands for hunting, fishing and other traditions, both new and old," said Rep. Heinrich. "FLTFA offers a balanced approach to land management, benefiting private land owners and the general public."

Currently under FLTFA, proceeds from the sale or exchange of BLM lands are split between the state in which the lands were disposed of and a separate U.S. Treasury account. The funds in the account are available to both the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to acquire inholdings and other nonfederal lands that are adjacent to federal lands and contain exceptional resources.

"The vast majority of sportsmen in New Mexico depend on public lands to go hunting and fishing," said **Edward Olona, avid sportsman and president of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation**. "This action helps to ensure that the average person will still have places to hunt and fish in the future in New Mexico."

"The Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act is a wonderful tool for advancing land conservation," said **Larry Selzer, president and CEO of The Conservation Fund**. "It

balances conservation and economics and demonstrates an innovative way to generate funds to acquire high priority land for conservation, outdoor recreation and historic preservation. We thank Representative Heinrich for introducing this important bipartisan legislation and for his leadership in creating a lasting legacy for future generations.”

"Conserving land in any budget climate is difficult," said **R. P. Van Gytenbeek, president of the Federation of Fly Fishers**. "Given the country's economic challenges having FLTFA funds now and in the future means we can continue to protect important outdoor recreational resources. We applaud Representative Heinrich's leadership"