

Arroyo Hondo Arriba
Community Land Grant
HC66 Box 442
Valdez, NM 87580

May 11, 2026

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R.2785, H.R. 2785, New Mexico Land Grant-Mercedes Historical or Traditional Use Cooperation and Coordination Act

The Arroyo Hondo Arriba Land Grant submits this letter in support of **H.R. 2785, the New Mexico Land Grant-Mercedes Historical or Traditional Use Cooperation and Coordination Act** introduced by New Mexico Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández. The Arroyo Hondo Arriba Land Grant was a community land grant made by the Governor Albert Máynez on April 2, 1815. By May of 1823, the upper village had separated into a daughter grant and our ancestors were put in possession of our land grant by the local *alcalde* of the Pueblo of San Gerónimo de Taos, by order of Governor Don Juan Antonio Viscarra. Our grant was approximately 4 square miles and has been reduced to one third of this over time. To the north, west and east, most of our land grant is surrounded by U.S. Forest Service managed lands that are part of the Carson National Forest. The forest lands that border nearly our entire eastern boundary were included in the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness (created in 2014), effectively restricting our ability to access to these lands for our traditional uses like wood gathering. This Wilderness designation also makes management of these lands more difficult for the Carson National Forest and increases the likelihood for a catastrophic wildfire, threatening the homes and properties of our community, a community that predates not only the Wilderness designation (2014) and the creation of the Carson National Forest (1908), but also the U.S. Forest Service (1905) and the even the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 that created forest reserves.

The Arroyo Hondo Arriba Land Grant has nonetheless worked to build cooperative relationships with the U.S. Forest Service. We recently collaborated with the Carson National Forest and local villages of San Cristóbal, Des Montes and Gallina Canyon to harvest 300 acres of wood over 3-year thinning project. The project was then extended additional sections of 60, 70, 85, 72 and 90 = 377 acres as management by the traditional land grant extended for another decade. This “Cerro Negro Project” adopted governance structures from the local acequia and land grant-merced organizational and cultural-historical values praxis through procedures such as self-governance, collective leadership, reciprocity or mutualismo as well as resolana (collective traditional knowledge) and querencia (a spiritual sense of ethical place relationality). This has

been formally structured as a six-member commission and appointing a *mayordomo* (a relational based administrator, or steward in place of punitive values) to oversee the work. Projects like the Cerro Negro Project make locally available important natural resources that our communities depend on. This supports local wood haulers (*leñeros*) that sell firewood for a living and makes this product affordable for local households that depend on wood as a heating source for warming homes and cooking meals. **H.R. 2785** offers the opportunity to extend and expand projects like the Cerro Negro across northern New Mexico. It can ensure that our continued access and use of the land will be part of the Carson National Forest's management objectives for the area long term. Further, the inclusion of our concerns through consultation will ensure that the positive relationships that we've built with current Forest Service staff and will continue under future U.S.F.S. leadership.

The Arroyo Hondo Arriba Land Grant respectfully requests both your support and the support of the House Committee on Natural Resources for H.R. 2785.

Sincerely,



Joaquín Argüello
President
Arroyo Hondo Arriba Community
Land Grant

CC:

Representative Tereasa Leger Fernández, New Mexico, 3rd District
Representative Melanie Stansbury, New Mexico, 1st District
Senator Ben R. Luján, New Mexico