



La Merced del Pueblo de Chililí
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May 8, 2026

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

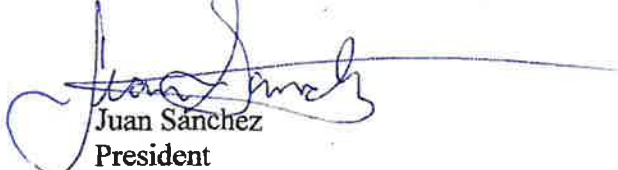
Dear Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman; Rep. Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources; Rep. Tom Tiffany, Chairman, and Rep. Joe Neguse, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Federal Lands

The Merced del Pueblo de Chililí (Chililí Land Grant) is writing this letter to ask for your support of the **H.R. 2785, New Mexico Land Grant-Mercedes Historical or Traditional Use Cooperation and Coordination Act**, introduced by Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández (NM-03). H.R. 2785 will ensure that the Chililí Land Grant Board of Trustees will always be consulted about management decisions on the Cibola National Forest within the Mountainair Ranger District that may affect our adjacent common lands. The Chililí Land Grant which has been in existence since 1841 shares several miles of border with the Cibola National Forest within the Mountainair Ranger District. As an adjoining property owner, it is important that our land grant maintain a working relationship with the agency. Our land grant community continues to utilize livestock grazing as both an income and a food source for community members. Therefore, maintenance of our shared fence is important to ensure our cattle remain on our side of the fence. In addition, collective management of the region to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire is critical for our community. Over the past decade our land grant has worked on forest restoration projects on our common lands and have treated over 600 acres of land to reduce fire risk. Unfortunately, in 2016 a spark generated during a mastication project on the Cibola National Forest resulted in the catastrophic Doghead Fire. While this wildfire originated on Forest Service lands it jumped the fence and within a matter of few days it burned over 13,000 acres of forested lands within our exterior boundaries and came within feet of burning our community. This lesson taught us the importance of maintaining our right to sit at the table when management decisions are being determined for Forest Service lands adjacent to us.

In addition, this bill will help protect the rights of land grant-merced communities across Central and Northern New Mexico to access traditional uses and natural resources on National Forest System lands that are within their historical use areas. This is imperative to maintaining the cultural integrity of these unique centuries old land-based communities in New Mexico. Based on all of this the Board of Trustees of the Chililí Land Grant proudly offers our support and endorsement

of H.R. 2785. We humbly ask that you do everything in your power to support the passage of this bill through your Committee and through the U.S. House of Representatives.

Con Todo Respeto,



Juan Sánchez
President
(505) 249-6759

CC:

Representative Tereasa Leger Fernández, New Mexico, 3rd District

Representative Melanie Stansbury, New Mexico, 1st District

Senator Ben R. Luján, New Mexico