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Jan. 14, 2021

Rep. Miguel P. Garcia
District 14

Dear Rep. Garcia,

The New Mexico Wildlife Federation is sympathetic to the history and status of land grants in New Mexico. However, this organization and many other sportsmen's organizations and individuals from throughout New Mexico will vigorously oppose HB78, which you are sponsoring.

The State Game Commission legitimately acquired the Rio Chama, Humphries and Sargent Wildlife Management Areas decades ago, purchasing them with hunter and angler license dollars and delimited federal aid funding. The department has subsequently invested hundreds of thousands of dollars and years of labor to restore and enhance the land, vegetation and waters to pristine condition, using those same revenue sources. As prescribed and directed by law and policy, the agency manages those areas as havens for big game and many other wildlife species, as well as for high-quality hunting and angling experiences for New Mexico residents statewide.

We will oppose the transfer of these lands, their management, and their uses not only as improper but illegal under both state and federal laws. It would be an improper transfer of land and resources acquired on behalf of all the state's citizens to a very small group of private individuals. It would be an illegal diversion of property acquired with federal aid and sportsmen's license dollars, and could not be accomplished unless the land grant, or the state on its behalf, pays full market value or replaces the properties with lands of equal monetary and wildlife values elsewhere.

We are attaching a document from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the federal aid grants, that sums up the legalities and penalties for Rep. Garcia/NMWF Jan. 14, 2021 Page 2

violations. Penalties can ultimately include loss of all federal aid to the game department -- around \$19 million annually.

We would point out that the New Mexico Wildlife Federation has supported the transfer of Laguna del Campo to the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant, a much different and smaller move that did not involve federal aid funding. NMWF, in concert with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and Adobe Whitewater, also has filed suit in the state Supreme Court to restore public access to public waters -- such as Rio Chama and Brazos -- where they flow through private land. We cannot and will not support this legislation, however.

We would hope that you see your way clear not to pursue it.

Sincerely,

John Crenshaw,
Board President, NMWF

and

Jesse Deubel,
Executive Director, NMWF

cc:

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham
Michael Sloane, NMDGF Director
New Mexico State Game Commissioners