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Water Quality Control Commission  
1190 Saint Francis Drive  
Suite # South 2102  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505  
[Pamela.Jones@state.nm.us](mailto:Pamela.Jones@state.nm.us)

Re: WQCC 21-62 (R) - The Outdoor Recreation Division of the NM Economic Development  
Petition to Designate Segments of the Rio Grande as Outstanding National Resource Waters

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to convey The Pew Charitable Trusts' support for the petition submitted to the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) on December 3, 2021, by the Outdoor Recreation Division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (ORD). The petition nominates segments of the Rio Grande, the Rio Hondo, Lake Fork, the East Fork of the Jemez River, San Antonio Creek, and Redondo Creek as Outstanding Natural Resource Waters, pursuant to 20.6.4.9 NMAC. Pew joins numerous tribes, local governments, acequia associations, land grants, schools, neighborhood associations, businesses, and nongovernmental associations in supporting the nominations in this petition.

Pew's U.S. Public Lands and Rivers Conservation project seeks to safeguard ecologically and culturally significant public lands and rivers by working closely with diverse stakeholders—such as local businesses, local governments, Indigenous Tribes, the outdoor recreation industry, travel and tourism organizations, veterans, sportsmen and women—to develop collaborative proposals that protect landscapes and local communities.

The waters nominated in this petition are some of the most treasured in the state. All have exceptional recreational and ecological value, among other outstanding attributes, and they deserve protection from pollution now and for the future. Visitors come from all over to experience the beauty of these northern New Mexico streams, and to hike, camp, fish, hunt, wade, raft, kayak, and bird and wildlife watch.

The Rio Grande is a mainstay of New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy — providing opportunities for fishing, hiking, and whitewater rafting—and it supports numerous species of wildlife. The Rio Hondo and Lake Fork wind their ways through the Taos Ski Valley, one of New Mexico's most popular destinations, attracting thousands of hikers and anglers annually. Similarly, the headwaters of the Jemez River draw high numbers of visitors each year to hike, camp, fish, hunt, horseback ride, cross-country ski, mountain bike, observe wildlife, and view the night skies.

Protecting these waters will translate into tangible economic gains for the surrounding communities and New Mexico. Numerous studies show that protected public lands and waters provide a host of economic and other benefits — from increased job creation to higher incomes to improved public health outcomes. In 2019, the outdoor recreation economy in the state added \$2.4 billion to the state's gross domestic product and directly employed over 35,000 people. The rivers nominated by ORD host many activities that contribute to this economic growth.

In addition, the communities downstream from the nominated segments depend on the clean and clear flowing water of these rivers to feed their acequias and water their livestock. Conserving the headwaters of these reaches will help to ensure these downstream users continue to receive clean water into the future.

Thank you for WQCC's consideration of Pew's support for ORD's petition and the designation of all 125.9 miles of the six streams nominated as ONRWs.

Sincerely,

Brett Swift

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