

From: [Diana Gries](#)
To: [Jones, Pamela, ENV](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Designate the proposed streams as Outstanding National Resource Waters
Date: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 9:32:09 AM

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Dear Water Quality Control Commission:

I support protecting the Rio Hondo, Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez River Headwaters as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs). They have exceptional ecological, cultural, and recreational significance and must be protected against new pollution.

The nominated waters provide vital habitat for a myriad of state and federal endangered and threatened species, state species of greatest conservation need, and special status species. For example, the Upper Rio Grande Gorge supports a population of the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax trailii extimus*), which is closely associated with healthy riparian areas. San Antonio and Redondo Creeks provide federally designated critical habitat for the Jemez Mountains salamander (*Plethodon neomexicanus*) and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius luteus*), both of which are federal and state endangered species that rely on healthy riparian areas for survival. The petitioned waters also support a population of New Mexico's endemic Rio Grande cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia virginalis*), a candidate for federal endangered species protection. Overall, at least 35 special status animal species inhabit the area within or around the nominated waters.

Local communities also depend on clean water from the nominated river and stream segments to feed their acequia systems. For generations farmers have irrigated their crops with water from the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez watershed. ONRW designation will ensure that clean water continues to flow downstream and protect this traditional use from new development and impacts.

Finally, the nominated waters provide exceptional recreational opportunities for New Mexicans and visitors alike. Anglers, rafters, hikers, and hunters flock to the petitioned waters year-round to experience the unique beauty of New Mexico. Protecting these waters will ensure that water quality is protected for generations to come.

I support the efforts to ensure the Rio Hondo, Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez River Headwaters will continue to provide clean water for wildlife, downstream communities, and recreators.

I urge the Commission to designate these waters as ONRWs.

Sincerely,

Diana Gries