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To: Randal_Bowman@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DCN: EST-00002808 - Antiquities Act - Rio Grande del Norte NM
Date: Thursday, June 29, 2017 10:25:18 AM
Attachments: [2808 in.pdf](#)

Tasked to OCL.



LOUIS BACON

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

June 5, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I am a local businessman who is strongly supportive of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in Taos County, New Mexico. After more than two decades of advocacy by the local community, the monument was established in 2013. In its first four years, Rio Grande del Norte has proven to be an invaluable asset to local businesses such as the Taos Ski Valley, which I own and operate. It is also a point of pride for residents in neighboring communities.

One year after the monument was established, lodgers' tax revenue in the Town of Taos increased by 21 percent, and the gross-receipts revenue to businesses in Taos County in the accommodations and food service sector rose 8.3 percent. This represents an increase of \$3.7 million – propelling tourism to the #1 industry in Taos County.

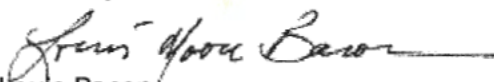
In 2014, I purchased Taos Ski Valley from the founders of the ski area – the Blake family. Taos Ski Valley is one of the largest private employers in Taos County, and my investment is one of the most significant infusions of private capital in northern New Mexico. A key goal of my investment strategy in the ski resort, which heretofore has been only viable in the winter months, is the growth potential of summer activities through the expansion of recreational benefits in the region. The proximity of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is a major feature in that expansion and is a cornerstone in "the Enchanted Circle Tour," which recruits tourists to the region.

We are witness to the incredible pride that the surrounding communities have in their stewardship of this landscape. Tribal leaders, veterans, conservationists, ranchers, land grant heirs, sportsmen, and business owners have united in their support for protecting the Rio Grande del Norte for generations to come. Part of the recent decisive acquiescence by these local constituents to an enhanced airstrip for commercial tourist traffic was due to the protection of these and other public lands in the area.

As you conduct your review of national monuments, I hope you will take the time to visit the Taos community and hear directly from the monument's neighbors about what Rio Grande del Norte means to them. It is crucial that the conservation ethos of Taos be recognized and protected, especially as it is a driver of the #1 business in the area. I hope you will share my appreciation of the economic and spiritual value that this monument brings to nearby residents and visitors to the region.

Thank you for your consideration of this important place, and thank you for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,


Louis Bacon

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