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August 25, 2021

Gov. Lujan Grisham sets 2030 preservation goal, protecting N.M. land, watersheds, wildlife and heritage

SANTA FE – Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on Wednesday signed an executive order to conserve at least 30 percent of all lands in New Mexico by 2030. New Mexico’s “30 x 30” framework complements a nationwide effort to protect the nation’s lands and waters but is tailored to honor New Mexico’s traditional land uses while promoting biodiversity, encouraging recreation opportunities and protecting watersheds.

The executive order directs the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, New Mexico Environment Department, Office of the State Engineer, Department of Agriculture, Indian Affairs Department and the director of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and Outdoor Recreation Division to use their existing authorities to support and implement programs that conserve, protect and enhance our lands and natural environments. This framework will leverage available funding and programs, allowing the state to move more quickly to protect and conserve New Mexico’s unique landscapes. The committee of agency leaders will work with local communities on recommendations to ensure our diverse land uses are represented.

The executive order specifically:

- Directs the agencies to use existing programs across all land types, leverage state and federal funding to the fullest extent, engage with federal land management agencies in planning, and coordinate with stakeholders.
• The agencies will meet quarterly to assess the state’s progress toward the goals set by the executive order and provide an annual report to the governor on progress.

• The agencies are instructed to use the best available science, take a broad view of conservation including contributions from working lands and demonstrate a commitment to equity, including respect for and consideration of tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

The executive order, which is attached to this news release, sets goals that are consistent with the scientific consensus to keep average global temperature increases below 1.5 degree Celsius of warming and highlights the need for fast action on climate change. This approach is consistent with the federal government’s recently announced America the Beautiful Initiative, which recognizes that protection of 30 percent of the world’s lands, freshwater, and oceans by 2030 can significantly contribute to this goal.

“Today we promote a broad view of conservation that reflects the importance of traditional resource protection, access for outdoor recreation, contributions of working lands, and tribal sovereignty and self-determination,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “We have set the wheels in motion to conserve our state’s incredible natural resources and ensure that New Mexico remains, forever, the Land of Enchantment.”

“The science is clear that responding to climate change, enhancing biodiversity, and increasing carbon sequestration can be accomplished through land conservation,” said EMNRD Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. “Actions to implement the 30 x 30 Executive Order will build our climate change resilience for future generations.”

“All New Mexicans deserve equal access to our state’s abundant and beautiful outdoor places,” said Demis Foster, executive director of Conservation Voters New Mexico. “Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our local public lands and open spaces have proven to be invaluable for the health of our communities across the state. This 30x30 Executive Order issued by Governor Lujan Grisham will help ensure equitable access to our public lands and open spaces, address the need for climate resiliency, and provide sustainable opportunities to boost our local economies.”

"A New Mexico 30x30 executive order is the start of a conservation that will allow local communities, much like mine, to start the discussions about how best we can achieve that goal of preserving and protecting 30% of our lands and waters here in the state,” said Theresa Pasqual, executive director of the Acoma Historic Preservation Office. “And we start that conversation by thinking about what's in our own backyard."

“As New Mexicans, we know that our hunting, fishing, and outdoor heritage and way of life require healthy, intact natural landscapes and clean, flowing rivers,” said Ángel Peña, executive director of Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project. “This science-based executive order will help set our state on a path to achieve the landscape scale protections we know we need by 2030 in order to preserve our wild places, and legacy of tradition for our communities and future generations to enjoy.”
“Conserving our public lands and wild places is necessary to combat the climate crisis that is getting more dire every year,” said Mark Allison, executive director of New Mexico Wild. “As the planet continues warming and we experience record droughts, it is clear we must act so there is something left for future generations. Governor Lujan Grisham’s commitment to the 30x30 resolution is a positive first step in the right direction and will allow us to begin addressing the challenges in front of us collectively.”

“New Mexico’s public lands, ecological beauty, hunting and fishing heritage are unique and must be protected,” said Jesse Deubel, executive director of New Mexico Wildlife Federation. “The governor's Executive Order sets our state on the path to achieve the landscape scale protections that scientists say we must put in place in order to preserve what we love most about our state.”

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