From Sen. Tom Udall, Sen. Martin Heinrich and Rep. Ben Ray **Luján**

WASHINGTON, D.C.– **U.S. Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich and U.S. Representative Ben Ray Luján** welcomed on Aug.9, an announcement form the Department of interior (DOI) that Secretary Ryan Zinke intends to finalize the process to consider whether to accept the donation of 3,595 acres, known as the Rimrock Rose Ranch,

that are adjacent to Sabinoso Wilderness in New Mexico to be included as part of the wilderness.

Last year, the Wilderness Land Trust purchased the Rimrock Rose Ranch in order to donate the land to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) so it can be added to the existing wilderness and allow for public access to the entire area. The Sabinoso Public Access Plan is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to open a spectacular hunting and recreational opportunity to the public for the very first time. The New Mexico lawmakers urge the Department to take the final steps to accept the donation and the current terms of the Sabinoso Public Access Plan quickly.

“Sabinoso is the only American wilderness without public access, so I am heartened that Secretary Zinke is moving to finalize an agreement with the Wilderness Land Trust that will allow hikers, sportsmen and others to enjoy this pristine New Mexico landscape. This collaboration is a testament to how beautiful this land is and the tremendous opportunity it holds for sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts and our state’s growing recreation economy,” **said Udall.**
«Enabling access to this wilderness is something that many New Mexicans have worked toward for years, and while there are some details to work out to ensure the property is managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act, I want to thank Secretary Zinke for coming to New Mexico to see this stunning land for himself and for moving quickly to accept the donation of the Rimrock Rose Ranch property.”

“The Sabinoso is the only legally inaccessible wilderness area in the entire nation. Surrounded by private land and without a legal road or trail to get there, the public has effectively been locked out of this stunning landscape that we all own. By accepting this land donation as part of the wilderness, the Department of Interior will finally unlock the Sabinoso to the public,” **said Heinrich**
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“This is a major gain for New Mexico and would not be possible without the generosity of the Wilderness Land Trust and the dedication of the local community and sportsmen who have championed this effort for many years. I am grateful that Secretary Zinke visited our state and recognizes just how special the Sabinoso truly is. Traditions like hunting, hiking, and fishing are among the pillars of Western culture and a thriving outdoor recreation economy. Through this collaborative effort to create public access to the Sabinoso we will ensure that outdoor enthusiasts from near and far can finally experience all that this special landscape has to offer and that it will be protected for our children and all future generations.”

“New Mexico is known as the Land of Enchantment because of our people, beautiful landscapes, clear skies, and fresh air,” **said Luján.** “I am pleased that Secretary Zinke has signaled his support for additional acreage which will allow greater public access the Sabinoso Wilderness. Thanks to the efforts of the Wilderness Land Trust and all those in New Mexico who weighed in on this issue, we will be able to preserve this unique land for future generations to hunt, fish, camp, hike and enjoy other recreational activities.”

Created in 2009 through legislation championed by Udall, Heinirch, Luján and former Senator Jeff Bingaman, the Sabinoso Wilderness is currently surrounded by private land and therefore inaccessible without trespassing on private property. Located on just over 16,000 acres in San Miguel County, the rugged Sabinoso Wilderness includes scenic canyons and mesas, which are home to a variety of wildlife, including mule deer, elk, mountain lions and wild turkey. Its dramatic landscape includes the 1,000-foot tall Canyon Largo and several impressive rock formations.

Sportsmen, recreation groups, local residents, and small business owners overwhelmingly support the Sabinoso Public Access Plan and are eagerly awaiting the day that the public can visit this unique landscape. The San Miguel County Commission has also endorsed the proposal, which represents a major economic opportunity for Las Vegas and the surrounding communities.

“Access to public lands is key to my operations as an outfitter living in rural northern New Mexico. Secretary Ryan Zinke’s has made a great decision to move forward on accepting the donation of the Rim Rose Ranch opening the Sabinoso Wilderness to hunting--that is key to all sportsmen,” **said John Olivas of JACO Outfitters.**

“This is welcome news from the Secretary of Interior. We are one step closer to having public access to what was once in accessible. Our Sabinoso Wilderness will soon be in the hands of its rightful owners, We The People,” **said Max Trujillo, San Miguel County resident.**

“After years of organizing around opening up the Sabinoso Wilderness, I’m glad to see there is finally movement,” **said Garrett VeneKlasen, executive director of New Mexico Wildlife Federation.** “The sportsmen and women of New Mexico have been clamoring to get into this prime hunting area for years and I look forward to this donation getting finalized. The New Mexico Wildlife Federation thanks the Senators and Congressman for their years of leadership on this issue, our members who have worked tirelessly on this issue, and

Secretary Zinke for taking the time to see this area for himself."

"Viva la Sabinoso! If there was any doubt that sportsmen and women have a voice, today's announcement should settle that debate. Together, hunters and anglers unanimously urged Secretary Ryan Zinke to do the right thing, and today's announcement marks the first step to securing public access to one of New Mexico's premier wilderness areas. We thank Senators Heinrich and Udall and Congressman Luján for their leadership to get us to this date and look forward to continued partnership with Secretary Zinke and his staff to finalize this long-awaited agreement," **said Jason Amaro, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Southwest Chapter Coordinator.**