

Letter by Senator Pete Domenici

Pete V. Domenici^{1, 2}

Thank you for your invitation to attend today's panel discussion on "Rio Grande Restoration: Future Directions." I apologize for not being able to attend in person, but I hope you will understand that now is a particularly busy time here in Congress.

As we all know, the Rio Grande is synonymous with life in New Mexico. It is this basic fact that makes today's discussion so important. Our State depends on the Rio Grande for so much—for basic water resources, for riparian wildlife habitat, for simple aesthetic beauty—that we simply must make the best decisions about how we use and protect it. Fortunately, recent years have seen important progress being made in crafting policies that will restore and preserve the Rio Grande.

I have tried to help in this regard. For example, I have been involved in the ongoing bosque preservation initiative since 1991, and am happy to say that the Senate has recently approved a \$500,000 appropriation to aid in the implementation of

recommendations made by the Rio Grande Bosque Conservation Committee. Another \$940,000 was also approved by the Senate, at my request, for much-needed rehabilitation of the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge. This money will be used for such projects as a new service and storage facility, replacement of obsolete heavy equipment, and rehabilitation of road and water delivery systems. Finally, the Senate has approved my request for \$1 million to continue the U.S. Geological Survey's comprehensive study of the availability of water in the Middle Rio Grande Basin.

Money alone, however, will not solve the problems facing the Rio Grande, and that is why today's conference is so very important. To make lasting progress on Rio Grande restoration, there must also be full and sustained coordination at all levels—federal, state, county, and local. Only in this way, with all of us working together, can we ensure the protection, preservation, and enhancement of this most precious resource.

¹ United States Senate, Washington, DC 2051 O-3101.

² Presented by Staff Representative, Cheryl Garcia.