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New Mexicans cheer BLM decision to halt aerial spraying of Rio Chama watershed

New Mexicans who organized their collective voices to rally against the ill-advised plan to spray toxic pesticide carbaryl over the Rio Chama Watershed praised the Bureau of Land Management Taos Field Office Thursday announcement that it would halt the spraying project.

In response, local organizations and residents released the following statements:

Mother Earth and her Inhabitants Win! I am ecstatic and beyond words and thankful for the BLM Taos Field Office for having the courage to do what is right for New Mexico and the Rio Chama pristine ecosystem. Of significant importance was protecting the land, air, our sacred water and us, a no-brainer. Our animals, pollinators, birds, fish, lizards, fox, bears, and many more are extremely important to this delicate ecosystem. What scared me most was the Rio Chama getting contaminated and subsequently contaminating the Rio Grande and devastating the agriculture and farms to the Mexico border, also devastating Tribal lands, and contaminating Santa Fe and Albuquerque aquifers beyond recovery. What was the USDA-APHIS thinking? More work ahead, with public and Tribal consultation, as we figure out a natural and or Indigenous way to address the grasshopper problem. Ahee'hee everyone for this monumental precedent setting Victory!

— **Terry Sloan, Director, Southwest Native Cultures** - tas@sloancompany.net

"The effort to stop this incredibly toxic spray was collaborative and strategic. People were tireless in getting the word out," said **Aimee Code, the Pesticide Program director at the Xerces Society**. "We are pleased that BLM recognized the need for a more thoughtful process to address the concerns ranchers raised about native grasshoppers. Now it's time to work together again to create a plan that preserves this unique and vital ecosystem."

"This pollinator week, thank you to hundreds of New Mexicans who called for a halt to the aerial spray over our cherished Rio Chama Watershed. As a mom and a photographer, we've hiked the slot canyons among the pink cholla cactuses and towering sandstones — home to bumblebees, monarchs, and fireflies. These diverse habits need long-term protection, inclusive decision-making with communities and consultation with Tribes and Pueblos to foster healthy ecosystems. Today, the power of collective action prevails. We will continue to raise our voices."

— **Anni Hanna, director, NM Climate Justice**

"When we speak with one voice, the message is heard and good decisions are made! Yesterday our members were sending in comments to BLM and APHIS at the rate of two per minute.

Thank you to everyone who read, reacted and responded to this disastrous poorly devised project.

— **Teresa Seamster, Northern New Mexico/Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club**

“Using such a toxic pesticide over such a large, ecologically important, and beautiful area without regard to the presence of nesting songbirds, insect diversity, aquatic animals, and even human health, which would all have been placed in jeopardy, was a reckless idea. I am so grateful that the BLM was responsive to the public’s concerns and was persuaded to scrap the project.”

— **Mary Katherine Ray, Wildlife chair, Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club**