

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: David Carl

September 4, 2018

(505) 288-2465

AG Balderas Wins Historic Public Lands Victory on Behalf of New Mexicans, Granting Access to more than 50,000 Acres

Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced a major court victory on behalf of millions of New Mexicans, granting them access to thousands of acres of public lands in Northern New Mexico, near White Peak, much of which had previously been blocked off by a landowner.

“Access to and use of our state’s public lands is a crucial part of the cultural heritage of New Mexicans,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “New Mexicans have hunted, fished, camped and spent time on our public lands near White Peak for more than a century. Judge Backus’s decision reaffirms the right of every New Mexican to enjoy the natural beauty of our state.”

The land in question was about 50,000 acres in Northern Mora and Colfax Counties. A wealthy, private landowner sued to block hunters and other members of the public from traveling on roads across his property to reach state lands.

A wealthy private landowner filed suit to block the public from traveling these historic roads. The landowner threatened to deprive New Mexicans of the use of their public lands and to take away New Mexicans' shared cultural and natural inheritance. The Attorney General intervened in the case to protect the public interest, and filed counterclaims to forever protect access to treasured state trust lands around White Peak. At trial, the Attorney General's Office demonstrated the public nature of a network of eleven roads covering more than 70 miles in distance.

Judge Backus agreed with the Attorney General’s Office that all eleven roads are public and may not be blocked by the landowner. The Judge’s ruling is an important victory for the people of New Mexico.

###