

## **Land Protection Measure Sponsored by Council President Heinrich Clears Committee Hurdle, Moves to Full Council**

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**LAND PROTECTION MEASURE CLEARS COMMITTEE HURDLE, MOVES TO FULL COUNCIL**

ALBUQUERQUE – Last night City Council President Martin Heinrich shepherded a major land protection measure through the Finance and Government Operations Committee and on to the full City Council for final action. The bill aims to protect 67 acres of open space property that is one of the most important and imperiled wildlife connections in New Mexico, and that has been recognized recently as one of North America’s five most important wildlife linkages. The corridor connects wildlife habitats in the Sandia Mountains to those of the Manzano Mountains. Because of its passage through a busy freeway corridor, the area has also become a hotspot for wildlife collisions along Old Route 66. Currently wildlife are funneled down via a drainage to the north and are crossing Old Route 66 in attempts to access food and water in Tijeras Creek below. The New Mexico Department of Transportation and New Mexico Game and Fish have been working with a host of community groups represented by the Tijeras Safe Passage Coalition to reduce this conflict. Protecting the Hawkwatch site will help leverage their considerable efforts.

Heinrich is excited that the proposed purchase of the Hawkwatch property will also provide new recreational opportunities for Albuquerque residents. The area is adjacent to the existing Tres Pistolas Open Space and to the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. One of the benefits to the citizens of Albuquerque will be potential for improved public access from Old Route 66 to the Sandia Wilderness by hikers, bird watchers and sportsmen. The property is part of the scenic view-shed along the I-40 corridor through Tijeras Canyon.

“Protecting this land will leave a legacy to our children. Not just of open space, but also healthy wildlife populations in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains,” said Councilor Heinrich.

The Finance and Government Operations Committee, Chaired by Council Vice-President Don Harris and comprised of Councilors Sanchez, Benton, Heinrich and Loy, passed the measure unanimously. For further information, please contact Councilor Martin Heinrich at 768-3152 / TTY 768-2474.

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