

## **Council President Heinrich Applauds Unanimous Approval by City Council of Open Space Protection Measure in Albuquerque's Sandia Mountains**

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Contact: Councilor Martin Heinrich 505-768-3152

### **COUNCIL PRESIDENT HEINRICH APPLAUDS UNANIMOUS APPROVAL BY CITY COUNCIL OF OPEN SPACE PROTECTION MEASURE IN ALBUQUERQUE'S SANDIA MOUNTAINS**

ALBUQUERQUE – Albuquerque City Council President Martin Heinrich is pleased to announce the approval of a measure requiring the City of Albuquerque to purchase and protect a vulnerable 67-acre property, known as the Hawkwatch property, in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness overlooking the City of Albuquerque.

Scott Wilber, Executive Director of the New Mexico Land Conservancy, stated “This effort demonstrates the power and effectiveness of public-private partnerships. The joint effort of the New Mexico Land Conservancy, the Tijeras Canyon Safe Passage Coalition, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, the New Mexico Department of Transportation and the City of Albuquerque have helped move this proposed project one step closer to reality.” He also noted “the acquisition of the Hawkwatch Property will be a great asset for the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County. It ensures the movement of wildlife between the Sandia and Manzano Mountains, provides safe travel to motorists in the canyon, protects the scenic viewshed for the gateway to the City and provides extensive recreational opportunities.”

Because the canyon serves as a natural funnel for wildlife in between two large mountain ranges, many mule deer have been hit by vehicles at the location as they attempt to access a permanent water source in Tijeras Creek between NM 333 and I-40. Hawkwatch International, the previous owner of the property, had expressed its intention to sell the property, potentially to develop the area into residential housing lots. Such development of the property would have modified wildlife movement and also undermined efforts to protect motorists by moving wildlife safely across both highways at the location.

The Hawkwatch property is one of the most important and imperiled wildlife connections in New Mexico and has been recognized recently as one of North America's five most important wildlife linkages. Council President Heinrich's measure commits the \$650,000 of City Open Space funding necessary to purchase all 67 acres. During public comment upon the measure, several speakers praised the significant value of the land for its price tag.

“This is a wonderful open space acquisition for Albuquerque,” said Heinrich. “I'm thrilled that when my sons are my age they will be able to enjoy the Hawkwatch site and the wildlife that live there.”

For further information, please contact Javier Benavidez, Assistant to City Council President Martin Heinrich at 768-3152 / TTY 768-2474.

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