

NEW MEXICO LAND CONSERVANCY

Preserving New Mexico's Land Heritage

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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1,760 acres along Continental Divide Permanently Protected in Catron County Santa Fe, New Mexico, June 2, 2009

The New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC) and the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) – Forestry Division are proud to announce the recent completion of a conservation easement on the Alegres Mountain Ranch in Catron County, New Mexico.

“Forests and woodlands on the private lands of northern Catron County are very important for wildlife habitat and wood products”, said New Mexico State Forester Arthur “Butch” Blazer. “State Forestry is glad to assist landowners in protecting these forest values by establishing perpetual conservation easements. We paid a small amount for this easement, so most of the value was donated by the landowner. New Mexico State Forestry and the New Mexico Land Conservancy are working with Mr. Tollett to see that he gets a well-deserved land conservation tax credit for his donation.”

Alegres Mountain Ranch is located in western New Mexico just south of Pie Town and exemplifies the quality and importance of the scenic, wildlife, and agricultural land values of Catron County. As a result of the cooperative partnership, EMNRD and NMLC were successful in protecting 1,760 acres of forested land on the western flanks of Alegres Mountain, one of the most prominent natural features in the area and a high point along the Continental Divide which runs through the property.

At 10,229 feet in elevation, Alegres Mountain towers over the surrounding country and affords majestic views in all directions. The natural habitat within the easement supports many wildlife species including elk, mule deer, black bear, and mountain lion. The easement will also help protect headwater areas for the Nester Draw and Middle Mangas Creek watersheds.

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This conservation easement builds upon an existing 1,480 acre easement that the landowner, Blake Tollett, donated to NMLC last year to protect the southern portion of the ranch, bringing the total area of protected land on the property to 3,240 acres.

“Much of the high quality private lands in Catron adjacent to or nearby national forest and other public lands are highly susceptible to development,” noted Scott Wilber, NMLC’s Executive Director. “Blake Tollett has done a wonderful thing by protecting his ranch and ensuring that the important wildlife habitat and scenic vistas around Alegres Mountain and along this stretch of the Continental Divide will remain protected forever.”

Founded in 2002, NMLC is dedicated to preserving New Mexico’s land heritage by working with private landowners and organizations, public agencies and community groups to protect significant wildlife habitat, productive agricultural lands, scenic open space, cultural and historic sites and recreational lands for conservation purposes and public benefit. NMLC’s goal is to conserve, directly or in partnership with others, 250,000 acres of high priority, high conservation value lands throughout the state by 2016 through the use of conservation easements and other voluntary land protection methods.

As of early 2009, over 70,000 acres have been protected throughout the state through NMLC’s efforts. NMLC continues to pursue other conservation work in this area of New Mexico to help protect the unique landscape surrounding Alegres Mountain and other high conservation value areas in Catron County.

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