

# NEW MEXICO LAND CONSERVANCY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **Land Protection in the Rio Mora Valley takes a Giant Step Forward at the Phoenix Ranch West near Watrous**

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At the close of 2014, local Las Vegas rancher and native New Mexican, Robert M. Quintana, contributed to the protection of an additional 5,453 acres of rangeland in the Rio Mora Valley by donating a conservation easement on his property at the Phoenix Ranch West, near Watrous, to the New Mexico Land Conservancy.

The Phoenix Ranch West is located approximately 3 miles west of the village of Watrous and about 1.5 miles southwest of the Rio Mora, within the *Rio Mora Conservation Area*. The *Rio Mora Conservation Area* was designated by the federal government in 2012 and encompasses 962,000 acres in the Rio Mora Watershed. It includes the new *Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge*, a 4,600 acre refuge along the Mora River that is directly adjacent to the Phoenix Ranch West.

The Phoenix Ranch West is a working cattle ranch that also supports a diversity of wildlife habitats, including numerous *playas* lakes that are important to resident and migratory birds. “It is important to me to see that rangeland in this area is not further subdivided and kept intact as working ranches into the future”, said Mr. Quintana, who owns other ranch properties along the front range of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, between Las Vegas and Wagon Mound.

The New Mexico Land Conservancy is excited to add the Phoenix Ranch West to our growing inventory of conservation easement properties in northeast New Mexico and the *Rio Mora Conservation Area*. The Phoenix Ranch West joins the recently protected 2,543 acres of rangeland at nearby Wolf Creek, on the Fort Union Ranch, donated to NMLC by the Union Land and Grazing Company in December 2014.

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