

EASTERN SANDOVAL CITIZENS ASSOCIATION
Press Release

July 2019

Contact: ESCA President George Franzen

On June 20th, Sandy Johnson, President of Las Placitas Association (LPA); George Franzen, President of Eastern Sandoval Citizens Association (ESCA); Mary Rose de Valladares, member of LPA and ESCA; and Dick Ulmer, Chair of the ESCA Land Protection Trust, had the opportunity to meet with Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, her Cabinet Secretary for the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, and her Deputy Chief of Staff, Caroline Buerkle.

The purpose of this meeting was to thank Gov. Grisham for her previous support to try to stop the BLM from gravel mining in the Buffalo Tract, and to ensure that she and her staff were prepared to respond appropriately to the anticipated Resource Management Plan, or RMP, revision that would potentially allow a gravel mine larger than any of the four currently in our area. While a member of Congress, she had toured our area and knows well the impact of existing mines on our economy and quality of life -- and she understands the squeeze play on our community that is being proposed.

We wanted to alert our Governor of proposed changes to BLM that has just been reported to us by our County Commissioner, Katherine Bruch. The BLM presented an overview of their proposed changes to the overall land use management rules in a webinar this past Friday. We believe the intent is to streamline the process for leasing and disposing of property. BLM did say that they want to work more closely with State and local governments, but that would be discretionary. The BLM expects the proposal to be published in the Federal Register in August.

It is our understanding (from multiple sources) that the BLM will try to “fast track” this revised RMP in their desire to quickly lease the land to a mining operator, and as the Signpost reported recently, Vulcan has already been permitted to drill a significant number of exploratory holes — some extremely close to private residential property in the Mustang Mesa area of Placitas. As we explained to the Governor, the changes proposed in the new BLM process would reduce the Governor’s time to respond to the RMP to 30 days from the current 60, and cut the public comment period on applications from 30 to 15 days.

Clearly such an attempt by the BLM to ramrod land use proposals sends a clear signal about the importance of the efforts by our Congressional Delegation to stop further mineral extraction in our area. But it also needs to loudly signal the importance of our community being ready to respond with extreme speed once the RMP is published for public comment. The reversal of the BLM regarding their plan for Chaco Canyon demonstrates that these inappropriate land uses can be stopped -- but we all must work together and do our part.

Next ES-CA Board Meeting: (open to the public) Monday, **August 12, 2019 – 4:30pm – 6:00pm – Note new meeting time!** Placitas Community Library, NM Hwy 165, Placitas, NM 87043.