January 13, 2022

New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission
1190 Saint Francis Drive
Suite # South 2102
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
Pamela.Jones@state.nm.us

Re: WQCC 21-62(R) – Outstanding Waters Designations for Rio Hondo, Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez River Headwaters (Rio San Antonio, East Fork Jemez River, and Redondo Creek)

Dear Water Quality Control Commissioners,

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (New Mexico Wild) supports protecting the Rio Hondo, Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez River Headwaters (Rio San Antonio, East Fork Jemez River, and Redondo Creek) as Outstanding Waters (ONRWs). Protecting these waters will ensure that water quality is protected for generations to come.

New Mexico Wild is committed to the protection of New Mexico's wildlands, waters, and wildlife. Clean water is an absolute imperative to our mission, and to the continued enjoyment of the spaces we care about. Additionally, New Mexico Wild is committed to the preservation of cultural and sacred sites, artifacts, and landscapes that are important to our pueblos and tribes. Water is life, and these ONRW designations are an important step in the right direction.

Outstanding Waters designation for these ecologically and recreationally significant waters will support and protect existing community uses, such as ranching and farming, while prohibiting new pollution from impacting our watershed. For generations the local community has depended on clean water in the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez watersheds to water livestock and feed acequia systems. This designation will ensure that clean water continues to flow downstream to these critical watershed stakeholders and protect these traditional uses from new development and impacts.

These waters are rich with ecological resources, and they also provide significant recreational opportunities for both New Mexicans and visitors alike.

In addition, Outstanding Water protections will help draw much needed attention for restoration, and water and fuel management projects throughout these watersheds. New Mexico Wild supports the efforts to ensure the Rio Hondo, Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo, Upper Rio Grande, and Jemez River Headwaters (Rio San Antonio, East Fork Jemez River, and Redondo Creek) will continue to provide clean water to downstream communities and wildlife.

We urge the Commission to designate these waters as ONRWs.

Sincerely,

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