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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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### **The New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee & the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Celebrate Preservation of 5900 Acre Double E Ranch**

**Silver City, NM** – Today, the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) celebrated the preservation of a 5,900 acre property located in southwestern New Mexico that will become one of New Mexico's newest state wildlife management areas. The celebration was hosted at Western New Mexico University by President Joseph Shepard.

The property, known as the Double E Ranch, will be owned and managed by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish for wildlife, compatible public recreation, and educational purposes. Funding for the acquisition of the Double E Ranch was made possible with a combination of funds provided by the ONRT and the USFWS from a natural resource damage settlement and the New Mexico Game Commission.

"The acquisition of the 5,900 acre wildlife habitat at the Double E Ranch marks a true partnership between the public, the State of New Mexico and the nation. Working together we selected, funded, and today celebrate, the Double E Ranch restoration project that compensates New Mexicans for natural resources that have been injured, destroyed, or lost as a result of the release of hazardous substances into the environment," said Ryan Flynn, New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee. "The acquisition of the Double E Ranch by the State Game Commission will permanently protect and restore valuable wildlife habitat."

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with the New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee, enthusiastically joins in celebrating the acquisition of the Double E Ranch into the public domain," said Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Regional Director of the Service's Southwest Region. "We are pleased to have been able to provide significant funding via our Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program – State Wildlife Grants to ensure preservation of the high-quality conservation landscapes inherent in the property. Today's culminating event is truly a commencement; whereby our important ally in conservation, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, can move forward in making a good thing great."

The Double E Ranch is located approximately 30 miles northwest of Silver City and encompasses about a three mile stretch of Bear Creek. Wildlife and wildlife habitat will benefit from protecting and restoring this high-quality riparian habitat. Riparian habitat is critical for hundreds of migrating birds that visit the

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area, including the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and the candidate species yellow-billed cuckoo. In addition to having a high-quality riparian habitat, this portion of Bear Creek is designated by the USFWS as critical habitat for the endangered loach minnow, and may also provide habitat for the threatened Chiricahua leopard frog. Restoration actions will focus on passive restoration, including allowing riparian vegetation to reestablish naturally.

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