

# News Release

## New Mexico Congressional Delegation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 13, 2006

### PRESIDENT SIGNS VALLE VIDAL PROTECTION ACT INTO LAW

WASHINGTON – The New Mexico Congressional Delegation today proudly announced President Bush has signed into law the Valle Vidal Protection Act, and praised the efforts of countless New Mexicans who worked to protect the Valle Vidal permanently.

The new law, authored and introduced in Congress by Rep. Tom Udall, on September 15, 2005, and supported by the entire Delegation, permanently shields the 101,794-acre Valle Vidal Unit of the Carson National Forest from mineral extraction.

The law amends the Forest Service management plan for the Valle Vidal to ban mineral extraction, while allowing the Forest Service to continue its management and ensuring the current recreational and agricultural uses on the land continue.

"The Valle Vidal is national treasure and I am pleased its true values have been protected by law," Rep. Udall said. "Congratulations to all of the New Mexicans and the Valle Vidal Coalition who succeeded in making its protection a reality. Drilling in our state's 'Valley of Life' would not have been a long-term, responsible energy strategy – and I am pleased they and our entire Delegation united to protect it forever."

"I believe the Valle Vidal bill, teamed with my legislation to tap vast American energy supplies in the Gulf of Mexico, represents a common sense balance for a nation with great energy demands and a drive to protect stunning areas like the Valle Vidal. I'm glad we got both done," said U.S. **Senator Pete Domenici**, outgoing chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

"The Valle Vidal is one of those special places in our state that should be preserved for everyone to enjoy. I congratulate Congressman Udall for working so hard to get this bill signed into law," **Sen. Bingaman** said.

"The Valle Vidal is a great recreational, scenic and wildlife area, and the summer destination for up to 3,000 Boy Scouts on a wilderness experience each year. These are its best uses," **Rep. Wilson** said.

"I was pleased to join this bipartisan effort to preserve one of New Mexico's great natural wonders," **Rep. Pearce** said. "This bill passed a key test of good environmental legislation – common sense. I commend Congressman Tom Udall for finding balance between environmental protection, community development, and respect for private property rights."

Straddling Colfax and Taos counties, the Valle Vidal harbors one of the densest concentrations of wildlife in the state. It is home to 60 species of mammals, 33 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 15 species of fish.

Over 30 years ago, the Pennzoil Co. purchased nearly 500,000 acres of the land, which was being used as a hunting park. Pennzoil maintained the area as such until 1982, when it donated a 101,794-acre parcel of it to the federal government – at the time, the largest donation in Forest Service history. During its ownership, Pennzoil never opened the area for oil and gas drilling.

--END--