



VALENCIA COUNTY

**A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINIMUM POOL AT
ELEPHANT BUTTE LAKE
RESOLUTION NO 2021- 29**

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Valencia County, met upon notice of a duly published Business meeting on June 16, 2021, at 5:00 P.M. in the Valencia County Administration Building, 444 Luna Avenue, Los Lunas, New Mexico 87031; and,

WHEREAS, NMSA 1978, Sections 4-37-1 *et seq.* provides that counties may adopt those resolutions and ordinances, not inconsistent with statutory or constitutional limitations place on counties, to discharge those powers necessary and proper to provide for the safety, convenience of the county and its inhabitants; and,

WHEREAS, the Valencia County Board of County Commissioners is the duly authorized governing body of Valencia County, a New Mexico political subdivision; and

WHEREAS, Elephant Butte Dam was established in 1916 as part of the Rio Grande Project to not only tame the flood waters of the Rio Grande but also to store water that could be used by farmers for irrigation of their crops during the dry seasons; and,

WHEREAS, Elephant Butte Lake is 40 miles long and has over 200 miles of shoreline; and,

WHEREAS, Elephant Butte Lake's waters supports a diverse fishery of record-breaking bass, walleye, catfish, crappie, white and black bass, stripers, and numerous other species;

WHEREAS, numerous bird species, including the American white pelicans, thousands of western and Clark's grebes, terns, and unusual gulls, and shorebirds inhabit the Elephant Butte Lake area primarily because of the abundant availability of fish; and,

WHEREAS, depletion of the lake has a significant adverse effect on wildlife and,

WHEREAS, fishing, boating and wildlife viewing are recreational activities vital to the public and economic interest of both the Community and the State at large; and,


WHEREAS, a minimum pool is crucial to the public's enjoyment and critical to the financial success of the marinas and the local economy.


NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Valencia that Elephant Butte Lake is a critical regional resource that provides

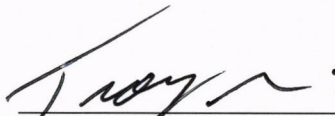
recreational opportunities, water storage, and wildlife habitat for numerous fish and bird species, that depletion of Elephant Butte's water level adversely affects those resources, and that it calls upon the Bureau of Reclamation to lead efforts to establish a minimum pool at Elephant Butte Lake to ensure the continued vitality of the environment and the prosperity of both the community and the State at large, and to take such further efforts as are necessary to protect Elephant Butte Lake.

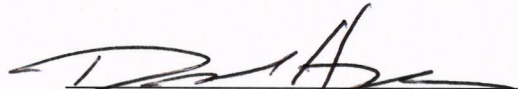
PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS 16th DAY OF JUNE 2021.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Gerard Saiz, Chair, District I



Jhonathan Aragon, Vice-Chair, District V


Troy Richardson, District II


David A. Hyder, District III


Joseph Bizzell, District IV

Attest:


Mike Milam, County Clerk



May XX, 2021

Camile Touton, Acting Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Commissioner Touton,

We write to express concerns about the future of the Elephant Butte Reservoir and the need for all stakeholders involved to work together to protect this invaluable resource. For decades, Elephant Butte has been both a hub for outdoor recreation in New Mexico and the life blood of our prolific agricultural industry. However, the prolonged drought in the desert southwest has put all of this at risk.

As the Bureau of Reclamation knows, Elephant Butte faces an existential crisis this year, with water levels the lowest in recent memory. Currently, Elephant Butte is only at 12% capacity, with projections showing it will reach 3% capacity once irrigation season begins and compact requirements with Texas and Mexico are met. This will make marinas inoperable and recreation on the lake nearly impossible, causing great economic hardship to the Elephant Butte and Truth-or-Consequences communities. In addition, with the lake at such a low-level, agricultural producers in the region will only be given roughly 3 inches of irrigation water this year, which is not enough for even one irrigation cycle. This is not an issue of recreation versus agricultural users, but a crisis for both vital industries that require a healthy and sustainable Rio Grande river system.

We all must come together to find solutions that can help mitigate the problems at Elephant Butte this year and in years to come. In the weeks ahead we all must work together to find common ground to protect Elephant Butte Lake this year, along with the communities and businesses that depend on it. Over the long term, innovative solutions like the creation of minimum pools and investments in water storage, desalination, removal of invasive species, and preventative river maintenance can all help to ensure that Elephant Butte is healthy and thriving.

Regulatory reforms are also necessary to protect our water supply in Southern New Mexico. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are incredibly out of date and have handcuffed your agency and local water authorities. In addition, the ESA has been used as a weapon by radical environmental groups to stop forest management, river maintenance, and the construction of dams across the west, all to the detriment of our water sheds.

We know some of these solutions will take time and both federal and state funding. All of us are committed to working to secure these actions, as the communities we live in and represent depend on it. We ask that you join us in working in a collaborative way to solve the crisis we face at Elephant Butte and the entire Rio Grande watershed in New Mexico.

Sincerely,

Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress