

Public Law 109–337
109th Congress

An Act

To establish the Rio Grande Natural Area in the State of Colorado, and for other purposes.

Oct. 12, 2006
[S. 56]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Rio Grande Natural Area Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission” means the Rio Grande Natural Area Commission established by section 4(a).

(2) NATURAL AREA.—The term “Natural Area” means the Rio Grande Natural Area established by section 3(a).

(3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF RIO GRANDE NATURAL AREA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is established the Rio Grande Natural Area in the State of Colorado to conserve, restore, and protect the natural, historic, cultural, scientific, scenic, wildlife, and recreational resources of the Natural Area.

(b) BOUNDARIES.—The Natural Area shall include the Rio Grande River from the southern boundary of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge to the New Mexico State border, extending $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on either side of the bank of the River.

(c) MAP AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall prepare a map and legal description of the Natural Area.

(2) EFFECT.—The map and legal description of the Natural Area shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act, except that the Secretary may correct any minor errors in the map and legal description.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The map and legal description of the Natural Area shall be available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Rio Grande Natural Area Commission.

(b) PURPOSE.—The Commission shall—

(1) advise the Secretary with respect to the Natural Area; and

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(2) prepare a management plan relating to non-Federal land in the Natural Area under section 6(b)(2)(A).

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Commission shall be composed of 9 members appointed by the Secretary, of whom—

(1) 1 member shall represent the Colorado State Director of the Bureau of Land Management;

(2) 1 member shall be the manager of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, ex officio;

(3) 3 members shall be appointed based on the recommendation of the Governor of Colorado, of whom—

(A) 1 member shall represent the Colorado Division of Wildlife;

(B) 1 member shall represent the Colorado Division of Water Resources; and

(C) 1 member shall represent the Rio Grande Water Conservation District; and

(4) 4 members shall—

(A) represent the general public;

(B) be citizens of the local region in which the Natural Area is established; and

(C) have knowledge and experience in the fields of interest relating to the preservation, restoration, and use of the Natural Area.

(d) TERMS OF OFFICE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except for the manager of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, the term of office of a member of the Commission shall be 5 years.

(2) REAPPOINTMENT.—A member may be reappointed to the Commission on completion of the term of office of the member.

(e) COMPENSATION.—A member of the Commission shall serve without compensation for service on the Commission.

(f) CHAIRPERSON.—The Commission shall elect a chairperson of the Commission.

(g) MEETINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall meet at least quarterly at the call of the chairperson.

(2) PUBLIC MEETINGS.—A meeting of the Commission shall be open to the public.

(3) NOTICE.—Notice of any meeting of the Commission shall be published in advance of the meeting.

(h) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary and the heads of other Federal agencies shall, to the maximum extent practicable, provide any information and technical services requested by the Commission to assist in carrying out the duties of the Commission.

16 USC 460rrr-3.

SEC. 5. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.

(a) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such hearings, meet and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission considers advisable to carry out this Act.

(b) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of carrying out the management plan on non-Federal land in the Natural Area, the Commission may enter into a cooperative agreement with the State of Colorado, a political subdivision of the State, or any person.

(2) **REQUIREMENTS.**—A cooperative agreement entered into under paragraph (1) shall establish procedures for providing notice to the Commission of any action proposed by the State of Colorado, a political subdivision of the State, or any person that may affect the implementation of the management plan on non-Federal land in the Natural Area.

(3) **EFFECT.**—A cooperative agreement entered into under paragraph (1) shall not enlarge or diminish any right or duty of a Federal agency under Federal law.

(c) **PROHIBITION OF ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY.**—The Commission may not acquire any real property or interest in real property.

(d) **IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall assist the Secretary in implementing the management plan by carrying out the activities described in paragraph (2) to preserve and interpret the natural, historic, cultural, scientific, scenic, wildlife, and recreational resources of the Natural Area.

(2) **AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.**—In assisting with the implementation of the management plan under paragraph (1), the Commission may—

(A) assist the State of Colorado in preserving State land and wildlife within the Natural Area;

(B) assist the State of Colorado and political subdivisions of the State in increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, the natural, historic, scientific, scenic, wildlife, and recreational resources in the Natural Area;

(C) encourage political subdivisions of the State of Colorado to adopt and implement land use policies that are consistent with—

(i) the management of the Natural Area; and

(ii) the management plan; and

(D) encourage and assist private landowners in the Natural Area in the implementation of the management plan.

SEC. 6. MANAGEMENT PLAN.

16 USC 460rrr-4.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 4 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary and the Commission, in coordination with appropriate agencies in the State of Colorado, political subdivisions of the State, and private landowners in the Natural Area, shall prepare management plans for the Natural Area as provided in subsection (b).

Deadline.

(b) **DUTIES OF SECRETARY AND COMMISSION.**—

(1) **SECRETARY.**—The Secretary shall prepare a management plan relating to the management of Federal land in the Natural Area.

(2) **COMMISSION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall prepare a management plan relating to the management of the non-Federal land in the Natural Area.

(B) **APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall submit to the Secretary the management plan prepared under subparagraph (A) for approval or disapproval.

(ii) ACTION FOLLOWING DISAPPROVAL.—If the Secretary disapproves the management plan submitted under clause (i), the Secretary shall—

(I) notify the Commission of the reasons for the disapproval; and

(II) allow the Commission to submit to the Secretary revisions to the management plan submitted under clause (i).

(3) COOPERATION.—The Secretary and the Commission shall cooperate to ensure that the management plans relating to the management of Federal land and non-Federal land are consistent.

(c) REQUIREMENTS.—The management plans shall—

(1) take into consideration Federal, State, and local plans in existence on the date of enactment of this Act to present a unified preservation, restoration, and conservation plan for the Natural Area;

(2) with respect to Federal land in the Natural Area—

(A) be developed in accordance with section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712);

(B) be consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the management plans adopted by the Director of the Bureau of Land Management for land adjacent to the Natural Area; and

(C) be considered to be an amendment to the San Luis Resource Management Plan of the Bureau of Land Management; and

(3) include—

(A) an inventory of the resources contained in the Natural Area (including a list of property in the Natural Area that should be preserved, restored, managed, developed, maintained, or acquired to further the purposes of the Natural Area); and

(B) a recommendation of policies for resource management, including the use of intergovernmental cooperative agreements, that—

(i) protect the resources of the Natural Area; and

(ii) provide for solitude, quiet use, and pristine natural values of the Natural Area.

(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish notice of the management plans in the Federal Register.

16 USC 460rrr-5. **SEC. 7. ADMINISTRATION OF NATURAL AREA.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall administer the Federal land in the Natural Area—

(1) in accordance with—

(A) the laws (including regulations) applicable to public land; and

(B) the management plan; and

(2) in a manner that provides for—

(A) the conservation, restoration, and protection of the natural, historic, scientific, scenic, wildlife, and recreational resources of the Natural Area;

(B) the continued use of the Natural Area for purposes of education, scientific study, and limited public recreation

in a manner that does not substantially impair the purposes for which the Natural Area is established;

(C) the protection of the wildlife habitat of the Natural Area;

(D) a prohibition on the construction of water storage facilities in the Natural Area; and

(E) the reduction in the use of or removal of roads in the Natural Area and, to the maximum extent practicable, the reduction in or prohibition against the use of motorized vehicles in the Natural Area (including the removal of roads and a prohibition against motorized use on Federal land in the area on the western side of the Rio Grande River from Lobatos Bridge south to the New Mexico State line).

(b) CHANGES IN STREAMFLOW.—The Secretary is encouraged to negotiate with the State of Colorado, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, and affected water users in the State to determine if changes in the streamflow that are beneficial to the Natural Area may be accommodated.

(c) PRIVATE LAND.—The management plan prepared under section 6(b)(2)(A) shall apply to private land in the Natural Area only to the extent that the private landowner agrees in writing to be bound by the management plan.

(d) WITHDRAWAL.—Subject to valid existing rights, all Federal land in the Natural Area is withdrawn from—

(1) all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

(2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and

(3) disposition under the mineral leasing laws (including geothermal leasing laws).

(e) ACQUISITION OF LAND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may acquire from willing sellers by purchase, exchange, or donation land or an interest in land in the Natural Area.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—Any land or interest in land acquired under paragraph (1) shall be administered in accordance with the management plan and this Act.

(f) APPLICABLE LAW.—Section 5(d)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(d)(1)) shall not apply to the Natural Area.

SEC. 8. EFFECT.

16 USC 460rrr-6.

Nothing in this Act—

(1) amends, modifies, or is in conflict with the Rio Grande Compact, consented to by Congress in the Act of May 31, 1939 (53 Stat. 785, ch. 155);

(2) authorizes the regulation of private land in the Natural Area;

(3) authorizes the imposition of any mandatory streamflow requirements;

(4) creates an express or implied Federal reserved water right;

(5) imposes any Federal water quality standard within or upstream of the Natural Area that is more restrictive than would be applicable had the Natural Area not been established; or

(6) prevents the State of Colorado from acquiring an instream flow through the Natural Area under the terms, conditions, and limitations of State law to assist in protecting the natural environment to the extent and for the purposes authorized by State law.

16 USC 460rrr-7. **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.

16 USC 460rrr-8. **SEC. 10. TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.**

The Commission shall terminate on the date that is 10 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

Approved October 12, 2006.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 56:

SENATE REPORTS: No. 109-45 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 151 (2005): July 26, considered and passed Senate.

Vol. 152 (2006): Sept. 27, considered and passed House.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 42 (2006):

Oct. 13, Presidential statement.