

NEWS RELEASE

Santa Fe National Forest Pueblo of Jemez



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Santa Fe National Forest and Pueblo of Jemez make history

JEMEZ PUEBLO, N.M. – The Santa Fe National Forest and the Pueblo of Jemez entered into a historic cooperative agreement at the Jemez Pueblo Youth Center, Monday.

Pueblo of Jemez Governor, Joshua Madalena, and Acting Forest Supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest, Erin Connelly, formalized the government-to-government relationship between the Pueblo and the Forest Service. Each recognized the struggles and impacts of the past and acknowledged the present successful relationship. Each is also committed to working together in the future to address issues related to the management of areas of the Santa Fe National Forest that are the ancestral lands of the Jemez people.

This Memorandum of Understanding establishes a mechanism for ongoing collaboration and consultation.

The memorandum comes after many years of sacrifice by the Pueblo, including elements of its religion and culture that have been impacted since the forest service began operations there in 1905, then known as the Jemez Forest Reserve.

“I am deeply moved by the words spoken by Governor Madalena here today,” Connelly said. “I look forward to continued dialogue and coordination on natural and cultural resource issues.”

“This MOU brings us one step closer to properly and directly managing the very lands that support our life and livelihood,” said Joshua Madalena, Pueblo of Jemez Governor. “I have an overwhelming feeling of gratitude (about the signing) because our ancestors sacrificed their lives to protect these lands as the first stewards and conservationists.”

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“This MOU helps our people follow in our ancestors’ footsteps,” he said. “It also details that the Santa Fe National Forest has legal commitments and federal trust responsibilities to protect and preserve our ancestral sites, our traditional cultural properties, human remains, religious freedoms and sacred objects of the Pueblo of Jemez.”

In 1891, Congress authorized forest reserves to be established for the purpose of preserving forest land for timber and other public uses, but without cooperative agreements with Native American Tribes in New Mexico, thus adversely impacting the Pueblo of Jemez culture and religion. Over the past twenty years, the Santa Fe National Forest has made a concerted effort to guide forest management, acknowledging and respecting the deep ties the Jemez people (Hemish) have to the land. Members of the Jemez Pueblo, who experienced a decline in their customary practices at sacred sites, are today welcoming the efforts of the Santa Fe National Forest.

“We’ve had a good relationship with the Santa Fe National Forest for the past decade or so, but now have a better relationship that is understood through this agreement,” Madalena said. “There are no words that can express the spirit of cooperation I have experienced in working with the Santa Fe National Forest. For our religious purposes, this means improved access to and greater protection of our sacred sites. This is something my people have dreamed of for a long time.”

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(Photo attached below, jpg files available upon request)



Photo by Bruce Hill, Jr., Santa Fe National Forest Public Affairs

Hon. Joshua Madalena, Pueblo of Jemez Governor (left), and Erin Connelly, Acting Forest Supervisor for the Santa Fe National Forest, sign a historic cooperative agreement at the Pueblo of Jemez Youth Center on Monday. The agreement is designed to improve collaboration and consultation between the Pueblo and the Forest Service regarding forest operations in the Jemez Pueblo area.