

UPPER PECOS RIVER WATERSHED, NEW MEXICO

THE PLACE:

Northern New Mexico's Upper Pecos River watershed is a spectacular landscape of mountain peaks, ridges and valleys in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the southernmost tip of the Rocky Mountains. In 2024 Interior Secretary Deb Haaland issued [an order](#) withdrawing 163,483 acres of the Upper Pecos from mining claims for two years while the federal government considered implementing a 20-year mining ban. That order could be scrapped by the Trump administration.

WHY IT'S SPECIAL:

The Upper Pecos River watershed is a wonderland of forests, wildlife and world-class camping, hiking and fishing. A biodiversity hotspot, the region provides habitat for Rio Grande cutthroat trout, deer, elk, black bears and other wildlife. Beavers are helping restore degraded rivers and wetlands. The watershed is also home to the [Holy Ghost ipomopsis flower](#), an endangered plant found only along a 2-mile stretch of river in the Upper Pecos watershed.

The watershed is part of the headwaters of the Pecos River, which runs through the arid lands of eastern New Mexico and west Texas, the only sizeable surface water throughout much of that area.

The Upper Pecos includes many ancestral Pueblo sites, including the Pecos National Historic Park, an archaeological site dating back thousands of years that is sacred to native peoples of the Southwest.

THE STAKES:

The public lands of the Upper Pecos watershed are being targeted for hard-rock mining exploration and extraction. Hard-rock mining for metals could destroy rivers and valleys, degrade the watershed as a habitat and recreation area, and pollute the waters for all the communities and agricultural areas downstream. The watershed is still recovering from mining that destroyed waterways in the 1990s, killing tens of thousands of fish and polluting the water.

Contact:

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