

Joint Statement on Cooperative Action for Conservation in the Big Bend/Río Bravo Region

by

The Department of the Interior of the United States of America

and

The Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources of the United Mexican States

Today, we celebrate together our progress on conservation in the Big Bend/Río Bravo Region, and reconfirm our intent to continue and expand cooperation in this natural area of binational interest, as provided for in the Joint Statement from President Barack Obama and President Felipe Calderón of May 19, 2010.

Big Bend National Park and Río Grande Wild and Scenic River in the United States and the Protected Areas of Reserva de la Biosfera Maderas del Carmen, Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Cañon de Santa Elena, Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Ocampo, and Monumento Natural Río Bravo del Norte in Mexico together are one of the largest and most significant ecological complexes in North America. Increased cooperation in this area will protect the region's extraordinary biological diversity, and support the conservation of this shared desert ecosystem for current and future generations.

We commend Mexico's National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) for jointly leading the development of an "Action Plan for the Big Bend/Río Bravo Protected Area," which identifies a set of goals for the conservation of the area's biodiversity building on the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT). We also recognize the effort and commitments put forth by the Instituto Nacional Ecología, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and other agencies in Mexico and the U.S. to provide expertise and support in developing the Action Plan. Park and natural resource managers and scientists from both countries are implementing the joint action plan to restore the natural ecosystem, control invasive species, preserve wildlife, adapt to climate change, and manage wildfires.

These continued collaborative efforts are of great importance in the context of our shared border, and will benefit more than 268 miles of rivers—some 14 percent of the entire U.S.-Mexico border—and three million acres of contiguous parks and protected area.

When Big Bend National Park was established on June 12, 1944, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States of America wrote to President Manuel Ávila Camacho of Mexico, "I do not believe that this undertaking in the Big Bend will be complete until the entire park area in this region on both sides of the Río Grande forms one great international park." More than 65 years later, we celebrate the latest steps in the long and productive history of bilateral cooperation in the conservation of natural and cultural resources between the United States and

Mexico. By this statement, we reaffirm the strategic partnership between the United States and Mexico and underscore our cooperative approach to conservation of this natural area of longstanding binational interest.

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