



Department of Cultural Affairs
State of New Mexico

Bill Richardson
Governor

Stuart A. Ashman
Secretary

June 28, 2010

Ms. Helen Hankins
State Director
BLM Colorado State Office
2850 Youngfield Street
Lakewood, CO 80215-7093

New Mexico
History Museum/
Palace of the Governors

Museum of Fine Arts

Museum of International
Folk Art

Museum of Indian
Arts and Culture

Museum of Natural
History & Science

Museum of
Space History

Bruce King
Farm & Ranch
Heritage Museum

National Hispanic
Cultural Center

New Mexico
State Monuments

Office of
Archaeological Studies

New Mexico
State Library

New Mexico Arts

New Mexico Historic
Preservation Division

Museum Services

Administrative Services

RE: Letter of Support for *Over the River* project

Dear Ms. Hankins:

I write this letter to extend my support and that of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs for Christo and Jeanne-Claude's proposed project, *Over The River*. This project will be a magnificent cultural opportunity for the region, including northern New Mexico. The proposed 5.9 miles of silvery, translucent fabric panels along the Arkansas River will be a treasure for both visitors and citizens that will last well beyond the two weeks it will be exhibited.

As the Secretary of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, I have a deep appreciation and understanding of the cultural benefit that such a unique project will create. The people of New Mexico certainly recognize the value, both culturally and economically, that art has on the community and my office is proud to support such a monumental and unprecedented project.

Support for *Over The River* is growing throughout New Mexico. Our unique history, heritage and culture are naturally a place of interest that will attract visitors from around the world. During the viewing period, we can expect thousands of visitors to travel to northern New Mexico and Santa Fe as part of their trip. These visitors will provide a welcome economic benefit to our communities during these difficult times.

Such a significant and great work of art does, at first glance, cause some unease and raise serious questions. However, given Christo's and Jeanne-Claude's track record of safety and concern for the environment, I applaud their decision to voluntarily request a rigorous Environmental Impact Statement. They are paying for this exhaustive study as well as all other costs associated with the construction and exhibition, and like all their other projects will be accepting no form of payment from the public or taxpayers. This is truly a cultural public good to be enjoyed by every visitor.

I understand that the draft EIS will be released in mid-July and that date commences a 45-day public comment period. I would ask that you include this letter as a formal comment; however, I wanted to relay my support before July.

Again, I offer my full support for *Over The River*, as originally proposed. If I can be of any assistance or provide additional input, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Stuart A. Ashman
Cabinet Secretary