



STEPHANIE GARCIA RICHARD, COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS
STATE OF NEW MEXICO



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Land Office, Mescalero Apache Tribe to Host Las Cruces Public Meetings on Proposed Land Exchange

Process still in early stages; no official decisions have been made

SANTA FE, N.M. – The New Mexico State Land Office and the Mescalero Apache Tribe will host public meetings in Las Cruces on November 7 and November 24 to share information and gather feedback from the local community regarding a potential land exchange, Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard announced today.

Acknowledging that the majority of lands the state currently stewards were once Indigenous lands, Commissioner Garcia Richard reached out to all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes in New Mexico to gauge interest in potential land exchanges of importance to their communities. In response, the Mescalero Apache Tribe approached the State Land Office to propose a land exchange that would return some ancestral lands near Las Cruces to the Tribe. Since time immemorial and before being forcibly removed to the Mescalero Apache Reservation, the Mescalero Apache people inhabited the Organ Mountains, harvesting cactus and other plants, drinking from springs, and naming numerous landmarks that exist today.

The State Land Office is still in the early stages of reviewing the proposal and gathering more information. No official decisions about the proposal have been made at this time.

As with any potential land exchange or large development, Commissioner Garcia Richard is requiring public meetings and an open public engagement process to hear feedback on this proposal. In 2019, Commissioner Garcia Richard pushed the legislature to pass [a new law](#) that requires the State Land Office to host public meetings for any potential land exchanges.

Neighborhood-Focused Public Meeting*

Friday, November 7

6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum

4100 Dripping Springs Road

Las Cruces, N.M. 88011

ONLINE OPTION: [Register to join via Zoom](#)

*The primary goal of the neighborhood-focused meeting will be to gather feedback from the neighborhoods in the direct vicinity of the proposed land exchange parcel, including Las Alturas, Talavera, and La Tierra Escondida.

General Public Meeting

Monday, November 24

6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum

4100 Dripping Springs Road

Las Cruces, N.M. 88011

ONLINE OPTION: [Register to join via Zoom](#)

Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard has overseen the New Mexico State Land Office since 2019. In that time the agency has raised more than \$12 billion for New Mexico public schools, hospitals, and universities. Over 13 million acres of state trust land are leased for a variety of uses, including ranching and farming, renewable energy, business development, mineral development, and outdoor recreation. The State Land Office has a dual mandate to use state trust land to financially support vital public institutions, while simultaneously working to protect the land for future generations.