For Immediate Release:

January 17, 2013

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State Land Commissioner Signs MOU with Counties to Resolve Long-Standing Dispute for Rights of Way Across Trust Lands

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – Agreements struck between the New Mexico State Land Office and two state counties resolve a long-standing dispute about rights of way to county roads through state trust lands, which was celebrated with a signing ceremony today at the New Mexico Association of Counties Annual Meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed for rights of way to specific county roads, which cross state trust lands by State Land Commissioner Ray Powell and respective County Commission Chairmen from Doña Ana and Rio Arriba Counties.

Assn. of Counties Executive Director Paul Gutierrez and President Dee Robinson from Lea County were also present for the agreement signing.

The MOUs establish a cooperative working relationship between the State Land Office and New Mexico counties to identify roads that do no have an executed right of way and will bring county roads into compliance with state rules and regulations. Counties will continue to maintain roads and will have a legal right of way to do so as part of the agreement.

“I greatly appreciate the Association of Counties’ effort to find a fair and workable solution to the age-old rights-of-way question of accessing roads that cross state trust lands,” said New Mexico State Land Commissioner Ray Powell. “Working cooperatively with our outstanding county leaders helps address important health and public safety issues, encourages local economic development, and helps generate revenue to support our public schools, universities, and hospitals from the use of state trust lands.”

The MOUs became effective upon signing.

The New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands is an elected state official responsible for administering the state’s land grant trust. Thirteen million acres of land were granted to New Mexico in 1898 and 1910. Each tract is held in trust for the public schools, universities, as well as special schools and hospitals that serve children with physical, visual, and auditory disabilities. In fiscal year 2012, the trust lands and permanent funds produced a record amount of more than $650 million in income for the beneficiaries.
The New Mexico Association of Counties Sustaining Membership Program is designed to bring county members, businesses and other governmental entities together. Sustaining members have special benefits for our conferences, access to our biennial membership directory, and an opportunity to create lasting relationships with over 1,000 county members.

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Commissioner Powell Signs MOU with Dona Ana County
Commission Chairman Wayne Hancock

Commissioner Powell hands signed MOU to staffer Ley Schimoler flanked by (r) Paul Gutierrez, New Mexico Association of Counties exec. director and (!) Barney Trujillo, Rio Arriba County Commission chairman. Standing, L-R: Tomas Campos, Rio Arriba County manager and commissioners Danny Garcia, District 3 and Alfredo Monoya, District 2