

**ELEVENTH LEGISLATURE
OF THE
CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES
SPECIAL SESSION
MAY 28, 2026
CONCHO, OK**

RESOLUTION: A Resolution to Approve and Support the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Engagement with the Nature Conservancy and its Efforts to Establish a Tribal Entity and Co-Management Agreement with New Mexico.

RESOLUTION NO: 11L-SS-2026-0528-001
DATE INTRODUCED: May 22, 2026
SPONSOR: Kendricks Sleeper, District A2
CO-SPONSOR: Rector Candy, District A4

SUBJECT: A Resolution to Approve and Support the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Engagement with the Nature Conservancy and its Efforts to Establish a Tribal Entity and Co-Management Agreement with New Mexico.

WHEREAS: The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes are federally recognized Indian Tribes, organized under a constitution approved by the Secretary of the Interior on April 4, 2006, and

WHEREAS: The Legislature has the Constitutional obligation and public responsibility to the Tribes to oversee the Tribes' operations in order to establish and promote justice, establish guidance and direction for the government and advance the general welfare of the Tribes; and

WHEREAS: Article VII, Section 4(d) of the Constitution requires that the Legislature or Tribal Council give prior authorization for the signing of contracts by the Governor; and

WHEREAS: The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a District of Columbia non-profit corporation, has acquired an approximately 50,000-acre property in northeastern New Mexico, which is part of the ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes; and

WHEREAS: TNC is working to coordinate a phased transfer of approximately 32,000 acres of the Property to the State of New Mexico using U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Funding. The State's Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department-Forestry Division intends to own this State Parcel in fee, subject to a Co-Management Agreement between the State and a yet-to-be-created Tribal Entity, which will be comprised of multiple federally-recognized Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS: In a future stage of this project, TNC intends to transfer the remaining

approximately 18,000 acres directly to the Tribal Entity (Tribal Parcel), once the entity is legally established and in a financial and operational position to accept management of the Tribal Parcel. The Tribal Parcel will be transferred to the Tribal Entity in fee, subject to a perpetual conservation easement or other similar restriction held by a qualified holder; and

WHEREAS: This endeavor requires the creation of a Tribal Entity with key characteristics, including but not limited to equal representation for all interested Tribes in the coalition, the possibility for additional Tribes to join the Tribal Entity after its initial formation, the capacity to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the State to co-manage the State Parcel, the ability to hold the Tribal Parcel land in fee, the ability to manage contracts, grants, staff and programs to carry out management activities on both the State Parcel and Tribal Parcel, and the protection of the sovereignty of each participating Tribe; and

WHEREAS: The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes intend to work collaboratively with TNC and other Tribal Nations to establish a Tribal Entity and Co-Management Agreement that are responsive to Tribal needs and input and that will enable successful co-management and Tribal land ownership; and

WHEREAS: Participation in these conversations do not commit the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes to join the future Tribal Entity at this time, and

WHEREAS: The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes understand that the Tribal Entity will enter a Co-Management Agreement with the State of New Mexico and that because of timing constraints related to federal funding, aspects of the Co-Management Agreement may need to be negotiated before the Tribal Entity is fully formed; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes express its support for TNC's efforts to create a tribally-led co-management and land ownership model for the Property and expresses its willingness to participate in these important conversations about the creation of the Tribal Entity and Co-Management Agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes designate Governor Wassana or other designee to engage in conversations, meetings, and in-person events to provide input on behalf of the Tribes. Until the Tribal Entity is formed, Governor Wassana or other designee has the authority to indicate the Tribes' preference regarding the Tribal Entity and the Co-Management Agreement in workshops and intertribal meetings. Governor Wassana with prior approvals, shall have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Tribes; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Eleventh Legislature approves and supports the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Engagement with the Nature Conservancy and its Efforts to Establish a Tribal Entity and Co-Management Agreement with New Mexico and authorizes Governor Wassana to sign any and all documents related to the intent of this resolution.

Kendricks Sleeper
Speaker of the Eleventh Legislature
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes



ATTEST:

I, Jodi White Buffalo, Legislative Clerk, hereby certify that the foregoing is a True and Accurate Copy of the Original Resolution No. 11L-SS-2026-00528-001 which was acted upon by the Legislature of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in a Special Session of the Eleventh Legislature, by a roll call vote on the 28th day of May 2026.

VOTE RECORD:

DISTRICT	LEGISLATOR	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
A1	Pamela Sutton				
A2	Kendricks Sleeper				
A3	Travis Ruiz				
A4	Rector Candy				
C1	Bruce Whiteman, Jr.				
C2	Milan Roman Nose, Jr.				
C3	Thomas Trout				
C4	Mariah Youngbull				
TOTAL					
Passes () Fails () Tabled () Allowed to Die () No Action ()					

Pursuant to Article VI, Section 5, subsection (a) of the Tribes Constitution reads in part: “Tie votes in the Legislature shall be decided by the Governor.”

		YES	NO	ABSENT
Governor	Reggie Wassana			

Jodi White Buffalo, Legislative Clerk
Eleventh Legislature, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes



ATTEST:

Pursuant to Article VI, Section 7, subsection (a)(iv) of the Tribes Constitution reads in part: “All Bills passed by the Legislature shall be presented to the Governor for signature or veto. All laws shall take effect thirty days after signature by the Governor or veto override by the Legislature unless any Member of the Tribes submits to the Coordinator of the Office of Tribal Council a petition signed by at least one hundred fifty Members of the Tribal Council seeking to repeal the law or resolution at the next Tribal Council meeting. If the Tribal Council fails to repeal such law or resolution at the next Tribal Council where the matter has been properly placed on the agenda for the Tribal Council meeting, such law or resolution shall become effective immediately.”

Pursuant to Article VII, Section 4, subsection (g) of the Tribes Constitution reads: “The Governor shall have the power to sign any enactment passed by the Legislature into law or to veto any enactment passed by the Legislature within ten days of passage with a written explanation of any objections; and if the Governor takes no action within ten days, then the enactment shall become law in accordance with this Constitution.”

{ } APPROVED

{ } VETOED: Attachment ____; Governor’s written explanation of any objections.

On the _____ day of _____, 2026.

Reggie Wassana, Governor
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes



TRANSMITTAL OF DOCUMENTS:

From the Legislative Branch to the Office of Records Management

ATTEST:

Pursuant to Article VI, Section 7, subsection (a)(v), of the Tribes Constitution reads, “The Office of Records Management shall compile all Laws and Resolutions into a comprehensive Code in an orderly manner that shall be published annually.”

Office of Records Management Staff, hereby certify that the foregoing is a True and Accurate Original Resolution No. 11L-SS-2026-0528-001.

Space below is reserved for Stamp:

Received (Date) Office of Record Management

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Office of Records Management
Department of Administration, Executive Branch
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes



Elk Valley Tribal Entity: What is Needed?

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recently acquired the Dawson Elk Valley Ranch, an approximately 50,000-acre property in northeastern New Mexico (EV Ranch Property) in December 2025. TNC is coordinating a phased transfer and long-term stewardship structure involving the State of New Mexico and a coalition of federally recognized Tribal Nations.

The acquisition and phased transfer will involve dividing the former Elk Valley Ranch property into two distinct land transactions. First, approximately 32,000 acres will be transferred from TNC to the State of New Mexico using U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program funding (the State Parcel). The State, through The New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department–Forestry Division (EMNRD or the State), will own the State Parcel in fee. The State Parcel will be managed through a co-management agreement between the State and a tribal entity formed by the coalition of federally recognized Tribal Nations. The land transfer to the State and co-management agreement must be executed by September 2026 to capitalize on federal funding and state political support.

In a later phase of the Project, the remaining 18,000 acres will be transferred directly to the tribal entity to hold in fee (the Tribal Coalition Parcel) once the entity is in a financial and operational position to accept management of the Parcel. The fee transfer will be subject to a perpetual conservation easement held by a qualified holder, preferably a tribal land trust.

To facilitate this effort, the tribal entity must meet various requirements, objectives, and constraints. The following chart lists many of those parameters and where they originate.

Requirements of Project • Multiple Tribes can be part of the entity • Ability to enter into co-management agreement with the State of New Mexico • Ability to own real property • Ability to receive grant funds, enter contracts, and hold insurance policies • Ability to carry out management activities	Requirements of The Nature Conservancy • Must be able to ensure that the conservation easement on the Tribal Coalition Parcel can be enforced if needed to protect conservation values
Protections and Equitable Considerations for Tribes • Limit liability for Tribes, either through preservation of sovereign immunity or separation of liability from Tribal government • One vote per Tribe • Ability to add new Tribes in the future	Requirements of State • Tribal entity must be “governmental” in nature to enter co-management agreement • Must submit executed co-management agreement to U.S. Forest Service by September 2026 to receive federal funding for land acquisition



Elk Valley

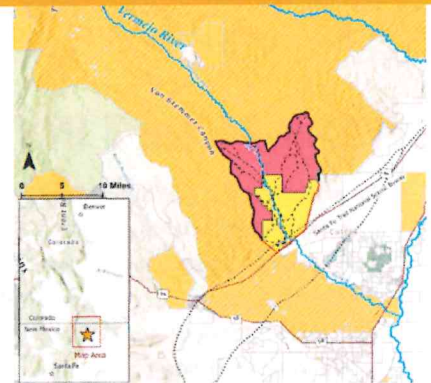
INTERTRIBAL COALITION

ELK VALLEY RANCH

The Elk Valley Ranch spans 50,039 acres of forested canyonlands, high meadows, and short grass prairie in northeastern New Mexico. The property includes large expanses of ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper woodlands as it transitions to the expansive shortgrass prairie of the southern Great Plains. The property also contains 18 miles of critical headwaters of the Vermejo River and supports a myriad of flora and fauna, including 32 threatened and endangered species.

THE PROJECT

Northeastern New Mexico is the ancestral land of many Tribal Nations and Pueblos that effectively stewarded this landscape for thousands of years. The canyons, meadows, and 18 miles of the Vermejo River still hold tipi rings, peeled trees and cultural markers that reflect generations of stewardship, ceremony, hunting, harvesting and living in balance with the land. Today, this project creates a rare opportunity to reconnect Tribal Nations with a place of deep ancestral significance by restoring Indigenous-led management and ensuring that Tribal knowledge and values guide how this landscape is protected and cared for moving forward.



50,039 acres
of forested canyonlands, high
meadows, and short grass prairie

18 miles
of critical headwaters of
the Vermejo River

32 species,
threatened and endangered

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has purchased the Ranch and has developed a phased plan that ensures protection and a transition to Indigenous decision-making authority. Under this structure, approximately 32,000 acres of forested habitat will be conveyed to the State of New Mexico and governed through a legally binding co-management agreement that establishes shared management rights between the State and a coalition of participating Tribal Nations. The remaining 18,000 acres will be protected through conservation easements and subsequently transferred in fee ownership to the same Tribal coalition. Because there is currently no Indigenous-led accredited entity capable of holding conservation easements of this type, the project also includes the development of a new Indigenous-led land trust designed to create, hold and steward culturally appropriate easements and to support long-term Tribal governance, land management, and conservation across the region.

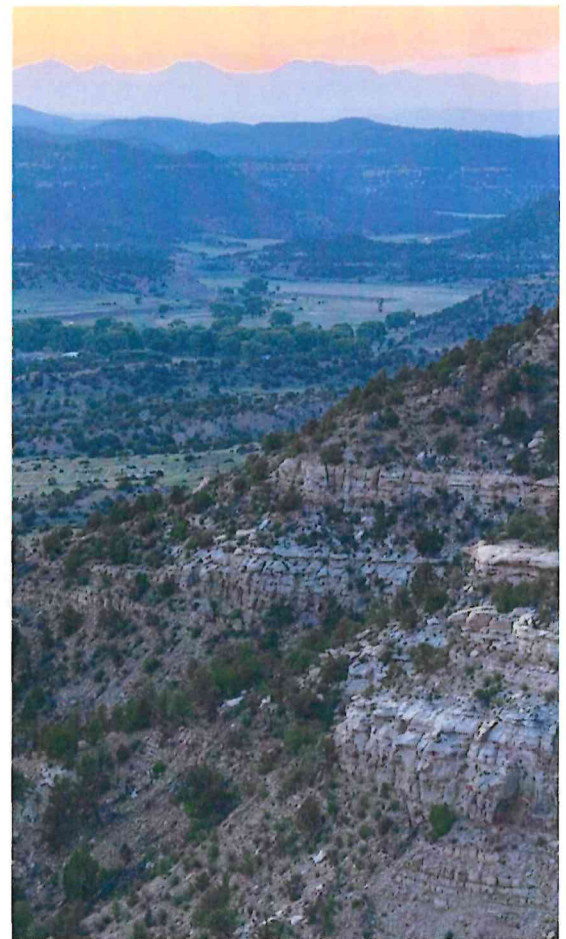
Benefits to Tribal Peoples include:

- Restorative Justice
- Tribal Sovereignty
- Reconnection to Ancestral Lands
- Cultural Revitalization
- Indigenous-led Conservation and Stewardship
- Land Rewilding
- Economic Opportunity
- Youth Development and Leadership
- Regional Impact

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We are inviting Tribal Nations to join the coalition that will guide long-term stewardship and governance of Elk Valley Ranch. This is a meaningful opportunity to reconnect with ancestral lands, shape management grounded in Indigenous Knowledge and help build an Indigenous-led land trust that can support future Tribal conservation efforts.

If your Nation or Pueblo is interested in learning more or exploring participation, we welcome the opportunity to meet with you. Your involvement will help ensure that this project reflects Tribal priorities and creates lasting benefits for future generations.



ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY?

The Nature Conservancy has been working to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends throughout New Mexico for more than 50 years.

TNC New Mexico's Indigenous Partnerships team—led by John Waconda (Isleta Pueblo) and Rose Gildersleeve (Tlingit & Inupiat)—is leading this effort to ensure the project reflects Tribal priorities and respects long standing cultural relationships to the land, while also emphasizing Tribal sovereignty and Indigenous-led stewardship.



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY | ELK VALLEY RANCH | CIMARRON, NM

May 18-19, 2026 Site Visit and Visioning Session at the Dawson Elk Valley Ranch



May 18 Tour of the Dawson Elk Valley Ranch

(in-person only at the Ranch, Meet at Best Western Hotel, Raton, NM)

8 - 10 AM	Continental Breakfast at the Best Western Hotel (for guests arriving Sunday May 17th)
10 AM	Tribal representatives and partners meet at the Best Western Plus, Raton, NM: 473 Clayton Rd, Raton, NM 87740. Carpool 45-minutes.
11 AM	Self-driving participants arrive at the Ranch Gate (coordinates HERE) by 11 AM. Welcome by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Mending Mountains Collective: Introduction Circle. Lunch provided.
12:30 PM - 5 PM	Guided Tour of the Dawson Elk Valley Ranch by TNC staff Time for: Ceremony & Prayer, Ranch History, Land Walks

For Questions: Contact Rose Gildersleeve r.gildersleeve@tnc.org 505-946-2037 or
Gemara Gifford, gemara.gifford@gmail.com 303-815-8530

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY | ELK VALLEY RANCH | CIMARRON, NM

6:30 -	Group Dinner Provided at K-Bobs in Raton, NM
8:00 PM	1228 S 2nd St, Raton, NM 87740

May 19 Visioning Session in Raton, NM

Raton Convention Center, 901 S 3rd St, Raton, NM 87740

Zoom Conferencing Available by Request

8:00 AM	Welcome, Breakfast at the Best Western Hotel Talking Circle on Significance of these lands to Tribes, Pueblos, and Historic Native Nations of New Mexico
10 - 11 AM	Facilitated Visioning: What does good stewardship at the Dawson Elk Valley Ranch look like in 10–20 years? • Vermejo Ranch Stewardship Activities. Vermejo Presenters Depart by 11am • State of New Mexico Forestry Department • The Nature Conservancy New Mexico
11 AM - 12:15 PM	Tribal Coalition Updates and Co-Management Agreement • SMW Law, Native American Rights Fund • Facilitated Discussion by Mending Mountains Collective
12:15 - 2 PM	Closing, Lunch provided, Optional Breakout Sessions for Tribal and State representatives and Partners.

For Questions: Contact Rose Gildersleeve r.gildersleeve@tnc.org 505-946-2037 or
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