



**PRESS RELEASES OF SENATOR PETE DOMENICI**

***Domenici & Bingaman Press Interior Dept. on Potash***

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

– Senators Meet Secretary Kempthorne, Gain Commitment on Studies –

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman today gained a commitment from Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to have the federal government examine ways to better protect both the extensive potash reserves in southeastern New Mexico and the miners that produce them, while allowing oil and gas drilling where feasible.

Domenici and Bingaman, along with Senators Wayne Allard (R-Colo.), Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Texas) and John Cornyn (R-Texas), met with Kempthorne and Acting Bureau of Land Management Director Jim Hughes in Domenici's Capitol Hill office to discuss issues raised as a result of exploration and production of both potash and oil and gas on overlapping areas of federal land. This development is occurring in the Known Potash Leasing Area near Carlsbad.

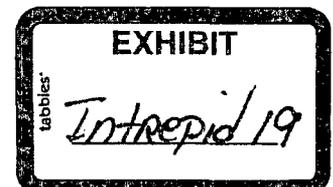
In response to the New Mexico Senators' concerns, Kempthorne committed to conducting a new study regarding the safety of developing oil and gas in the potash area. The Secretary also noted that the Department has already commissioned a study through Sandia National Laboratories to provide updated maps of the potash resource.

"I share the concerns of many in New Mexico that oil and gas drilling may interfere with potash development. I am encouraged by the commitments that the Secretary made today, and I'm hopeful that we can resolve this issue in a manner that will benefit all," Domenici said. "Both of these industries are important economic forces in southeast New Mexico and it is important that we understand the region's natural resources before policy decisions are made that could be unnecessarily disruptive."

"While I continue to support the responsible development of oil and gas, it is critical, to both the area economy and the national energy interests, to do what we can to preserve these potash reserves. I look forward to continue working with Secretary Kempthorne to address this important issue, given that potash is a key element for fertilizers of America's agriculture products, including corn, which is an important feedstock for ethanol," Bingaman said.

Both Domenici and Bingaman raised concerns about the appropriateness of drilling in disputed areas until these studies are completed. They suggested that a final resolution would be in the best interest of all parties.

Funding for the new study commissioned by Kempthorne could come from



reprogramming of Interior Department funds. Domenici, who serves on the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, and Bingaman pledged to be of assistance if additional funds are needed for the studies. The current Sandia study has already been funded.