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Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation to establish the Great Sand Dunes National Park and the Great Sand Dunes National Preserve.

This legislation is a major step in protection and preservation of the Great Sand Dunes and San Luis Valley water. I along with Congressman McInnis decided to introduce companion bills at the request of valley residents, locally elected officials and the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. In an era of Presidential threats and questionable uses of the Antiquities Act, a locally driven legislative process is something I strongly support.

Anyone who has visited the Sand Dunes understands the unique feeling they offer the visitor, the dunes seem out of place--a contradiction in nature. The San Luis Valley serenely placed between the Sangre De Cristo and the San Juan Mountains is the last place one would expect to see 750 foot high sand dunes. Still, the Sand Dunes offered the early residents and explorers a unique look into the earth's geological wonders. This bill will help to ensure that future generations have that same opportunity.

Developing legislation that satisfies everyone is a difficult task, but this bill reflects compromises on all sides and puts forth a unique proposal for a complicated issue. The provisions of the bill allow for (1) establishing the Great Sand Dunes National Park; (2) establishing the Great Sand Dunes National Preserve; (3) the acquisition of the Luis Maria Baca Grant No. 4; (4) protection of San Luis Valley's water resources; (5) hunting in the new Great Sand Dunes National Preserve; (6) creation of a new National Wildlife Refuge and (7) a local advisory council.

Protection of the valley's water resources is very important to the citizens of Colorado and a primary motivation for virtually everyone's support for this measure. An integral part of the water component is the federal acquisition of the Baca Ranch. While I am usually very skeptical of additional federal ownership of land, it makes sense here to purchase the land from willing sellers and incorporate it into the combination park, wildlife refuge and forest. The legislation requires the Department of the Interior to work with the State of Colorado to protect the water dependent resources of the Sand Dunes while not

jeopardizing valid existing water rights held by others. I want to assure everyone that this bill does not create a federal reserve water right.

The Great Sand Dunes National Preserve allows the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to transfer existing Forest Service lands to the Park Service and manage these lands as a Preserve. The transfer would allow the Park Service jurisdiction of the watershed affecting the Sand Dunes, while not affecting the **wilderness** status or existing hunting in the area. As a veterinarian I understand and recognize hunting as an important tool in game management. The bill stipulates that the Colorado Division of Wildlife will play an integral role in continued game management of the area.

The bill also creates a new National Wildlife Refuge on the western edge of the existing Baca Ranch and adjacent state trust lands. This new Refuge will provide additional hunting opportunities in an area that has been historically closed to public hunting. It has extensive wetlands and is home to an extensive diversity of plants and animals, including a large elk herd. The Refuge would also give the affected county an additional source of revenue

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through the Refuge and Revenue Sharing Act as an offset to the loss of property taxes from the federal acquisition of the Baca.

President Herbert Hoover in 1932 recognized the unique characteristics of the sand dunes and wanted to protect their scenic, scientific and educational features. With the support of the local community, the Great Sand Dunes National Monument was established. Now sixty-eight years later, residents of the San Luis Valley are advocating expansion and upgrade of the national monument to a national park.

Last December, I along with Senator Campbell, Congressman McInnis, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar met at the Great Sand Dunes to discuss the merits of expanding and protecting the resources of the San Luis Valley. We all recognized the significance of the meeting and vowed to work towards passage of a bill.

Our time is short in Congress this year, and soon I will be asking for a hearing in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. This is an important issue to Coloradans, and I look forward to Senate passage of my legislation.