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Please support the revision of New Mexico's Night Sky Protection Act

New Mexico's dark skies have long attracted tourists as well as amateur and professional astronomers. Dark skies are important for wildlife, biodiversity, ecosystems, and human health. But even in this State, pristine skies are becoming less common. If we want to enjoy dark skies we have to drive further away from our cities, towns, and highways.

Before the advent of civilization, animal and plant populations on this planet depended on the natural cycles of night and day and the monthly cycle of the moon. Our human cultural heritage also developed under those natural cycles — the rhythms of planting and harvest, and of story telling under the constellations.

Wildlife that are already hemmed in by human developments suffer habitat loss in addition because light pollution produced in cities travels far in our wide open spaces. Artificial light at night impedes natural behaviors including predation, migration, and mating. Plants affected by artificial light may bud earlier or lose leaves later than under natural light alone.

The State of New Mexico enacted the Night Sky Protection Act (NSPA) in 1999, the first such law in the nation. However, after 25 years, this law is outdated, both because of advances in technology and changes in recommendations from DarkSky International and the Illumination Engineering Society. The New Mexico Chapter of DarkSky International, formed in the summer of 2023, has proposed revisions to the NSPA to address the necessary changes. Our draft legislation has already been reviewed by two Interim Committees of the Legislature, and State Senator Liz Stefanics (D, Cerrillos) will be its sponsor in the Legislative Session that begins on January 21st. Please help us improve the protection of our night skies by supporting this legislation.