

**Statement of  
Michael D. Nedd  
Deputy Director for Operations  
Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands  
H.R. 1373, Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act  
June 5, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 1373, the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act. H.R. 1373 would permanently withdraw over 1 million acres of Federal lands in the State of Arizona from the public land, mining, mineral, and geothermal leasing laws.

Under President Trump and Secretary Bernhardt's leadership, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made it a top priority to develop the vast domestic energy resources on public lands in an environmentally responsible manner to create jobs, lower costs for working Americans, and build a strong economy. The Secretary recognizes, however, that there are some places that may benefit from protections. Striking the appropriate balance for public lands use – whether it be energy development, recreation, grazing, or conservation – can be a challenge, but it is a mission the Department of the Interior (Department) takes seriously.

The United States has an extraordinary abundance of mineral resources, both onshore and offshore, and is a major mineral producer, but relies on other countries for more than 50 percent of dozens of minerals that are vital to our economy and security. To address this vulnerability, in 2017 the President issued Executive Order 13817, *A Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals*, calling upon agencies across the Federal government to develop a report that lays out a strategy to reduce the Nation's susceptibility to critical mineral supply disruptions. The Department is currently assessing critical mineral resources, including mapping on Federal public lands and offshore lands. Uranium, like oil and gas, solar, wind, geothermal, and other energy sources, remains a vital component of a responsible and comprehensive energy strategy. Additionally, uranium has been identified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as a critical mineral necessary to the economic and national security of the United States. The Department continues to study the impacts of mining in the area proposed for permanent withdrawal to provide future policymakers with the scientific data necessary to make informed decisions.

The Department has concerns about the size and scope of the withdrawal contained in the legislation; at over 1 million acres, the withdrawal covers an area that is 80 percent of the size of the state of Delaware.

Under Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution, Congress has the “power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States,” and we respect Congress’s role in this regard.

If Congress chooses to move forward with a permanent withdrawal, the Department recommends several modifications to the bill, including boundary adjustments to ensure local availability of mineral materials for nearby communities and to enable environmentally responsible development of uranium and other mineral resources, if determined to be appropriate through site specific analysis. The sponsors may also wish to consider language permitting lands within the proposed withdrawal to be conveyed or leased under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act for public purposes or exchanged to facilitate economic development for local communities.

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**House Natural Resources Committee  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands  
H.R. 2181, Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019  
June 5, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 2181, the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019, which would withdraw approximately 200,652 Federal surface acres and approximately 333,827 acres of Federal subsurface mineral estate surrounding the Chaco Culture National Historical Park (CCNHP) in northwestern New Mexico from the public land, mining, mineral, and geothermal leasing laws.

Under President Trump's and Secretary Bernhardt's leadership, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made it a top priority to responsibly develop the vast domestic energy resources on public lands to create jobs, lower costs for working Americans, and build a strong economy. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, the total revenue generated from responsible mineral development on Federal lands in the State of New Mexico alone was over \$1.3 billion, the vast majority of which came from oil and gas operations. The Federal disbursement to the State of New Mexico was over \$634 million; the remainder was directed to the U.S. Treasury for the benefit of all American taxpayers.

The Secretary also recognizes there are some places that may benefit from enhanced protection. Striking the appropriate balance for public lands use – whether it be energy development, recreation, grazing, or historic preservation – can be a challenge, but it is a mission the Department takes seriously.

Early last week, Secretary Bernhardt traveled to New Mexico and visited CCNHP, along with New Mexico Senator Martin Heinrich and Tribal leaders. Following that visit, the Secretary gained a greater sense of appreciation of the site managed by the National Park Service, and a better understanding of the Tribal leaders' views of its cultural significance.

In response, the Secretary has directed the BLM to develop and publish a draft Resource Management Plan that includes an alternative reflecting the Tribal leaders' views, which are similar to the proposed legislative boundaries included in H.R. 2181. The Secretary also directed the BLM to defer leasing within the 10 mile buffer zone for one year.

Under Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution, Congress has the "power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States," and we respect Congress's role in this regard. As a result, the Department has no objection to H.R. 2181.