



ALL PUEBLO COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

Officers:
E. Paul Torres, Chairman
Governor J. Michael Chavarria, Vice Chair
Governor Val Panteah, Sr., Secretary

House Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands June 5, 2019

Acoma

Cochiti

Oral Testimony on H.R. 2181, Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019 All Pueblo Council of Governors Chairman E. Paul Torres

Isleta

Jemez

Introduction. Good morning. My name is Paul Torres, and I'm the Chairman of the All Pueblo Council of Governors (or APCG). I thank the Committee for addressing the important matter of irreplaceable Pueblo cultural resources in the Greater Chaco Region currently at risk from oil and gas development.

Laguna

Nambe

Ohkay Owingeh

History of Chaco. For over 2,000 years, Pueblo people lived in Chaco Canyon. Eventually, they moved outward into the land they now occupy—like spokes moving away from the eye of a wheel. Their time in Chaco Canyon and their movement between Chaco and their eventual Pueblo land left behind many cultural resources. By cultural resources, I'm referring to vast pueblo structures, shrines and other sacred sites, and natural formations with culturally relevant modifications. This landscape is called the Greater Chaco Region. And you can feel the heartbeat of our people when you're in it.

Picuris

Pojoaque

Sandia

San Felipe

Ongoing Importance of Chaco. Many Pueblos maintain a significant connection to the Greater Chaco Region. Our people still remember it as a vital part of our present identity through song, prayer, and pilgrimage. It's hard to put into words how important Chaco is to us as Pueblo people. Even those outside Indian Country, including within the field of archaeology, recognize Chaco Canyon's importance in telling the story of the people of this continent.

San Ildefonso

Santa Ana

Santa Clara

Oil and Gas Development in Chaco. But, the Greater Chaco Region sits atop an oil field that is under tremendous pressure for development from the oil and gas industry, and this is where the problem lies.

Santo Domingo

Taos

Current Protections. Today, the major center point of Chaco Canyon is protected by the boundaries of the Chaco Culture National Historic Park, which is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Tesuque

Ysleta Del Sur

Vulnerabilities. But, many important cultural resources in the Greater Chaco Region are located outside these boundaries. And much of the Greater Chaco Region has not been studied for cultural resources.

Zia

Zuni

APCG's Position. APCG's position regarding oil and gas development in the Greater Chaco Region is two-part:

- First, APCG takes the position that no oil and gas development should take place within a designated withdrawal area—consisting of approximately 10 miles surrounding the Park.



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- Second, APCG takes the position that, even for development outside the withdrawal area but within the Greater Chaco Region, rigorous identification and analysis of cultural resources in accordance with federal statutes must take place before any steps toward oil and gas development occur.

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Current Issue. Until recently, DOI deemed the withdrawal area around the Park unavailable for oil and gas development. This Administration reversed the policy. Since reversal, the BLM has held quarterly oil and gas lease sales that include parcels in the withdrawal area and throughout the Greater Chaco Region. Despite our concerns and offers of assistance, the BLM has not conducted anything close to the type of studies required by law or to effectively protect our cultural resources.

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Asks. APCG has a number of requests for you.

- Withdrawal
 - o First, this Committee has before it the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act, which would legislatively remove federal land in the withdrawal area from future oil and gas development. We ask that you vote in favor of this important bill.
 - o After a recent trip to see Chaco, DOI Secretary Bernhardt has said DOI will defer leasing within the withdrawal area during the coming year. Passage of the legislation would make this permanent.
- Studies
 - o Second, we ask that you as a Committee encourage DOI to conduct sufficient cultural resource studies for development outside the withdrawal area but within the Greater Chaco Region.

Thank you for your time.