



ALL PUEBLO COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

Chairman:

Joey Sanchez

Vice Chairman:

Governor Mark Mitchell

Secretary:

Lt. Governor Cordelia Hooee

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ALL PUEBLO COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS RESPONDS WITH CONCERN TO INTERIOR'S PROPOSAL TO REVOKE CHACO PROTECTIONS IN FULL, WITH 14 DAYS FOR PUBLIC RESPONSE

***Draft assessment gives the public fourteen days; Department acknowledges it does not
have the cultural resources study completed by five Pueblo and Tribal nations***

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The All Pueblo Council of Governors, representing the twenty sovereign Pueblo nations of New Mexico and Texas, today responded with deep concern to the Bureau of Land Management's release of a draft environmental assessment identifying the full revocation of Public Land Order No. 7923 as the Department of the Interior's proposed action. The public has been given fourteen days, until July 29, 2026, to comment.

Public Land Order No. 7923 protects approximately 336,404 acres of federal land within a ten-mile buffer around Chaco Culture National Historical Park from new oil, gas, and mineral leasing. It was not the product of a single administration or a single Pueblo. It was built over more than a decade by Pueblo nations acting together, alongside the Hopi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, and the State of New Mexico, through congressional testimony, government-to-government consultation, and years of federal analysis.

"Don't allow protection that took decades to build to be reversed with the stroke of a pen," said APCG Chairman Joey Sanchez of the Pueblo of Santa Ana. "We said that in May. We are saying it again today, and the Department has now put in writing exactly what it intends. It intends to erase all of it, and it has given the public two weeks to object."

The Council's central concern is that the Department proposes to remove protection from a landscape it has not finished understanding.

The Bureau's own document states that its identification of cultural resources within the ten-mile area is incomplete. It reports at least 7,552 known historic properties and at least 145 traditional cultural properties, and then states that those figures represent only a fraction of what is present, because large portions of the region have never been formally inventoried. It states that the traditional cultural property count is a minimum estimate because past studies were not comprehensive and because the Bureau does not have

access to all available information. It states that the landscape itself has not been documented as a historic property.

Information developed by Pueblo nations about their relationship to this landscape — knowledge that no agency could produce on its own, and that the federal government has asked the Pueblos to provide — is not reflected in the analysis.

"The Department is proposing to remove protection from a place it admits it has not finished looking at, using knowledge it admits it does not have," Chairman Sanchez said. "Our Pueblos hold that knowledge. We have been asked for it, and we have given it, in good faith, over many years, because we were told it would matter to decisions exactly like this one. It is not in this document. What is missing is not a technicality. It is the substance of what makes this landscape what it is."

The Council also pointed to the consultation record set out in the Department's own document. Of the New Mexico Pueblos listed, several have received nothing but an invitation, with no meeting recorded at all. For several others, the only engagement the Department records is an "informational meeting." The document states that the decision will be made by the Secretary of the Interior. No official at that level appears anywhere in it.

"Pueblo governors have invited Secretary Burgum to come to Chaco and see it," Chairman Sanchez said. "Our governors and lieutenant governors carried this to Washington themselves. We have not been answered. A field office cannot consult on a Secretary's decision, and a briefing is not consultation. Our governments are entitled to speak with the person who holds the pen, before the pen moves."

On May 20, 2026, at a gathering hosted at the Pueblo of Santa Ana, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the Greater Chaco Cultural Landscape to its [2026 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places](#). The listing was nominated by the Pueblo of Acoma with the support of the Council and a broad coalition of tribal and non-tribal partners. It is the second time in fifteen years the landscape has been named. In its explanation, the National Trust found that federal and state management has historically treated Chaco as an isolated archaeological park while ignoring the broader landscape and the living Indigenous communities who hold cultural responsibilities to these places.

"Two months ago the country was told this landscape is among the most endangered places in America," Chairman Sanchez said. "The Department's answer is a document that proposes to remove its protection entirely. The National Trust named the problem precisely: Chaco has been treated as a fence line around a park. Everything outside that fence is where our ancestors lived, traveled, and prayed, and it is where the roads and the great houses and the shrines still are."

By the Bureau's own analysis, full revocation is projected to yield fourteen new wells over twenty years, with no new wells anticipated within five miles of the park under any alternative considered.

The Council reaffirmed its position, adopted in [APCG Resolution 2025-02](#) and supported by the [National Congress of American Indians in Resolution #SEA-25-121](#), that Public Land Order No. 7923 must be maintained and that permanent protection must follow. The Council continues to call on Congress to enact the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act, which would make the ten-mile withdrawal permanent, and to maintain the appropriations moratorium in the interim.

"Public Land Order 7923 is a floor. It is not the ceiling, and it was never meant to be the end of this work," Chairman Sanchez said. "But you do not build upward by tearing out the foundation. Defend the order that exists, and pass the law that makes it permanent. Our nations have been asking this country for that for more than a decade, and we will keep asking until it is done."

The Council urged members of the public to submit comments before the July 29 deadline. Resources, including the draft assessment, comment instructions, and background materials, are available at apcg.org/chaco. Comments may be submitted through the BLM National NEPA Register at eplanning.blm.gov under DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0002-EA.

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About the All Pueblo Council of Governors

The All Pueblo Council of Governors represents twenty sovereign Pueblo Nations in New Mexico and Texas — Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia, Zuni, and Ysleta del Sur. The Council advocates for and protects the social, cultural, and traditional well-being of the Pueblo Nations.