

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I write to request that you begin the process to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the Chaco Culture Heritage Withdrawal Area from future mineral development, including new oil and gas leasing. As you know, the Greater Chaco Landscape is home to innumerable sacred sites and cultural items of critical importance to Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache communities. An administrative withdrawal would provide protection from federal oil and gas development.

Over the last decade, a series of short-term actions have prevented new oil and gas leasing in the vicinity of Chaco Culture NHP. From deferred leasing parcels, to repeated one-year moratoriums, to a requirement to complete a cultural resources study prior to any new leasing, communities who care about protecting the Chaco landscape have had to fight again and again to gain short-term protection from encroaching energy development. It is time to move from short-term policies that shift every year to the long-term certainty provided by an administrative withdrawal of the federal mineral resources in the vicinity of the park.

I support permanent protection of the Greater Chaco Landscape and intend to reintroduce legislation soon with my colleagues from the New Mexico delegation to permanently withdraw this area from new federal mineral leases. As that legislation moves through the process on Capitol Hill, an administrative withdrawal would provide interim protection until permanent protection can be secured legislatively.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that this unique place is protected for generations to come.

Sincerely,

/s/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator