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Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment • New Mexico Environmental Law Center • Southwest Native Cultures
Tewa Women United • Youth United for Climate Crisis Action

350 Deschutes • 350 Seattle • Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids • Center for Biological Diversity • Chaco Alliance
Citizens Caring for the Future • City of Santa Fe • Common Ground Rising • Do Good LLC

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Multicultural Council, Inc. • Earthworks • Earth Ethics, Inc • Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition
Food and Water Watch • FrackTracker Alliance • Frack Free Four Corners • Frack Free New Mexico • Friends of the Earth
Jemez Peacemakers • MoveOn NM • New Energy Economy • New Mexico Climate Justice • NJ Industrial Union Council
Rio Arriba Concerned Citizens • Rocky Mountain Wild • San Juan Citizens Alliance • SEEDs of SW New Mexico
Society of Architectural Historians • Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter • Terra Advocati • Unite North Metro Denver
UNM Leaders for Environmental Action and Foresight • Upper Gila Watershed Alliance • Wall of Women
Western Environmental Law Center • WildEarth Guardians • Zero Hour

September 15, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: More Fracking is not Honoring Chaco

Dear Secretary Haaland:

It is with a heavy heart that we write to express our deepest disappointment over the ongoing marginalization, discrimination, and environmental injustice occurring in the Greater Chaco region of northwestern New Mexico. We are deeply troubled that the Department of the Interior is not living up to its promises to Honor Greater Chaco and chart a new path toward landscape-level cultural protection.

Groups wrote to you last month to thank you for your leadership and commitment to defending the Greater Chaco region from unchecked oil and gas extraction. They also called on you to follow through with your promise to objectively reassess and reconsider nearly 45,000 acres of oil and gas leasing that the Trump administration approved in the region despite adverse impacts to Navajo communities, the cultural integrity of the landscape, climate and clean air, and broad opposition.

Unfortunately, rather than reassess and reconsider Trump-era oil and gas leasing in the Greater Chaco region, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management New Mexico office fully re-approved every single acre. The decisions were quietly signed on July 31 and posted on an obscure website on August 1 with no public notice.

Given the Interior Department's pledge to honor the Greater Chaco region, this decision is especially disconcerting. The 45,000 acres of oil and gas leasing approved under the Trump administration was not only illegal, it was the result of fast-tracking for the oil and gas industry at the expense of public notice, environmental justice, community outreach, the climate, and the region's air and water. The 2018, 2019, and 2020 leasing in the Rio Puerco and Farmington Field Offices of northwestern New Mexico stood to open the door to expansive drilling and fracking near Navajo residences and communities. The Trump administration relied on lawless logic, claiming the environmental impacts of oil and gas leasing are not significant.

We are shocked and dismayed. We submit the attached petition and over 5,000 signatures calling on you to genuinely and objectively reassess and reconsider rubberstamping Trump-era oil and gas leasing in Greater Chaco. We hope that even as the Bureau of Land Management has rubberstamped oil and gas leasing, that you may consider intervening and doing the right thing. Suffice it to say, there is broad public support for Honoring Chaco and exercising restraint when it comes to oil and gas extraction authorizations.

We hope that you take these concerns to heart and chart a new path toward justice in Greater Chaco, rather than uphold Trump administration business as usual. Ending the continued sacrifice of the Greater Chaco Landscape to the oil and gas industry and ameliorating legacies of broken promises is what honoring Chaco means. The Department of the Interior must exercise some semblance of balance and restraint.

We look forward to a response and to engaging in further discussion to advance on-the-ground solutions and relief to truly Honor Chaco.

Sincerely,

Plaintiff Groups:

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Cc: Tracy Stone-Manning, Bureau of Land Management Director
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