



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

JUN 04 2019

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

Attached for your reference is the Bureau of Land Management's Statement on H.R. 2181, the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019. The attached statement is being submitted for a hearing on the bill tomorrow before the House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

Please note the change in position from the May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, BLM Statement on the Senate companion bill, S. 1079, which the BLM submitted to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining.

Sincerely,

Cole Rojewski  
Director  
Office of Congressional  
and Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

**Statement of**  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and 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 public land laws, 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 alone 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.