

## **FMG-RMPA-EIS VPM Meeting 3 - 2020-05-15**

- Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement Virtual Public Meeting. I want to introduce myself. My name is Theresa Ancell, and I work for a local Four Corners environmental firm here in the Four Corners. Pardon me. I will be your moderator today.

I just want to welcome you. We will get started here in a little bit. We're going to let all of our attendees join. And in the meantime, I'll provide some information on how you can join the webinar, and just go over some meeting logistics.

So you can join the webinar in the Zoom application on your computer, phone or tablet using the log-in information provided during registration. We also have a phone-in option should your computer, tablet, or phone not have capabilities to run the online Zoom application. That phone number for today's meeting is 1-346-248-7799, and the webinar ID is 97647923372.

If you registered online, your confirmation email should have provided you with the phone-in registration option as well. If you registered using our operator phone number, you will only have the option to join by phone. To have the best chance at seeing and hearing the presentation, please download the Zoom app directly to your computer if you haven't done so already, and use that instead of your web browser.

At this time, it would also be a good moment to upgrade your Zoom to version five or greater. That way, we ensure that you're on a good version that can see our presentation properly. It'll be a few minutes before we start the meeting, so I invite you to do that now.

I'll be repeating these instructions here in the next few minutes as we're waiting on all of our participants to join. Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks again for joining the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement Virtual Public Meeting. We will begin in just a few minutes. We'd like to provide some more time for our participants to join. So in the mean time, I'm going to read just the instructions again so that everyone has the opportunity to hear those.

And my name is Theresa Ancell, and I work for a local environmental consulting firm here in the Four Corners area. And I will be your moderator today. You can join the online webinar from the Zoom app on your computer, phone, or tablet using the log-in information provided during registration.

We also have a phone-in option should your computer, tablet, or phone not have the capabilities to run the online application. The phone number for today's meeting is 1-346-248-7799, and the webinar ID is 97647923372. If you registered online, your confirmation email should have provided you with the phone-in option as well. If you registered using the operator phone number, you will only have the option to join by phone.

To have the best chance at seeing and hearing the presentation, please download the Zoom app directly to your computer. And if you haven't done so already, use that instead of your web browser. Now would be a good time to update your Zoom version to five or greater, since it will be a few more minutes before we start the meeting.

Let me give it a couple more minutes, and then we will begin. Thank you.

Hello again, everyone. I do want to just confirm-- I did make a mistake on the call-in web ID or the call-in ID number. So the phone number is still the same at 346-248-7799. However, the ID was incorrect. So that ID number, if you're trying to call in on the phone, is 95943985869. Again, the call-in number is 346-248-7799, and the password is 95943985869. I apologize about that.

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment Virtual Public Meetings. And my name is Theresa Ancell, and I work for a local environmental consulting firm here in the Four Corners.

I'd like to welcome you to the meeting today. We will be turning it over now to Jill Aragon from the BLM. Jill?

JILL ARAGON: Let me get my-- sorry. [INAUDIBLE]

Hello, everyone. My name is Jillian Aragon, and I'm the Public Affairs Specialist for the Bureau of Land Management-- Farmington District office. We welcome and thank you for participating in the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement Virtual Public Meeting.

For this presentation, we will refer to this project as the RMPA. The Bureau of Land Management-- BLM-- and the Bureau of Indian Affairs-- BIA-- appreciate you joining us virtually as we navigate through these difficult times.

Before we begin the presentation, we would like to take this opportunity to go over some housekeeping items to ensure that you are able to access the information we are providing today. The audience with us today is joining us through a variety of different means. Some are listening and viewing this online, others joining by telephone, and some may be viewing this presentation after the live session has ended.

During this presentation, all participants' audio will be muted with video streaming turned off. Once the presentation is complete, we will begin the comment portion of this meeting. Additional instructions will be given once we get to that point.

We want to inform you that this presentation is being recorded and will be made available on the project's e-planning website. Closed captioning is available for this presentation by clicking the CC button on the right-hand corner of your Zoom screen. Transcripts of these comments will be available with the final RMPA EIS.

If you are having technical difficulties with the Zoom interface, you can let us know through the chat box by submitting a question in the Q&A feature. You can do so by clicking the QA icon at the bottom of your Zoom window. And we will also be using the QA feature to address clarifications about the public meeting or the draft RMPA EIS.

If it would be easier to join by phone, please use this phone number-- 346-248-7799. The webinar ID that you'll put into this is 95943985869. Additionally, this webinar presentation is being streamed on BLM New Mexico's Facebook Live feed.

At the end of this presentation, we will be providing additional information on how you can submit your comments outside of this meeting. However, please note that Facebook Live comments will not be considered official comments on the draft RMPA.

Now, we will hear from the BLM New Mexico State Director, Tim Spisak, and the BLM-- or, excuse me, the BIA Navajo Regional Director, Bart Stevens.

**TIM SPISAK:** Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tim Spisak, and I'm the state director for the Bureau of Land Management-- New Mexico. With me is Bart Stevens, the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs-- Navajo Regional Office.

The BIA has teamed up with BLM as co-leads for this EIS process. Now, the BLM and BIA welcome you to the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment Virtual Public Meeting. We understand that these conversations are often preferred to be done in person. But right now, it is critical that we do our part to keep the American public and BLM and BIA employees healthy and safe.

It is also important, though, that we maintain a capable and functioning government to the greatest extent possible during the COVID-19 outbreak. To achieve this, BLM and BIA are using current technology where possible to move forward with important projects like this Farmington RMPA.

Thanks to all of you who have joined us for this meeting online or by phone today. We appreciate your interest and input. I will now turn it over to director Stevens, who has prepared some remarks for this presentation also.

**BART STEVENS:** Thank you, Mr. Spisak. This is Bart Stevens. Good afternoon. I'm the director for the BIA Navajo Regional Office. I want to also welcome you all in joining us for today's meetings that are very important to all of us.

We all have to adapt and cope with this pandemic that we're dealing with. Our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of the public is paramount. And we also dedicated the full-- are dedicated to fulfilling 6 and 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and our government-to-government consultation responsibilities.

We will continue to be available to consult with tribes throughout this process. We look forward to our continued work together in this process. We all know that during this crisis, there are a lot

that still needs to happen. We have [INAUDIBLE], grocery store, front line workers, medical personnel, and others that continue to report to work and are giving themselves selflessly to make sure that we have the things that we need.

Social distancing bends the curve slightly and relieves some pressure on a heroic medical professional. So in moments of crisis, we look out for each other to guide us through one of our darkest times and heal us through a long recovery. And they are risking their lives fighting on the front lines of this pandemic. For that, we want to say thank you.

And we want to honor and acknowledge the work that those people are doing to ensure that our medical needs are met and to honor our communities that are experiencing the same hardships that we all are experiencing in these difficult times. So we're now going to switch off the audio for a moment of silence for you to join us in thinking about these people. Thank you.

JILL ARAGON: Thank you again for participating. We will now review the agenda for the meeting. We will begin with a presentation, and then we will accept comments from the public. The presentation will cover the EIS team, the purpose of the meeting, the NEPA process, and the project overview. We expect the presentation to last approximately 25 minutes.

I'm going to go over some meeting logistics at this time. If you need to grab a pen, I'll take a few moments before I begin.

As a reminder, this meeting is currently being recorded and will be available after the meeting has concluded. A Navajo recording of a newsletter describing the project and this process is available and can be found on the BLM's e-planning website.

If you're on the computer, feel free to ask simple-- excuse me-- to ask questions in the Zoom Q&A feature during the presentation, where BLM and BIA specialists will be working to answer you. Due to the time limitations, these questions will not be read during the meeting. We are asking participants to submit more complex questions as formal comments on the RMPA EIS. Please be courteous to other attendees by not spamming or using profanity in the chat box.

The public comment portion of this meeting will begin after the presentation. At the close of the presentation, individuals that signed up during the registration can submit comments. Once everyone who has registered has been given the opportunity to comment, the line will be open to anyone else wishing to provide comments. We do have translators available, so feel free to make your verbal comments in Navajo.

There will be two more meetings. You may register for these future meetings either online or by calling 505-635-9701. This information will be repeated at the end of this meeting.

We are here today to help orient you in reviewing the document and provide you an opportunity to provide your verbal or written comments. The BLM and BIA have placed additional meeting materials on the project's e-planning website for your review. Beyond these meetings, comments will also be accepted through e-planning or by mailing them to the BLM Farmington Field Office or to the BIA Navajo Regional Office.

Now, onto the presentation that will be facilitated by the BLM Farmington District Manager, Al Elser.

- Thank you, and hello to all of our participants. My name is Al Elser, and I'm the BLM Farmington District Manager. Your participation in this process is valued, and I appreciate you taking the time out of your days to join us as we look for innovative ways to continue our mission while ensuring that our community remains safe.

The BLM is preparing the draft EIS due to changing oil and gas development patterns in the Mancos shale and Gallup sandstone, collectively known as a Mancos-Gallup formations, including innovations in horizontal drilling technology and multi-stage hydraulic fracturing.

The BLM will use this EIS to consider amending decisions in the 2003 RMP related to impacts of oil and gas development as well as the rights of way, lands with wilderness characteristics, and vegetation. It's important to remember that the BLM's 2003 RMP is still valid, and that this amendment could provide the agency with additional management tools within the decision space defined for the draft RMPA EIS.

The BIA does not currently have an RMP for these lands, so they will be using this EIS to evaluate alternatives and resource impacts related to its authority over mineral leasing and associated activity decisions within the planning area.

The BLM and BIA are preparing the draft EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, or NEPA, which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of proposed federal actions prior to making decisions.

While preparing this document under NEPA, the BLM and BIA were required to comply with all applicable federal regulations. Examples include the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Clean Water Act.

Our project managers are Sarah Scott from the BLM and Robert Begay from the BIA. We also have a team of resource specialists from both agencies collectively known as the interdisciplinary team. This team assisted in the development of the draft environmental impact statement, or EIS, and they're joining us today to help provide clarifications to the draft. They will be doing so through the Zoom Q&A function noted previously.

The draft EIS was developed based on input from agency staff, cooperating agencies, and the comments were received during our public scoping process. There are 23 core operating agencies in total, including federal, state, and local governments, tribes and pueblos, and Navajo Nation chapter houses.

This slide provides an overview of the NEPA process. The first step is to publish a notice of intent in the federal register. For this EIS, the BLM published a notice of intent in 2014. After the publication of the notice of intent, the BLM conducted public and internal scoping to identify issues, provide resource and other information, and develop planning criteria to guide the preparation of this draft EIS document.

In 2016, after the BIA joined as co-lead, another notice of intent was published in the Federal Register, followed by an additional round of public scoping. After the completion of scoping, the agencies began preparing the draft EIS. Scoping input from the public and ongoing work with cooperating agencies, resource specialists, and other stakeholders, helped the BLM and BIA to develop a range of alternatives and establish a framework for our analysis.

The notice of availability for the draft EIS was published in the Federal Register on February 28 of this year. This began the 90-day public review and comment period, and is the step we are currently on for the NEPA process. The agencies will be accepting comments on this document through May 28.

After the 90-day public review period, the BLM and BIA will review the comments that were submitted and begin to incorporate them into the final EIS document as appropriate. Once the final EIS document development is complete, we will publish a notice of availability announcing the final EIS, which will begin the 30-day public protest period.

The draft EIS can be found online at [www.blm.gov/nm/farmington](http://www.blm.gov/nm/farmington). Hard copies have been distributed throughout Northwest New Mexico. Please contact us, and we will direct you to the nearest location.

There are four volumes of the draft EIS. Volume one contains the draft EIS itself. It introduces the project and explains the purpose in need. It also describes the alternatives, the effected environment, and the consequences of each alternative.

The executive summary in this document will give you a brief overview of the purpose of the project and what to expect to find within. Tables 2-2 and 2-3 offer a look at the specific range of alternatives for which resource management updates are being considered.

Volume two includes a series of appendices with a variety of supporting information including maps and figures. And volumes three and four are supplemental reports that describe in more detail the affected environment and the environmental consequences of each alternative.

The map that you are seeing now is of the state of New Mexico. And highlighted on this map in the Northwest corner of the state are the lands referred to as the planning area. As we zoom into that portion of the state, we are showing the planning area that is being covered by BLM's analysis.

The boundaries of the planning area expand from the Colorado-New Mexico boundary to the north, down the south near the Becenti and Pueblo Pintado Chapter House areas, and from the area known as the Hogback to the west, reaching to the eastern edge of the Hickory Apache Nation border. The planning area includes San Juan, Rio Reba, Sandoval, and McKinley counties, covering almost 4.2 million acres, with the BLM and BIA responsible for managing approximately half of those.

However, the decision area, those lands affected by this RMPA, is much more focused and does not include all lands within the planning area. The map is now showing the BLM's decision area

for this RMPA EIS effort. Only the areas in yellow on this map are subject to the updated management prescriptions being considered in the document.

Existing leases will continue to operate under their current terms and are subject to the decisions outlined in the 2003 RMP. Once the final decision in this document is made, any new lease issued would be subject to the land use allocation and management decisions of this RMPA EIS.

Next, we'll show BIA's decision area. Similar to the BLM, only the areas shown in brown on this map are subject to the considerations in the document. And now, we'll merge the two maps to show the decision area for both agencies. As you can see, the agencies are working together to manage a complex, overlapping landscape.

The range of alternatives that the BLM and BIA developed offer a range of possible management approaches for the decision area. We have each identified five alternatives, including eight BLM sub-alternatives that would apply specifically to fluid mineral leasing management around the boundary of Chaco Culture National Historic Park.

The draft EIS presents the varying degrees to which resources could be impacted under each alternative. This will be dependent on the theme of the alternative, nature of the resource, location of the resource, and the proposed action, and other factors. While each agency develops its own range of alternatives, the general themes of each were similar across agencies.

The no-action alternative consists of continuing current management outlined in the 2003 RMP. Alternative A places an emphasis on natural ecosystems. Alternative B emphasizes Chacoan and cultural landscapes. Alternative C emphasizes land health and traditional and cultural life ways. And finally, alternative D places an emphasis on maximizing resource protection while minimizing impacts to surrounding areas.

The BLM and BIA are responsible for signing their own decision for this project, and both agencies are recommending alternative C as the preferred alternative. The goal behind the agencies identifying a preferred alternative is to get the public to provide more focused comments.

It is important to understand that even though the agencies have both indicated a preferred alternative, they are not obligated nor required to select alternative C for their final decisions. They may select another alternative, or the final decision may include components of each alternative, provided that the impacts of the management tools are consistent.

In accordance with NEPA, the next step in this process will be to review the comments we received during this public review period and prepare the final EIS. A notice of availability will be published when the final EIS is ready for review. This will begin the 30-day public protest period of the plan.

Upon completion of protest resolutions, the agencies will prepare and sign the record of decision for the approved RMPA. The BLM and BIA will each sign their own records of decision for this

process. Once the records of decision are signed, the updated management tools would become available for use by the agency. Our goal is to sign a record of decision in early 2021.

This wraps up the presentation phase of this meeting, and we will now be shifting into the public comment portion. I'm going to transition back to Jill so she can provide you with further instructions. Thank you.

JILL ARAGON: As I stated, we will now begin the public comment portion of this session. If you have not had the opportunity to review the draft EIS, you can find a document on the BLM's e-planning website, where you can also provide comment. The comments you provide on the draft EIS can assist the agencies in ensuring that we have completed a thorough analysis, so that we are able to make an informed decision.

Substantive, specific comments are the most useful for this process. These comments could include new information about the proposed action, alternatives, or analysis, identify factual corrections or flaws in the analysis, or provide information on different sources of research that could better inform the analysis.

Examples of comments that are not substantive and may not help us change the draft EIS would include the following-- those in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives without providing any rationale, agreeing or disagreeing with agency policy or decisions without justification or supporting data, not being relevant to the decision area or proposed management decisions, or vague or open-ended questions.

Here are some examples of comments. A poor comment could include, this document is terrible and I am against it. A better comment would be, this document is terrible in that you do not adequately address X impacts that this may have on X resources. The best type of comment is, this document is terrible in that you do not adequately address X impacts that this may have on X resources. I'm attaching some results of studies that were conducted for your review.

As we move into the comments, a comment moderator will be assisting in the effort by announcing the speakers and ensuring that your phone line is unmuted for commenting. We will be taking comments in the order that requests were received during registration-- online registrants first and then phone registrants.

When it is your turn to comment, the moderator will announce you by the name you registered under. If you are on the web application, when you hear your name, please use the raise hand feature so the moderator knows you are available and ready to offer your comment.

For commenters that are joining by phone, the moderator will identify you by the last four digits of your phone number. When you hear your phone number, press star 9, and the moderator will unmute your line, and you can begin speaking.

As a reminder, all participants will have three minutes to provide comments. Once all registered comments have been given and if time allows, we will open the floor to anyone wishing to



provide additional comments. We will offer this to callers on the phone first, and then offer to those joining by Zoom.

If a person is cut off or does not get an opportunity to provide a comment, they are welcome to submit their comments via the means listed on this screen. This information will also be provided at the end of this meeting

To ensure that we are able to receive as many comments as possible, we are limiting each commenter to three minutes. After three minutes are complete, the commenter's microphone will be muted, and we will move to the next person.

If anyone is speaking in their official capacity as a government official, we ask that you let us know so that we can make note in our records. We want to remind commenters that they are being recorded and to please be courteous to other members of the audience by not using profanity while providing your comments.

We ask that once it is your turn to speak and your line is open to please state both your first and last name and then spell them for us. We also want to remind commenters that the BLM and BIA are here to take your comments, however we will not be responding to these comments at this time. Responses to comments will be included in the final comment report that will be published for the final EIS. Theresa will lead us into the comment portion of our session.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Jill. I'm going to now call on the three next speakers. So as I call on you, please raise your hand. Again, if you're on the phone, you can press star 9, and that will raise your hand on our application. And if you're on your computer, tablet, or on the Zoom app on your phone, you can navigate to the Participant tab and then the hand raise feature is in that.

So on deck first, we have Jeremy Nichols. After Jeremy, we have Leia Barnett and Dianne Moug-- Mog-- Maughan-- sorry, Dianne. So Jeremy, it's your turn. I see your hand. And once you are able to speak, please state your first and last name and spell them for us. Thank you.

JEREMY NICHOLS: Great, thanks Theresa. Can you hear me OK?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you great. Thanks, Jeremy.

JEREMY NICHOLS: Great, thank you. My name is Jeremy Nichols. I am the Climate Energy Program Director for Wild Earth Guardians. My name is spelled J-E-R-E-M-Y N-I-C-H-O-L-S. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment today, but I do have to say, much as other commenters in the previous meetings have indicated, I am commenting under protest.

I think that the fact that the BLM is not fully accommodating the people who will be most impacted by this resource management plan amendment is shameful, and I think it's a travesty that the agency is not extending the public comment period and taking the time to ensure that everybody has a chance to meaningfully weigh in.

I feel very fortunate that I can weigh in virtually through Zoom, through my computer, because I have access to broadband and great access to internet, but I know for a fact that not everybody else does. And not everybody can participate easily over the phone either. Frankly, participating in a meeting like this over the phone seems like a god awful experience.

So I'm very disappointed with the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for not going more slowly in this process and taking the time for communities and for people to come to terms with a new normal in the face of the pandemic.

We are very concerned that this plan does not consider a range of reasonable alternatives. Every alternative here seems to open the door for a massive increase in oil and gas extraction and hydraulic fracturing in the region. We're very concerned that the Bureau of Land Management is not considering alternatives that prohibit oil and gas leasing and that wind down and help transition the region away from oil and gas to more sustainable and prosperous economies.

The Bureau of Land Management is not a rubber stamp of the oil and gas industry, but unfortunately, people with the agency and who spoke earlier seem to think that that is their job to rubber stamp whatever the oil and gas industry demands of them.

We'll keep fighting. Wild Earth Guardians has already won lawsuits against the BLM for illegally approving fracking in the region. Unfortunately, the BLM is so dead set at accommodating the oil and gas industry that the agency continues to approve illegal fracking in the region.

It's shameful that there is not more level-headedness and more compassion and more humanity being shown by the agency right now. It's unfortunate that we have to just keep fighting-- keep fighting the agency-- an agency that supposedly is trusted and is responsible for stewarding public lands and resources--

JILL ARAGON: 30 seconds.

JEREMY NICHOLS: --for today's and future generations. Again, like pretty much every other commenter has said at past meetings, I urge the Bureau of Land Management to extend the public comment period if not suspend the process altogether so that people can focus on responding to the COVID-19 health crisis and so that people can have a chance to meaningfully engage in this process to ensure that this irreplaceable landscape, the Greater Chaco Region, receives the protection that it deserves. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

- Thank you very much, Jeremy. Up next, we have Leia Barnett and then Dianne Maughan. After Dianne, we will have John Cornell. Leia, Dianne, John, if you could all please raise your hand, we can start with Leia. Leia, are you on? Leia Barnett.

OK, I don't see Leia on, so we'll move along to Dianne Maughan. Dianne? M-A-U-G-H-A-N. Sorry if I mispronounced. If you're on the phone, Dianne, you can push star 9 to raise your hand, or if you're on the Zoom app, you can scroll to the Participants tab and click on it, and then it'll raise your hand. There will be a Raise Your Hand option.

OK, I'm not seeing Leia or Dianne. John Cornell? John Cornell, are you on? OK, after John Cornell, we have Denise Ulibarri-Clauss, and then Ben Chavarria, and Steven Harris. OK, Denise-- OK, we have Denise. Denise, when you have a moment, you should be able to speak. Unmute yourself and start by giving us your first name, last name, and the spelling, please.

DENISE ULIBARRI-CLAUSS: Yes, my name is Denise Ulibarri-Clauss-- D-E-N-I-S-E U-L-I-B-A-R-R-I C-L-A-U-S-S.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Denise.

DENISE ULIBARRI-CLAUSS: Yes. Thank you for the opportunity to participate today. I had been moved to action because of the various attempts by tribal leaders, our elected officials, the head of the energy and minerals department at the state, to no avail. And so I give my voice to ask for this comment period to be extended until the pandemic is over.

The BLM and the BIA defines that it has a trust responsibility, and this means that it must always act in the best interests of the beneficiary. In this case, it's the indigenous people who are the land owners. In this time of global pandemic, many of us are distracted and anxious about many things. But we have running water and reliable broadband internet.

Many on the reservation do not, and therefore cannot participate to voice their opinion in these virtual means. With stay-at-home orders, they're prohibited from moving to even access a community center to try to get access.

So I also recognize that-- let's also recall that the IRS, as part of the Treasury Department, early on during the pandemic recognized the adverse conditions of our nation in this pandemic, and extended the due date of taxes by 90 days. And this action impacts vast revenue to fund federal government.

Relative to this proposal, the oil and gas markets have collapsed because of oversupply and reduced demand. Prices are rock bottom. So there is no opportunity cost lost by slowing down this process to allow all to participate.

This proposal itself describes irreversible and irretrievable consequences regarding sacred ancestral lands. These consequences deserve methodical consideration by all stakeholders, especially indigenous people who are the landowners.

JILL ARAGON: 30 seconds.

DENISE ULIBARRI-CLAUSS: And moreover, as an individual who's a native of New Mexico-- my father was from Tierra Amarilla, my mother was from Belen in Valencia County, I was born and raised in Albuquerque, and we love our beautiful sacred lands. So I ask that alternative B be chosen in order to protect our sacred lands, which are priceless. Thank you.

- Thank you very much. We appreciate your comments. OK, so the next three people we have on deck-- I'll just go ahead. We only have four people left on our list. So we have Ben Chavarria, Steven Harris, Art Hutchinson, and Jeff Goebel.

Up next, we have Ben. Ben has this hand raised, so Ben, you should be able to join the meeting and start your audio.

BEN CHAVARRIA: Hello. Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you great. Thank you.

BEN CHAVARRIA: Yes, so my name is Ben Chavarria-- B-E-N C-H-A-V-A-R-R-I-A-- the tribal historic preservation officer and the director of the rights protection for the Santa Clara Pueblo. I have been authorized by Governor Chavarria to make these comments on behalf of Santa Clara Pueblo.

Governor Chavarria is unable to attend this or any of these virtual public meetings because he and all Pueblo leaders must remain completely focused on addressing the urgent health and safety needs for our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having these meetings at this time shows a complete disregard for the level of the crisis that we are facing on the ground in New Mexico.

Santa Clara Pueblo, therefore, deeply opposed to this virtual meeting process occurring right now. You are required by multiple federal statutes, your tribal consultation duties, and the trust obligation to pause this are RMPA so we can meaningfully participate in commenting on it.

The RMPA and associated NEPA and NEFA processes are of enormous importance to Santa Clara Pueblo because of our profound cultural and spiritual ties to the Greater Chaco Region. This sacred landscape is a vital part of our present identity that we still interact with culturally and traditionally.

Because the Greater Chaco Region is so profoundly holy, we do need time to really analyze this draft RMPA and EIS, which is simply impossible to do during this current status of this public health crisis. That is why Santa Clara Pueblo and many others have submitted repeated requests for a pause in the RMPA including processes related to the draft RMPA and EIS and section 106.

The secretary of interior has not responded to any of our Pueblo's requests. Santa Clara does not have the time, necessarily, to meaningfully review and comment on the draft RMPA and the EIS before May 28. The documents are voluminous and require extensive time to review and discuss, but our priority and focus is our people and community at this time.

BLM and BIA continue full steam ahead with this RMPA. Meanwhile, the Pueblo is closed with a curfew and travel restrictions for Pueblo members. Santa Clara Tribal Council in-person meetings have been suspended. It is wrong of the BLM and BIA to push forward with this process when we are in emergency operations.

I also want to state on record that Governor Chavarria, in a meeting with key officials from BLM, BIA, and Assistant Secretary Indian Affairs in February in Washington, DC requested government-to-government tribal consultation on the draft RMPA and EIS for Santa Clara Pueblo specifically and for other Pueblos generally in his capacity as the chairman of the All-Pueblo Council of Governors.

Santa Clara Pueblo has requested in person full and meaningful tribal consultation on the draft RMPA and EIS at a time when tribal state and federal public health directives indicate it is safe to meet in person. We reiterate this request again today. Your unwillingness to extend the comment deadline is putting us in a position right now that is limiting our ability to provide any meaningful review or comment.

Again, it is shameful to continue with this schedule for the RMPA on behalf of Santa Clara Pueblo. I urge you again to a merely halt current scheduled work tribes and stakeholders on developing a feasible timetable. Thank you very much for your time.

- Thank you very much, Ben. And if you have more to say, we will open up the line after we've gotten through our first registered list. Next on deck, we have Steven Harris, and then Art Hutchinson, and Jeff Goebel. Steven Harris, are you available? You can star 9 if you're joining us via phone. I'm not seeing Steven.

OK, we'll move on-- Art Hutchinson. Art, are you available? Raise your hand. Star 9 on your phone, or scroll over the Participants tab, click it, and it should provide you the Raise Hand feature.

- Yeah, he's there on the list. If you look closely, you'll see him right there towards the top, Theresa.

- There he is. OK, Art, it is your turn. You should have the ability to unmute yourself and introduce yourself with your name and spelling of your name.

ART HUTCHINSON: OK. All right, I am Art Hutchinson, A-R-T H-U-T-C-H-I-N-S-O-N, and I am retired federal manager. I managed some of our national parks in the Southwest. I started my career at Mesa Verde National Park, and I'm extremely familiar with the Chaco area. And that is the main reason I am calling in today.

I followed this for many years, and I finally decided to jump on and just make my opinions noted. One is that I believe, of course with the current status of this disease epidemic going around, the virus, that it is going to be almost impossible to get a good set of comments in from the people that need to be there.

And there is a choice to be made here, a major choice, even in the three alternatives, that I don't think give enough options. And they tend to focus on oil and gas, which at this time is probably one of the least effective things we need for the Southwest. And again, there is a choice to be made here to move forward with the preferred alternative and forever alter the landscape and the Chacoan culture that was here for a long time.

I don't think we're listening to repeated calls from stakeholders, land commissioners, the delegations, and others to say how much and how important the Chacoan landscape and the history of Chaco is to the history of not only the Native American folks, the indigenous people who probably existed for many, many thousands of years and made this place what it is, and why it is an attraction and probably one of the most important landscapes for human history in the world.

It is a world heritage area. And there is no question that by driving across here, you can see time passing, the geology and things that do not need to be destroyed for what I call short-term gain. At minimum, I see that the protection zone around the Chaco Culture Park is too skinny, too damaging, and just will not contribute to not only people coming to look and appreciate what was here but also for the future.

And I have many other comments to make, but I would like to leave it at that right now and just say, I would like to say, number one, we stall this out until this disease epidemic has gone and more of the people who live out there and make a living in that country have a chance to comment, more of the people who may have never been here have a chance to comment, and to also alter this so that we have a larger protection zone around Chaco Culture Park. That's all I have. Thank you.

- Thank you, Art. We appreciate your comment. OK, our last commenter is Jeff. Jeff, if you're available-- I see your hand. You should have the ability to talk now.

JEFF GOEBEL: Good. Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you perfectly. Thank you. Go ahead.

JEFF GOEBEL: Good. I'm Jeff Goebel, J-E-F-F G-O-E-B-E-L, and I've got two primary comments I'd like to make. First of all is based on the recent UN study. We have until the end of this decade, 2030, to address our climate issues. And investing more in oil and gas is going the opposite direction in terms of managing and taking care of our atmosphere and our climate.

So I am very much opposed to any oil gas development. We need to be putting our efforts into renewable resources. And it's very serious-- world as well as national issue and regional issue.

Also, too, there is the ramifications of fracking and the impacts on water quality and the damage that's done with that. So I'm opposed to any fracking activity that we do anywhere, particularly up in this part of the world. So that's one area is the-- I just don't believe we have the need for more oil and gas on Earth at this time. We need to be smarter with what we do.

Secondly, there is a significant issue that's happening. With climate change, they say the Southwest is going to get hotter and drier. And there is a significant issue that's happening from that region around Four Corners with dust on snow in the Colorado Rockies. The dust on snow issue has been is being thoroughly investigated, studied.

And they find that the dust on snow that blows up from that Four Corners region melts the snow in the mountains somewhere between one to two months earlier. And that's having huge consequences on our whole region. There's four river basins-- the Colorado, the Rio Grande, the Arkansas, and the Platte, which goes into the Missouri-- are impacted by the soil that's blowing off of there.

And it's basically a soil health issue. It's about learning to manage the lands in a way that the lands in that region become stabilized again. The current grazing management is not designed for stabilizing, making the soil healthy in that region. So it's a very, very significant issue and far more important--

JILL ARAGON: 30 seconds.

ART HUTCHINSON: Far more important than the development of oil and gas in terms of long-term viability for our whole region. There's a website, the Center for Snow and Avalanche Studies out of Colorado, that's got a lot of documentation about the dust on snow issue.

And then finally, I would agree with what other people have said, is that the commentary needs to be extended for the people that live out in that region. Thank you.

- Thank you very much for your comment, Jeff. At this time, we would like to open up the floor for those that weren't able to sign up or that changed their mind and do want to have a comment. It looks like we have one person already. But just to remind everyone, if you're on the phone, star 9 will raise your hand, and on the Zoom application, you can go to the Participants button and there's a Raise Your Hand feature.

So right now, I would like to call Elena Von Ancken. Elena, are you on?

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: Yes, can you hear me OK?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you now perfect. Thank you. Go ahead and state your name and spell it, please.

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: My name is Elena-- E-L-E-N-A-- Kayak-- K-A-Y-A-K-- Von Ancken, and I am the Sustainability Programming Specialist for Santa Fe Public Schools. I educate children regarding sustainability topics for 27 schools, pre-K through 12. And I also serve as the vice president of education for the New Mexico Solar Energy Association, but I am speaking on behalf of myself today.

I'd like to ditto the comments of Mr. Nichols earlier. An extension for the comment period is the only ethical, right decision for the BLM to make. I would also like to echo the comments of Ben Chavarria from Santa Clara Pueblo that to consider this an appropriate time for a public comment without an extension is peculiar. And it seems nefarious and kind of sneaky to not extend the period.

I would like to start by saying that the BLM has been an advocate in the past for educating young students regarding environmental stewardship. I collaborated with the BLM, the Rio Puerto staff, to fund field study trips to Tent Rocks Canyon. And these students who went to Tent Rocks were transformed by the experience and Hands on the Land program, along with BLM facilitated that.

So I very much appreciate the chart Jill presented at the beginning of this comment period, and I now aim for the best comment you can use for informed decision making. The oil and gas industry has left New Mexico with an environmental disaster in the southeast corner of the state. The produced water there, the drills, the abandoned drills-- they will be abandoned shortly-- it's a mess.

And now, we're looking at more extractive action in a sacred space. And we take students from Santa Fe Public Schools on trips to Chaco as well. I advise you to view the short, six-part series that CAVU-- these are videographers based in the city of Santa Fe-- have created. That is CAVU cli--

[AUDIO OUT]

The kids--

- Elena, I think we may have lost you. Can everyone hear me still?

TIM SPISAK: Yeah, we hear you just fine, Theresa. The timer continued, so I think it was on her end. She's back through, it looks like now, so if you want to give her-- I think we had at least 30 seconds left. I'm not sure exactly.

THERESA ANCELL: Elena, you're still on.

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: OK, I apologize. At what point did you lose me?

- Just five seconds.

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: OK, then I'm good. I hope I made-- the most important thing is that this group, this panel please see the CAVU series-- Climate Advocates Voces Unidas. You can stream it on the CAVU website. They are local videographers. And the situation down in the Carlsbad Region is completely articulated for you to move ahead or not move ahead with extractive policies around the Chaco area. Thank you.

- Thanks, Elena. I think we did maybe miss a part about the CAVU, but maybe you got it. I think you maybe covered it. If you want to speak again, you can do that in a little bit. OK, do we have any other folks on the line or on the call in the webinar that would like to provide a comment?

Again, we have about an hour left, and we will hold the line open, we will keep the webinar open so that anyone that joins late may have the opportunity to give a public comment. If anyone decides between now and then, just please raise your hand. We're happy to hear your comments.



I also want to remind you that you can always submit a verbal or written comment through the BLM's website. You can always mail a comment, and we do have an automated line. That information will be provided in the next slide once we have finished the comments. We have Jeremy Nichols again. Jeremy?

JEREMY NICHOLS: Yeah, I just wanted to see-- at these meetings, there's been a lot of dead time at the end. And if this were a normal public meeting, we'd have an opportunity to approach individual BLM staff to talk with them and ask questions, get greater insight, talk with people like Al and Tim who might show up. And I'm wondering why we can't do that, and why we have to sit in silence instead, or you guys have to wait for somebody to show up to comment. Why can't we engage in a conversation and a dialogue right now?

- Thank you, Jeremy. I do want to remind everyone that I'm not really allowed to answer questions. So if you do have a question, please put it in the question and answer box, and we will try to accept that and get you an answer back as quickly as possible. Would anyone else like to provide a comment?

OK, we have Ana Santorini, and then Ben Chavarria, and Elaine Von Ancken again. So we will move on to Ana Santorini. Ana, are you available?

ANA SANTORINI: Yes, I'm here.

THERESA ANCELL: OK.

ANA SANTORINI: I'm here. Can you hear me?

- I can hear you. It's a tiny bit choppy, Ana, but let's try again.

ANA SANTORINI: OK, my name is Ana Santorini-- A-N-A S-- like in Sam-- A-N-T-O-R-I-N-I. I would like to hear more from the other speakers. I would like to hear more from everyone, but especially Ben Chavarria and Jeremy Nichols, and I'd like to hear the part we missed from Elena Kayak about a six-part series, or at least the name of the acronym spelled out so that we can look it up online. Thank you very much.

- Thank you, Ana. Next on deck, we have Ben, Ben Chavarria, and Elena Von Ancken will be after Ben. Ben, are you with us?

BEN CHAVARRIA: Yeah, I'm still with you. Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you great. Go ahead, Ben.

BEN CHAVARRIA: OK, I just wanted to make sure that you got all of my comments, and I just, I guess, would touch base on the last, because I don't know if I did run out of time. So I just wanted to make sure I get in the last three of my comments.

The one was, I guess, your unwillingness to extend the comment deadline is putting us in a position right now that is limiting our ability to provide any meaningful review or comment. And again, it is shameful to continue with this current schedule for the RMPA, and on behalf of the Santa Clara Pueblo, I do urge you to immediately halt the current schedule and work with tribes and other stakeholders on developing a feasible timetable.

Again, this 3 minute time limit is also extremely offensive. This is an important topic, and it shows no equality for the general public and the federal recognized tribes to effectively and efficiently give verbal statements of great concern. And that's what I would like to go ahead and thank you for your time on. Thank you very much.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Ben. We appreciate your feedback and your comments. Is there anyone else on the line that would like to give a comment? There's Elena again. OK, Elena.

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: OK, are you able to hear me now?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you very well now, yes.

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: OK, that's wonderful. I just wanted to articulate clearly the resource that I had mentioned in my earlier comment period. The six-part series-- and it's short. Each part is very short. I think the longest is a half an hour. It's called UNEARTHED-- all capital letters-- UNEARTHED-- colon Exploring Oil and Gas Issues in New Mexico.

It can be streamed for free at CAVU-- C-A-V-U-- dot org, and people are welcome to contact CAVU for more information on how they produced the series. You'll find it very well balanced. And that is it. I hope you heard that I mentioned the oil and gas industry has left New Mexico with an environmental disaster in the southeast corner of the state with produced water and soon-to-be abandoned drills.

So I will type up this comment and send it to your website-- whatever-- can you put that on the screen so everyone can see where we can make further comments?

THERESA ANCELL: Yes.

ELENA KAYAK VON ANCKEN: OK, well thank you so much. I appreciate it, Jill.

- Thank you, Elena. Do we have anyone else? Again, we will keep the line open. Right now we have just under an hour. So please feel free to raise your hand. Oh, we have Jeremy again. Jeremy?

JEREMY NICHOLS: Yeah, Hi there. Thanks, Theresa. Again, I want this to be an opportunity for us to be able to engage with the agency. And I know everybody who's listening right now feels the same way. In fact, if somebody is on, and you feel like you want to talk to the agency, then write yes in the chat. Please write yes, because I want the agency to know we want to talk to the agency.

And I don't know why we don't get a chance to do that. Why is this so one-sided? This is so unlike a public hearing, so unlike an opportunity for public comment. It's astonishing here. The BLM should be ashamed of this process. People want to engage with the agency. They want to be heard, and we're not feeling like we're being hurt right now.

I just would like to ask some questions, and to be able to have a BLM official-- an actual, face-to-face discussion with a BLM official, just like I would at a public meeting. I don't even know if they're on right now. If they are on and listening, I hope they might be brave enough to actually show their face and actually engage in a dialogue and answer some questions.

And if they're not on right now, then what a joke this is. What a joke that they're not taking the time to listen to people and to try to understand our concerns. It just seems like this process is so stacked against people at the moment.

So I just, again, I want to reiterate, I want a chance to be able to talk to the agency. I don't understand why we can't get a chance to talk to the agency to ask some actual questions. Please, please consider this. Instead of just letting dead time play out here, give us a chance to engage in conversation. That's it for now.

- Thanks, Jeremy. We really appreciate your feedback. Again, you can use the question and answer box, and we thank you for your comment. Is there anyone else that would like to provide a comment? Again, we will hold the line open for the next 15 minutes. To raise your hand if you're on the phone, please press star 9. To raise your hand if you are on the web, you can hit the Participants button and there's a Raise Your Hand feature.

We'll continue to provide the opportunity for all that have joined and that may join for the next hour-- well, now 50 minutes. So thank you, everyone. We have Mabel Senger-- S-E-N-G-E-R. Mabel, would you like leave a-- or, like to introduce yourself?

MABEL C. SENGER: This is Mabel C. Senger-- S-E-N-G-E-R-- from Salina, Kansas--

WAYNE: Originally.

MABEL C. SENGER: Originally from Nageezi area.

WAYNE: It's in the indicated planning area.

MABEL C. SENGER: In indicating you on the planning area.

WAYNE: My name's Wayne. I'm her husband. She's asked me to assist with comments, if that's OK. I will continue. She's a Navajo from the Nageezi area, which is within your indicated planning area. One concern she has expressed is that what about the language barrier? There are a lot of Navajo allottees in that area who still do not speak English, and therefore hard to understand this whole process.

And those who can't figure it out may not have internet accessible, as one person indicated. They probably would have, but here in Kansas, even, the internet is not accessible everywhere or cell phone service, for that matter.

Also, the concern that she has raised is that not hearing comments from the local allottees within that area who are actually benefiting or trying to benefit from development of those natural resources understood that renewable resources need to be developed, but the petroleum need is not going away real soon with all the uses for that.

And in the meantime, families have benefited from the development of those resources, and the ability to do so is very, very much needed by those families. Got another-- what else, Mabel?

MABEL C. SENGER: A lot of the older Navajos are still scared to speak up. So that was really why the Navajo interpretations should be included with your meeting. I don't know how hard that'd be to do.

WAYNE: And understandably, there are other tribes involved here as well. But the local allottees have experienced difficulties developing their resources as a result of this. And they're also advocating for the five mile protection buffer zone around Chaco Canyon area, that that along with the current environmental and historical protections that are in place--

JILL ARAGON: 30 seconds.

WAYNE: --could to be adequate. Also, the family out there has worked very closely with oil companies and aware of their effort to protect the environment, and are probably leaving a smaller footprint now due to new technology than they were years back for a variety of things. And thank you.

MABEL C. SENGER: Yeah.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Mabel. At this time, we would like to welcome anyone else that would like to raise their hand to provide a comment. We appreciate all your comments. To raise your hand on the phone, again, you can hit star 9. To raise your hand in the Zoom app, navigate to the Participants tab, click on it, and there should be a Raise Hand feature.

We have about 45 minutes left. We will continue to keep the line open and continue the webinar so that if we have individuals join, they can do so. Looks like we do have a Margaret Wadsworth. Margaret?

MARGARET WADSWORTH: Hello.

THERESA ANCELL: Hi, Margaret.

MARGARET WADSWORTH: Yeah, my comment is that I'm just really concerned, because I thought that these meetings were to engage the local community that are impacted by this resource management plan amendment. And so far, I think we've only heard two indigenous

folks who are from communities who are impacted and Mabel, who was able to join from Salina, Kansas. That was great. But I'm just trying to voice this concern that I don't think this meeting is representative of the community.

- Thank you very much for your comment, Margaret. Anyone else on the line? We really appreciate everyone's comments. Again, we will hold the line open. Press star 9 or raise your hand in the app.

I will come back on throughout the time. I'd like to go ahead right now and share the information that has the how to submit written or verbal comments beyond this public meeting. And then we will go back to taking more comments.

And again, remember that it's welcomed-- if you've already given a comment, we welcome you to give another one. So please don't hesitate. We have over 40 minutes left, so we invite you to provide a comment more than once, if you would like.

I'm going to switch over to a screen showing the methods to submit comments. When we receive another hand raise, we will come back to the timer screen. Thank you.

- Jeremy Nichols has raised his hand again. Jeremy, please go ahead and make your comment. Thank you.

JEREMY NICHOLS: Well, I just want to say, this is absurd. We're going to sit in silence here when we could have a conversation? We could engage in questioning and have a chance to actually engage with the agency officials who are responsible for this. This is beyond surreal that the agency would rather we sit in silence and not respond here.

And again, you guys say people with the BLM staff are on this meeting. I don't believe it. Where are they? Where are their faces? How do we have any assurance that they're actually paying attention? This is turning into a complete joke in many respects. I can't believe the agency thinks that this is OK or that this is doing the public any justice here.

Will somebody from the BLM actually say anything and actually respond and actually answer a question or two?

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you for your comment, Jeremy. We appreciate your input. Anyone else would like to make a public comment? We're opening this right now for public comment. If you do have questions, please place them in the question and answer box. Thank you.

We do have Mabel back again. Mabel, you should have the ability to go ahead and give another public comment.

WAYNE: Mabel.

MABEL C. SENGER: Yes, hi. I was going to tell you that the first time they have a meeting like this with the Navajos, they're not going to really come in and do this, because they're not used to doing stuff like that. And they're still afraid what's going to happen if they spoke.

And I'm glad you guys are doing this, and to let them know that you are doing it, it doesn't harm anybody. This is for people. Yes.

WAYNE: And we've talked more in light of that would advocate also to delay this deadline and make a bigger effort to get the local people involved in some way or another. And due to the social distancing and the virus situation, that may be difficult in the near future. But part of the silence, we think, is because there aren't more local people involved in this meeting.

MABEL C. SENGER: Yeah.

WAYNE: And I guess we have spoken. Thank you.

- Thank you very much for your comment. We really appreciate it. Does anyone else at this time--  
- please raise your hand if you're on the phone by pressing star 9. If you're on the computer, you can hit the Participants tab and hit the Raise Your Hand option.

I'm going to go back to the slide showing how you can submit your comments in other ways. Oh, it looks like Yolanda Hernandez would like to give a comment. Thank you, Yolanda.

MABEL C. SENGER: Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you great, Yolanda. Thank you. Please state your first and last name and spell it out for us. My name is Yolanda Hernandez. It's Y-O-L-A-N-D-A H-E-R-N-A-N-D-E-Z. I just wanted to say that I'm an allotment owner that lives and grew up in the Nageezi area-- also the Lybrook area.

I just want to state that it seems like, as an allotment owner who owns a share of land in that area, that I am not being heard, along with all my relatives that live in that area. For some reason, we have other tribes coming in and saying that it's sacred, it's sacred. But if it's that sacred, then why not just close the park?

We have the Navajo people that live in that area. We're Navajo. We're the Navajo tribe. And I think that we should be heard. A lot of my relatives, a lot of natives that live in that area, they depend on this money from oil and gas. They benefit from this to feed their family. They put groceries on the table. They put food on the table. They pay their bills.

I don't understand why they're not being heard. And I also agree with what Mabel said, that the older Navajos-- they're not used to this stuff. They don't know how to work this whole process. So they're not going to step up, and they're not going to voice their opinion, because they're afraid of it.

I just feel like as an owner that we're not being heard. And, I mean, I inherited that land from my parents. I feel like I should be heard because that's where I grew up that was my parents' land and their parents' land. So it would be nice if the BLM or the BIA-- they would take that opportunity to listen to the people in that community--

JILL ARAGON: 30 seconds.

YOLANDA HERNANDEZ: The people that live in that area. The people that live in that area-- they depend on this. It's a hardship for them right now, and I don't think that people are seeing that side of it. Oil and production has been going in that on in that area for over 50 years. So I just don't think it's fair. It seems all one-sided. Thank you.

- Thank you, Yolanda. We really appreciate your comments. At this time, we can welcome any more commenters. Please raise your hand, star 9 or the Raise Hand icon. I do want to remind folks that you can submit your verbal comments in your native language. We have translators available. So we encourage that.

Again, if you've commented and you would like to make another comment, please feel free to raise your hand again. We're approaching about 30 minutes left, so we will have 30 minutes. At this time, I don't see anyone raising their hand, so I will go back to the slide showing how to submit comments and other methods beyond this particular format.

Jeremy has his hand raised again. We will go back to the timer slide. Jeremy, you should be able to--

JEREMY NICHOLS: Thanks, Theresa. I just want to echo what was said earlier in terms of the silence here reflecting just how few of the American public and impacted communities and impacted indigenous peoples are being reached by the Bureau of Land Management as part of this process. It really does speak volumes to just how ineffective this form of outreach is.

And I know that the Bureau of Land Management is trying hard and Bureau of Indian Affairs is trying hard to weather this pandemic right now, but it's just, all things are clearly indicating that this is just not working. This virtual public comment hearing is not working.

Sure, we're getting a chance to speak out and say a few words in three minutes, but we can't engage in a conversation, and we can't be face to face. This is about as far away from a public hearing that you can get. I feel like-- well, I'm literally talking to my computer screen right now. I'm talking to a wall, basically. And there is simply no substitute for being in person and being able to have a conversation with another human being.

I understand that the Bureau of Land Management wants to continue doing its business. But in this time of crisis, maybe there's some business that just needs to be put on hold. I know for a lot of us, we put a lot of business on hold. We put schooling on hold for our kids. We put lots of other errands and life choices on hold because of the pandemic.

Because that's what we do as responsible human beings. We do what we need to do to weather the storm, avoid the health risks, and help slow the spread of COVID. And while a virtual hearing can help slow the spread of the COVID disease, it's not sufficient to meet the BLM's obligation to the American public, to the Navajo people, to Pueblo tribes who have connections to this landscape.

All things are pointing to the need to suspend this process and to put the brakes on planning in the Greater Chaco Region. We want a good plan. We want to see this planning unfold in a good way, but not at the expense of meaningful public engagement, and not at the expense of feeling like we're being heard in this process.

So again, I'll get off, and there'll be more silence. I think it's hugely unfortunate. It's all going to be recorded. And it's all-- you guys are Facebook Live-ing it. You can go back and watch it. It's really going to say something when people go back and watch these videos, and they have to listen to half an hour or more of silence. And again, it just speaks to how ineffective this form of outreach is.

So anyway, thank you again. We'll be engaging in the process and sending more detailed comments. But again, we're very disappointed and very concerned that this process is not serving anybody's interests at the moment. Thank you.

- Thanks again, Jeremy. We really appreciate your feedback and comment. Is there anyone else on the line that would like to raise their hand at this moment and give a comment? We still have just under 30 minutes. And we will continue-- again, we will continue to have the line open. This will ensure that anyone that may be joining late would have that opportunity to provide a public comment as well.

So we're just going to continue to wait and see who else would like to provide that. In the meantime, I will share the how to submit comments slide again. And as we see hands raised, we will definitely jump right back over to the timer slide and would greatly appreciate more feedback, more comments.

Again, if you're on the phone, star 9 raises your hand. On your computer, the Participants tab-- click, and then the Hand Raise icon. I don't see anyone so far, so I will go ahead and put the how to submit comments slide back up, and we will wait to see if we have any more commenters. Thank you.

Denise. Denise, welcome back. You should have the ability to speak now.

DENISE ULIBARRI-CLAUSS: Yes, thank you. I just wanted to concur with those who have already eloquently stated the heartbreaking disappointment about indigenous people not being heard and not being responded to. And even with good intentions, let's be honest, this virtual environment does not give the kind of give and take that a public hearing would.



And the reason I'm here today is I was moved by the social injustice of this situation. I've visited the reservation several times, and only have a glimmer of the realities of how life is on the reservation. And they deserve equal access.

And the digital divide is well documented in our culture. And for God's sakes, I used the IRS example because we all feel like the IRS is not necessarily on our side. But when they come out early on in this pandemic, and they have a 90-day delay in filing tax returns, when that will cause a convulsion in the revenue flow in the federal government, doesn't that say something about the model of federal government trying to support and aid the nation?

And I just feel like all of these facts are so true on their face that it should be an easy decision. And not that I have any idea what the other pressures may be, but it took six years to develop this plan, as we understood from the presentation. And the 90 days to respond to it happens to fall in historic pandemic time.

No one is going to criticize the BLM or the BIA for slowing this process down. The oil and gas markets have collapsed, so there's no upside economic value at this point in time. So what on God's earth is the reason for not showing compassion, treating one another as equal citizens and equal stakeholders?

And I just-- it's very difficult to understand. And with all due respect, you're just trying to do your job, but I think there's lots of public example that no one's going to criticize you for extending the time frame. Thank you.

- Thank you again, Denise. We really appreciate your comment. Anyone else on the line? We do have still almost about 23 minutes remaining. So we will continue to leave the line open so that anyone that has joined us late may be able to provide their public comment.

We'll continue to show this slide on how to submit comments until we have a hand raised, and then I will be repeating this message as well in five minute increments until the end of the meeting. So right now, I'm going to share my screen again to show how to submit comments. Thank you, everyone.

- Hello again. We have a couple of folks with their hands raised. So thank you very much. Miya King-Flaherty, you're up first. And then Ana Santorini, you're up next. Miya, you should be able to go ahead and speak. Great. Hi, thank you. My name is spelled M-I-Y-A. My last name K-I-N-G dash F for Freddie-- L-A-H-E-R-T-Y.

THERESA ANCELL: Thanks, Miya.

MIYA KING-FLAHERTY: Hi. And I've been observing this meeting, and it's been quite interesting to say the least. And I wasn't planning to speak, but I felt compelled to, because there's just so much dead silence.

The fact that there is so much dead space during the public comment period really speaks to the absurdity of holding these online meetings, because you've heard multiple times that trouble

governments to those are communities that are impacted. There have been a few voices who are actually from impacted areas able to comment and get on this Zoom meeting.

But time, attention, resources-- people are focused on ensuring that communities that are most impacted during these times, who are hard hit, are helped and assisted. And I'm also not surprised, but the fact that holding these virtual meetings, there's one that's going to be scheduled tomorrow-- that's a weekend. And I'd be hard pressed to think that many people would take the time from their schedules to engage in a Zoom meeting on a weekend.

Again, that's time for people to be with their families, to take care of essential things that need attention. And this whole process, it seems like the way it's been rolled out was by design to systematically silence voices and disregard taking public comment into consideration.

And I'm also really disappointed that after multiple requests from Jeremy to engage in an actual conversation with BLM officials who, at the beginning of this presentation, were here-- but this would be a really good opportunity for them to answer any questions that people may have. But we continue to sit here in silence. I don't think anything's been accomplished.

I want to echo what everyone else has said about extending the public comment period during a time where we get through this, and we're better able to engage, because right now, that's just not happening. And that's the whole point of having public meetings. Thank you.

- Thank you, Miya. We appreciate your comment. Ana Santorini, you are up next.

ANA SANTORINI: Thank you. I appreciate what everybody said, and what strikes me is that among people most directly affected, there are so many differing and maybe even opposite or very different-- conflicting, maybe even-- opinions, which means we really do need a dialogue.

And if culturally, virtual is hard-- and I live in a place where the internet connection is really iffy. I live on Cochiti Pueblo reservation land. And it's distant, so internet connection isn't very good. So it seems to me that if BLM and BIA are really interested in hearing from people, that--

THERESA ANCELL: Ana, we've lost your audio. Ana, if you can hear me, we will come back to you as soon as we see your hand raised again. Thank you.

Thank you, Ana. We'll start the clock over for Ana, please. Ana if you--

ANA SANTORINI: OK

THERESA ANCELL: Sorry, your audio is pretty poor right now.

ANA SANTORINI: Right, well I'm a case in point then, because even though I know that, I mean, I more or less know how to use this Zoom virtual meeting, my internet access is terrible, because I live on Cochiti Pueblo reservation. And it's remote, and there simply isn't good coverage here.

So it seems to me if BLM and BIA are really interested in hearing comments, since there's no economic downsides for this process to be delayed considering oil prices, et cetera, why not get busy, be creative, and plan a schedule for later that can be applied later where--

- We have lost you again, Ana. OK Ana, you're back on. Let's try again.

ANA SANTORINI: Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can barely hear you. I can--

ANA SANTORINI: OK, well anyway-- OK, I probably need to write this down. But a comment process can be designed that combines virtual and face-to-face comment sessions in different areas so all the voices are heard, and people can talk to each other, and compromises can be worked out.

It seems to me that this could be a very creative process, and BIA and BLM have the opportunity to do that. So I encourage them to do that. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Ana. We really appreciate your comment.

We still have about 11 minutes. So we really encourage everyone, anyone. If you've gone before, please go again. If you haven't gone, we encourage you to provide a comment. I do want to remind everyone that we will be able to receive comments in your native language. We really encourage it, recommend it.

If anyone on the phone would like to unmute themselves, you can press star 9, and that will raise your hand, and then you can provide comment.

We have about 10 minutes left, so until we see another hand raised, I'm going to go and share the how to submit comments slide again so that you can have that information in front of you. Thank you, everyone, so much.

Hello again everyone. We're approaching five minutes left in the conference, and I would like to announce that we are still accepting comments. We still encourage you to comment. I'd also like to let you know that right at 4:00, we will be hearing from Jill again for some closing remarks. So thank you for your patience, and thank you for all of your comments. Greatly, greatly appreciate everything.

We'll stay on the line for five more minutes, and then Jill will give some closing remarks. There's still an opportunity. We still encourage you to raise your hand-- star 9 on the phone and the Raise Hand icon on the online. Thank you all so much.

We do have another comment from Ana Santorini.

ANA SANTORINI: Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Ana.

ANA SANTORINI: OK, you can hear me now?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you well now, yes.

ANA SANTORINI: OK, thank you. I just want to encourage people who are listening and commenting today to be creative and think of ways that this comment process can be-- that BLM and BIA can be strongly encouraged to extend and even redesign the comment process.

This is it. We're still a little bit locked down in New Mexico, and I think that this is an opportunity to put our efforts-- to do be creative with our efforts. Thank you.

- Thank you, Ana. We also have Stephen-- Stephen Verchinski. Stephen, you should be able to speak now.

STEPHEN VERCHINSKI: OK, thank you very much. I'm someone who's the national delegate for New Mexico to the Green Party US. I've been following this quite closely. The issue that I have is right away from the enabling legislation of the Bureau of Land Management, which is a requirement to have sustainable yield with regards to the products that they help produce.

I don't see how this whole fracking binge that has gone on is sustainable yield in any stretch of the imagination. It also provides for intergenerational inequity. There's no social justice involved with it.

And in the long run, it also works to destabilize us from the standpoint of having peaceful relationships with our neighbors, because we're exporting things in which they're going to have to be fully dependent upon years in the future. I'm noting here the gas that's being exported down to Mexico for a new generation of power plants.

Again, I would like to see a full BLM review of what is sustainable yield, how it's making its mandate in regards to even pushing these particular fossil fuels, and the intergenerational inequity that's being generated as an end result. Thank you.

- Thank you very much for your comment, Stephen. We do have one minute left, so if anyone would like to provide a comment, please feel free to do so. You can raise your hand-- star 9 or the Participants tab has a Raise Hand icon. Looks like Mabel would like to speak again. Great. Mabel-- you should be able to start your audio, Mabel. Mabel Senger?

WAYNE: OK, now can you hear us? Can you answer me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you now.

WAYNE: Anyway, just to--

- Yes, we can hear you now, sir.

MABEL C. SENGER: Hello.

WAYNE: Just to repeat-- she got called on another phone. Just to repeat what Yolanda said that the family down there has not suffered any ill effects from this drilling. One has benefited from the money greatly. Also, we understand the need to develop renewable, sustainable resources, but in the meantime, if we want to throw out all of our plastics and stuff like that, we're going to have to have these petroleums for a while.

I'm glad to let that petroleum sit in the ground until the prices come back up. But just no ill effects that the family has had there. And notice that the effort seems to have a smaller footprint due to the method of extracting that oil than petroleum.

Anyway, time's probably up. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, sir. We really appreciate your comment. Now, oh, it looks like Stephen-- Stephen did you want to give another comment, or do you have your hand still raised? Nope. Looks like we have his hand still raised.

OK. At this time, I would like to announce that our public comment period is over.

STEPHEN VERCHINSKI: I'm still here.

THERESA ANCELL: Oh, Stephen, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I thought that was an error on our side. My apologies. I did not mean to talk over you, Stephen. Please go ahead. Thank you.

STEPHEN VERCHINSKI: Yes. The other issue I have is that-- with regards to, again, releasing these leases on out with no real concern for the overall atmospheric pollution in the areas, not just around Chaco, but also the other areas in the San Juan and Permian Basin.

I don't believe that we have adequately addressed it, particularly since there is no monitoring stations around places like schools that are having to be shut down. I was up at Counselor for the discussions on this almost two years ago, and they were telling me that they were still having to go ahead and shut down the school on a regular basis whenever the air pollution levels drifted into the building.

As a cost to the industry that should be borne any time that they're within sight of one mile of the school, I feel that they should actually be paying for full school decontamination units, particularly in the air, so that the children can still have their schooling continue and not shutting down the schools on a regular basis. Thank you.

- Thank you, Stephen. We appreciate your comment. At this time, I don't see any other hands raised, so I will turn it over to Jill Aragon when she's ready to give her closing remarks. Thank you, everyone.

JILL ARAGON: Thank you everyone for your time and comments today. The BLM and BIA value your input, and we will continue to accept your comments on the draft EIS through May 28. Any comments received or postmarked after the May 28 date may not be considered.

Please note that the May 28 date is the deadline for the public comments. However the BLM and BIA will continue to consult with tribes, consulting parties, and cooperating agencies beyond this date and throughout the EIS development process.

I will be sharing the information that you can use to provide additional comments, and who to contact directly if you need further assistance. For comments, you can go to the e-planning tab on the online portal at [www.blm.gov/nm/farmington](http://www.blm.gov/nm/farmington). You can leave a voicemail comment by calling 720-213-5786.

You can also mail your comments to either project manager at the following addresses. For BLM-- Sarah Scott at 6251 College Boulevard Suite 8 in Farmington, New Mexico, 87402. Or you can mail them to BIA-- attention to Robert Begay at 301 West Hill Avenue in Gallup, New Mexico, 87301.

There are two more meetings scheduled after this one. The next one will be tomorrow morning, 9 AM Mountain Standard Time. The one after that will be on Monday, May 18 at 9 AM Mountain Standard Time. You can register for these future meetings either online or by calling 505-635-9701.

This concludes today's virtual public meeting for the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Associated Environmental Impact Statement. Thank you for joining us today. Have a good day and stay well.