

FMG-RMPA-EIS VPM Meeting 5 - 2020-05-18

THERESA ANCELL: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Virtual public meeting for the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment an Environmental Impact Statement. My name is Theresa Ancell, and I will be your moderator today.

Just a little bit about me. I was born and raised in the Four Corners, and I work for a local environmental consulting firm, and have been doing work in the San Juan basin for the past 17 years.

We'll go over some meeting logistics here, in just a few minutes while we're waiting for some participants to join. So at this time I will mute myself, and stop my camera so that we can give folks just a few more minutes to to join the meeting. Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. We want to welcome you to the virtual public meeting for the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement. My name is Theresa Ancell, and I will be your moderator today.

Just want to give you a little bit of information about me. I was born and raised in the Four Corners area, and I work for a local environmental consulting firm. And I've been doing work in the San Juan basin for the past 17 years.

We'll go over some meeting logistics while we wait for other participants to join. We want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to access the virtual platform, or call in on the phone. So you can join the online webinar from the Zoom application on your computer, phone or tablet, using the log in information that was provided during registration.

We also have a phone-in option should your computer, tablet, or phone not have the capabilities to run the online Zoom application. The number for today's webinar is 1-346-248-7799. And the password is 9-5-9-3-3-2-3-6-3-2-0. Again, for a call in option the phone number is 1-346-248-7799. And the password is 9-5-9-3-3-2-3-6-3-2-0. We'll be repeating that information, and it is also displayed on your screen.

If you registered online, you should have a confirmation email that was provided to you. That also has the phone-in option and information in it. If you registered using our operator phone number, you'll only have the option to join on the phone.

To have the best chance at seeing and hearing the presentation, please download the Zoom application directly to your computer if you haven't done so already, and use that instead of the web browser. If you haven't updated your resume to version 5 or greater, I suggest you take the time now, since it'll be a few more minutes before we start the meeting.

We'll just give it a few more minutes here so that we can let the individuals that are wanting to participate join. And we'll start here in just a few minutes. Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the virtual public meeting for the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement. My name is Theresa Ancell and I will be your moderator today. I'd like to take a moment and we'll come Jillian Aragon, she will be providing the presentation today. Jillian?

JILL ARAGON: Good morning, everyone. My name is Jillian Aragon and I am 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 the 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 is joining us today through a variety of different ways. 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 at that time.

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 made available with the final RMPA EIS.

If you are having technical issues with the Zoom interface, you can let us know through the QA chat box. You can do so by clicking the QA icon at the bottom of your Zoom window. We will also be using the QA feature to address clarifications about the public meeting or draft RMPA EIS. More complex questions about the RMPA EIS should be submitted as formal comments.

If it would be easier for you to join by phone today, please use this phone number-- 346-248-7799. You will be asked to use a webinar ID once you dial this number. The webinar ID for today's session is 9-2-9-3-3-2-3-6-3-2-0.

Additionally, this webinar presentation is being streamed live on BLM New Mexico's Facebook page. Those viewing this from Facebook live need to know that any comments submitted via the Facebook live page are not considered official comments on the draft RMPA. At the end of this presentation, we will be providing information on how you can submit those comments as formal comments.

Now we will hear from the BLM New Mexico State director, Tim Spisak, and the BIA Navajo regional director, Bart Stevens.

TIM SPISAK: Good morning, and 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 the BLM as co-lead 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 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'll now turn it over to director Stevens, who has also prepared some remarks for this presentation.

THERESA ANCELL: Director Stevens, you need to un-mute your microphone, sir.

BART STEVENS: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. This is Bart Stevens, and I'm the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Gallup Regional Office. I, too, want to welcome you all, and thank you for joining us today for these meetings that are very important to all of us.

We've all had to adapt to cope with this pandemic, and our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of the public is paramount. And we are also dedicated to fulfilling section 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 the EIS process. We look forward to our continued work together throughout this process.

So during this crisis, there are many out there that continue to report for work and to ensure that the rest of the world is able to get the things that they need to get through this. And they have been selflessly getting up every day to make sure that we have all the things that we need. For that, we want to thank those individuals that are doing that, and everyone else that is either essential or nonessential, and has struggled throughout this process or this pandemic.

So in moments of crisis, we look out for one another to guide us through one of the darkest times and heal us through a long recovery. And they are risking their lives fighting on the front lines of this pandemic. And for that, I'm referring to the medical professionals. And for that, we want to say thank you.

At this time, I'd like you all to join me in a moment of silence to acknowledge and honor our communities that are experiencing hardships during these difficult times. We are now going to switch off the audio for the moment of silence. 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 this presentation to last approximately 25 minutes.

I'm going to go over some meeting logistics at this time. As a reminder, this meeting is currently being recorded and will be available after the meeting. A Navajo recording of a newsletter describing the project and this process is available, and can be found on the project's e-planning website. If you are on the computer, feel free to ask questions in the Zoom Q&A feature during the presentation, where BLM and BIA specialists will be working to respond to you.

Due to time limitations, these questions will not be read during the meeting. And 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 when utilizing the QA 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 registration can provide their comments. Once everyone who has registered has been given the opportunity to say their comments, the line will be open to anyone else wishing to provide a comment. We do have translators available, so feel free to make your verbal comments in Navajo.

We are here today to help orient you in reviewing the document and provide you an opportunity to submit 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 Farmington field office, or to the BIA Navajo regional office. Now, on to the presentation that will be facilitated by the BLM Farmington District Manager, Al Elser.

AL ELSER: Good morning, and thank you, and hello to all of our participants. My name is Al Elser and I am 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 this draft EIS due to changing oil and gas development patterns in the Mancos shale and Gallup sandstone, collectively known as the 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 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, 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, National Historic Preservation Act, and the Clean Water Act.

Our project managers for this project 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 are joining us today to help provide clarifications to the draft. They will be doing so through the Zoom Q&A function noted previously.

This draft EIS was developed based on input from agency staff, cooperating agencies, and the comments we received during our public scoping process. There are 23 cooperating 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 the notice of intent for the EIS 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 preparation of the draft 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, help the BLM 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 can be found online at ww.BLM.gov/NM/Farmington. Hard copies have been distributed throughout northwest New Mexico. Please contact us and we can direct you to the nearest location.

There are four volumes to the draft EIS. Volume 1 contains the draft itself. It introduces the project and explains the purpose and need. It also describes the alternatives, the effected

environment, and the consequences of each alternative. The executive summary in this volume will give you a brief overview of the purpose of the project and what to expect to find within the document. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 offer a look at the specific range of alternatives for which resource management updates are being considered.

Volume 2 includes a series of appendices with a variety of supporting information including maps and figures. And volumes 3 and 4 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 the state of New Mexico. 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 this 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 Jicarilla Apache Nation border.

The planning area includes San Juan, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, and McKinley counties, covering almost 4.2 million acres, with the BLM and BIA responsible for managing approximately half of those acres. However, the decision area, or those lands that are 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 the 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 BLM 2003 RMP. Once the final decision on this document is made, any new lease issued would be subject to the land use allocations and management decisions of the 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. We will now 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 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, the nature of the resource, location of the resource, and the proposed action, and other factors.

While each agency developed 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 emphasizes natural ecosystems. Alternative B places an emphasis on 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 production while minimizing impacts to surrounding areas.

The BLM and BIA are responsible for signing their own record of decision for this project, and both agencies are recommending Alternative C as a preferred alternative. The goal behind the agencies identifying a preferred alternative at this point 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 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 receive during this public review period and prepare the final EIS. A notice of availability will be published when the final EIS is ready for public review. This will begin the 30-day public protest period for the plan.

Upon completion of the protest resolutions, the agencies will prepare and sign their own records of decision for the approved RMPA. The BLM and BIA will each sign their own records of decision for this process. Once signed, the updated management tools would become available for use by the agencies. Our goal is to sign these records 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 that 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 the document on BLM's e-planning website where you can also provide comments. 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 prepared 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 example might be, this document is terrible and I am against it. A better comment could be, this document is terrible, and that you do not adequately address x impacts that this may have on x resources. The best type of comment that you can provide to us is, this document is terrible, and that you do not adequately address x

impacts that this may have on x resources. I'm attaching the results of studies that were conducted for your review.

As we are shifting into the comments session, a comment moderator will be assisting by announcing speakers and ensuring that the phone line is un-muted 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 us 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 un-mute your line.

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 comment, they're welcome to submit their comment via the means 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 capacity as a government official, or has been asked to provide comments on behalf of a government official, we ask that they please let us know when they start speaking so we can make note of that.

We will initially provide everyone three minutes of time each, but there may be additional time at the end of the meeting to return to you for additional comments. The agencies will do their best to provide additional time for government officials.

We want to remind commenters that they are being recorded, and to please be courteous to the audience by not using profanity while providing your remarks. 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 would also like to remind commenters that the BLM and the BIA are here to take your comments. However, we will not be responding to them at this time. Responses to comments will be included in the comment report that will be published with the final EIS.

As a reminder, we do have 50 resource specialists available to respond to questions that are submitted to the QA chat box. Theresa will now welcome our first commenter.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Jill. At this time, I'm going to call off the next three speakers so that that will give everyone the opportunity to raise their hand. And when I say, raise your hand, what I mean is, if you're on the phone, you can use the star 9. You can use star 9, and that will raise your hand to where we can see that you're available for your comment. If you're on the computer, again, you'd navigate down to the "participants" tab, click on it, and there you should see the "raise hand" feature there.

Our next three commenters are Rebecca Sobel, Thomas Cassidy, and Donna Knapp. So first off, we have Rebecca Sobel. Rebecca, you should be able to test your audio.

REBECCA SOBEL: Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you. Thank you.

REBECCA SOBEL: Great. Thanks, Theresa. Can I first ask if there's anybody representing any public or tribal officials that wants to speak before me?

THERESA ANCELL: Absolutely. Do we have anyone on the phone? You can raise your hand if you're a representative, tribal or government representative. Hey, Rebecca, I don't see anyone raising their hand. And based on the registrant list of commenters, I don't see anyone. But if there's anybody on the phone or on the application itself, please feel free to raise your hand right now and Rebecca would like to offer her spot.

Well thanks, Rebecca. I'm not seeing anyone that would like to take the opportunity right now.

REBECCA SOBEL: All right. Sure. Can you still hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you well, thank you.

REBECCA SOBEL: My name is Rebecca Sobel-- R-E-B-E-C-C-A, S-O-B-E-L. All right. I am a senior climate and energy campaigner for Wild Earth Guardians. I'm based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I am privileged enough to have access to broadband, to be able to attend these meetings.

This is the fifth virtual meeting that I have attended, which means I've been to every single one of them. And I can say that not a single person has commended BLM and BIA for this process. In fact, I believe every single person has condemned this process. So I am shocked and appalled when I read comments that says BLM is pleased with the results of these virtual meetings.

I am one of those people that have read the definitions of environmental racism, environmental justice, the United Nations Declarations of the Rights of Indigenous People Article 32, the Rights of Free, Prior and Informed consent, and decried BLM's woefully inadequate attention to this process. This drilling plan is already offensive to communities, and the process meant to engage quote "focused comments" deliberately excludes and alienates those. And nobody-- I mean, I've heard a dozen and a half people say that they're giving comments under protest.

So the fact that BLM can use a double speak to pretend that these meetings are a success is not only insensitive, it's deplorable. And I feel compassion for those that are trying to facilitate these meetings online, but people have been playing songs literally titled, We're Not Going to Take It, and BLM says this is a success. This plan is bullshit. This process is bullshit.

And I'm sorry for all of those that have to listen to dead air, and I hope, I mean, that the BLM would extend this process is the minimum request. But to move forward with this sham and pretend that we're pleased with this, that's demonstrative of the fact that there are no real decision makers paying any attention to these phone calls. I cede the rest of my time.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Rebecca. Thank you, Rebecca. We will now move on to Thomas Cassidy. After Thomas, Donna Knapp and then Alison Kelly. Thomas, if you're available, please raise your hand by hitting the star 9, or hitting the "participants" tab and the "raise hand" icon. Thomas Cassidy.

TOM CASSIDY: Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Are you Thomas?

TOM CASSIDY: Shall I start?

THERESA ANCELL: Yeah. If you don't mind just stating your name again, and spelling it for the audience on the phone, that would be really great. And then your 3-minute timer will start once you've done that. Thank you.

TOM CASSIDY: So I am Tom Cassidy, T-O-M, C-A-S-S-I-D-Y. So I am the Vice President-- shall I begin? I am the Vice President of Government Relations for the National Trust of Historic Preservation. The National Trust is a privately funded non-profit organization chartered by Congress in 1949 to involve the public in historic preservation.

We have a long interest, and work in this area of Chaco. We provided comments on the RMP Amendment both in 2014 and 2016. We are also participating as a consulting party under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

We have provided grants for study in the area, including a LIDAR survey, a video documentary of Chaco roads, and recent grants for ethnographic study involving the Pueblos of Acoma and Zuni Pueblo.

Plainly, we are in a state of national emergency. And while the National Trust is able to, and appreciates the opportunity to come in virtually during this time when in-person meetings are not possible, many parties-- especially Pueblos and tribal members-- do not have the ability or capacity now, to participate in this process. We strongly believe this comment period should be extended by at least 120 days, and any decisions delayed until the public has had adequate opportunity.

We made this ask formally in a March 27 letter that was signed by my organization and numerous other preservation and conservation groups. The New Mexico Congressional Delegation has requested this 120-day extension. The state of New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department has made such a request, and the All Pueblo Council of governors requested that same period of time for a delay.

Furthermore, it's clear BLM needs additional information on cultural resources in the planning area. Congress recently provided \$1 million for a cultural resources investigation to identify culturally and historic significant areas within the Chaco region, and directed BLM to not offer oil and gas leasing on federal lands within the proposed withdrawal area around the park until that is completed.

THERESA ANCELL: 40 seconds.

TOM CASSIDY: Finally, to be clear, none of the alternatives considered in the BLM are what we would have drafted. But of the alternatives BLM has considered, we would recommend Alternative B as the most appropriate. It would prevent oil and gas development within the 10-mile protection area around the park as is set forth in legislation that has passed the House and is now pending in the Senate. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you very much for your comment, Tom. We will now list the next three in line. Donna Knapp, Alison Kelly, and Karen Nakakihara. Again, please hit the star 9 if you're on the phone. And if you're online, you can hit the "participants" tab and the "raise hand" icon.

Donna Knapp, Alison Kelly, and Karen Nakakihara. Excuse me. OK. I'm not seeing Donna, however I see Kelly-- I mean Alison Kelly. So Alison Kelly should be next in line. If you want to ask very nicely if we could avoid using any profanities please. Thank you so much. Alison should be--

ALISON KELLY: This is Alison. Can you hear me? And no, I'm not using profanity. So don't worry.

THERESA ANCELL: I didn't-- that wasn't directed at you. I'm sorry.

ALISON KELLY: I'm an adult. I'm a professional. My name is Alison Kelly-- A-L-I-S-O-N, K-E-L-L-Y, and I'm a senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. Can you hear me OK? I'm assuming yes. Despite--

THERESA ANCELL: Yes.

ALISON KELLY: --the reaching implications of this plan amendment for greater Chaco over the next two decades, BLM has so far refused to extend the public comment period to ensure that everyone affected can participate. Since BLM released the RMPA, Native Americans, including All Pueblo Council of Governors, in addition to the New Mexico Delegation, conservation

organizations, among others, have urged BLM to extend the public comment period due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Communities in greater Chaco are suffering due to the COVID crisis. In fact, the highest number of cases in New Mexico are located in the northern part of the planning area, near population centers like Farmington. Native Americans, in particular, are experiencing unusually large numbers of COVID cases, which highlights the urgent need to extend the May 20th comment period to ensure that every affected person's voice can be heard.

Those lacking the resources to submit comments online may be unable to participate at all. Most notably, in the plan amendment BLM defers analysis of the level and intensity of impacts on nearby environmental justice populations to future permitting decisions, citing insufficient information. Impacts on these populations include long-term impacts on visual setting, increased noise, vehicle traffic, exposure to hazardous materials, and adverse health effects from poor air quality.

This virtual meeting and the failure to extend the public comment period are stark examples of the complete failure to consider environmental justice. Despite the region's cultural and archaeological significance, around 90% of its lands have already been leased for oil and gas drilling. There are already 1 million acres of land open, 37,000 wells. Nonetheless, exploration, development, leasing would continue under the planned amendment-- over 3,000 new wells in the planning area, 18 hundreds of those BLM.

BLM concedes that hydraulic fracturing with horizontal drilling technologies may result in different impacts than those anticipated in 2003. This RMPA was supposed to disclose the impacts of drilling horizontal drilling and fracking to the public and address tribal concerns, but it is deficient in several ways. First, the preferred alternative fails to permanently protect lands around Chaco Cultural National Historical Park consistent with the Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act passed by the House and awaiting action by the Senate.

Second, BLM's preferred alternative is over a system proposed alternative that included a suite of measures designed to maximize protection of the landscape in nearby communities. Third, BLM's acknowledgment that plan amendment will affect climate. It still fails to disclose to the public the cumulative impacts of greenhouse gas emissions and their significance for the climate. It also refuses to use available tools to do so, such as the social cost of carbon, in particular. While touting the benefits of this plan to the economy, it fails to disclose the costs. Additionally, there are public health and safety risks that would increase from current levels, despite the COVID crisis.

Based on the foregoing, we ask that BLM withdraw the plan amendment and prepare a plan that adequately addresses tribal and public health, air and water quality, climate, wilderness area concerns, after the COVID pandemic is behind us. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you very much, Alison. We appreciate your comments. At this time, I'll list the next three that we have on deck. Karen Nakakihara, Kendra Pinto, Michael

Casaus. Karen, are you available? Star 9 on your phone, or the "participants" tab, click on it, and there's a "raised hand" icon. There we have Karen.

You may have to un-mute it on your side, Karen. It shows you have the microphone. Karen, you may have to go to your app and click on it again, and it should give you a notification to enable speaking. We lost-- try raising your hand again, Karen.

ART: We may have just lost her. So hopefully, she'll come back and join us.

THERESA ANCELL: Yeah. I don't see her on the list.

ART: We'll help her walk through that process to un-mute her microphone, OK?

THERESA ANCELL: That sounds great. Thanks, Art. OK. While we wait for Karen, we have Kendra Pinto, Michael Casaus and Shaina Oliver up next. Kendra? Kendra Pinto? If you're on the phone Kendra, you can hit star 9. Or you can hit the "raise hand" feature on your Zoom application. I don't see Kendra in our list. So star 9 on your phone, Kendra. OK. It doesn't look like Kendra's on yet, so we will go on to Michael Casaus. Michael, are you on? I'm not seeing Michael. I am getting a message--

ART: No, Michael is there.

MICHAEL CASAUS: Hi, can you hear me?

ART: Yeah, Michael's there.

THERESA ANCELL: Oh, there we go. Thanks, Michael. If you could just state your name and spell it, please. And then after you're done with that, your time of three minutes will begin.

MICHAEL CASAUS: Thank you. Good morning, my name is Michael Casaus-- M-I-C-H-A-E-L, C-A-S-A-U-S. And I am the New Mexico State Director for the Wilderness Society, whose mission is to unite people to protect America's wild places. Today, the Wilderness Society has over one million members and supporters from across the country.

It's outrageous for the BLM to conduct these virtual meetings at a time when New Mexicans are focused on keeping their families safe. Tribal nations should not have to defend their ancestral homeland during an unprecedented pandemic. While local communities and tribal governments are focused on human health and safety, the BLM is shamefully rushing forward with a plan for energy dominance that will result in more health and climate impacts for vulnerable communities. The BLM must extend the comment period at least until the threat from COVID-19 has subsided.

I am joining here from Albuquerque, where me and my family are, fortunately, healthy, we're able to stay safe, and importantly for this particular situation, I have access to broadband internet. Regrettably, some of the most directly affected communities-- the Navajo Nation and the

Pueblos-- disproportionately lack internet connectivity and have been hit extremely hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. And therefore, are most likely unable to join.

Considering these circumstances, these virtual meetings should not be happening. On March 27th, the Wilderness Society and several other conservation organizations sent a letter to Secretary Bernhardt requesting an extension to the comment period due to the pandemic. We have yet to receive a response. In fact, nobody that I know of that has formally requested that the comment period be extended has received a response. Not the All Pueblo Council of Governors, not the numerous individual Pueblos who've sent letters, not the State of New Mexico's Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, not even our entire New Mexico Congressional delegation who sent their letter to Secretary Bernhardt on March 20th. That's nearly two months ago with no response. This is not acceptable.

Since the first virtual meeting last Thursday, I have heard reports of people unable to provide public comment. There have been dropped calls due to poor cell phone service. There have been numerous technical difficulties, including difficulties in un-muting commenters. Several people that I know were unable to get on to the meeting despite pre-registering because there were issues with log-in credentials. And we've already seen today, problems with people being unable to un-mute themselves.

THERESA ANCELL: 20 seconds.

MICHAEL CASAUS: The only way to ensure public engagement and a genuine process is to extend, or suspend, the public comment period until it is once again safe for in-person meetings and the federal, state, and local authorities lift restrictions around public gatherings and social distancing to allow for in-person meetings. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you for your comment, Michael. We appreciate your feedback. After Michael, we have Shaina Oliver. Shane Oliver, then Pamela Gilchrist and Hannah Millsap. OK, it looks like we have a person on the phone with their hand raised.

SHAINA OLIVER: Hi, I'm Shaina Oliver.

THERESA ANCELL: Hi, Shaina. Perfect, thank you. We can hear you. If you could please state your name and spell it for the audience, and then you can start your comment.

SHAINA OLIVER: S-H-A-I-N-A, Shaina. And then Oliver, O-L-I-V-E-R. Good morning. My name is Shaina Oliver, I am a tribal affiliate of the Navajo Nation. I'm a mother of four children. I am a descendant of the genocide, known as the Long Walk of the Navajo. And the BIA and the BLM have always stated they are helping the tribal nations, but never educate the tribes of the truth of environmental impacts on water infrastructure, quality of air, and the degradation of soil.

So are these industries ever able to restore the damage contributed by coal, uranium, oil and gas? This industry and these agencies need to ensure the repayment of damages on tribal lands, and invest in restoring our groundwater, soil, and air quality.

My family's history of displacement has not just started, but has started back in 1598 after the foundation of the colony of New Mexico. A year after Don Juan de Onate attacked the Acoma Pueblo people, killing over 800 men, women, and children, forcing Acoma people to flee north.

Then in 1864, our ancestors were forced at gunpoint by American soldiers to leave their lands between the four sacred mountains and walk to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Many died, and indigenous people have a long history of injustices that still persist today. Navajo reservations have long been targeted by polluting industries for extraction of coal, oil, uranium, and natural gas, now.

This environmental injustice, coupled with weak air pollution protections, violates the Navajo community's right to clean air, water, and land. Indigenous people have some of the highest rates in asthma, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, leukemia, mental illness, adverse birth outcomes, and premature deaths than the general population. I was born on the Navajo reservation prematurely, low birth weight, and with a birth defect. And I've been diagnosed with asthma since infancy.

Scientists have known for decades that air pollution is harmful to the respiratory system and reduces our body's ability to fight infection. Even though recent studies by Harvard University found that exposure to air pollution is associated with increased risk of death from COVID-19, we are seeing the inequity playing out with the coronavirus in our state, in our community's--

THERESA ANCELL: 10 seconds.

SHAINA OLIVER: --people of color. So I am demanding that, as a tribal member of the Navajo Nation, that you extend the comment period and actually serve to protect the land and communities, and not earth-destroying industries. And the fact that our children deserve better than that you are providing. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you very much. We appreciate your comment. After Shaina, we have Pamela. Pamela Gilchrist, Hannah Millsap, and Brandon Velivis Pamela? Maybe on the phone. Let's see here, just a moment. OK. Our phone caller with the last-- oh, I think that was the lady we just heard from. I'm sorry. OK. Do we have Pamela? Pamela Gilchrist and Hannah Millsap? There's Pamela. Pamela, you should now have the ability to click on your Zoom app and it should let you un-mute your microphone.

ART: Yeah. Pamela, I saw it un-mute briefly. So if I don't know if you're on a phone, or a tablet, or if you're on a computer, but there should be a microphone icon that you can find, and then just press it once. And then that should un-mute you. We see that you have a microphone right now, we just need to find out-- we just need to have you un-mute that for us. And if you touch your device, you should see it appear where you could then un-mute it.

And it looks like maybe we lost Pamela. Oh no, she's right there. So Pamela, we'll try to allow you to talk one more time here. And let's see. She's down on the list. No, I don't I we have her on anymore, Theresa, so we might need to move on, OK.

THERESA ANCELL: Thanks, Art. She did submit her comment in the Q&A, just now.

ART: OK. Understood.

THERESA ANCELL: Perfect. Thank you so much. Next on board, we have Hannah Millsap, Brandon Velivis, and Felina Romero. Hannah, if you're on the phone you can hit the star 9. Oh, we have Hannah. Hannah, welcome.

HANNAH MILISAP: Thank you. My name's Hannah Millsap, that's H-A-N-N-A-H, M-I-L-L-S-A-P. And I'm here as a concerned citizen of the Four Corners region commenting under protest. First off, I'd like to thank the moderators and those at the BLM and BIA who are still working hard to do something to include the public in the process. I know there are a lot of good people with good hearts in both agencies that genuinely try to do right by the people who own land.

That being said, I do find it appalling that this project is being put forward in the midst of a global pandemic. I understand very well that in government work, things have to go through a lot of channels and change is slow to happen. But given the circumstances, it is disturbing to continue pushing this project forward while the communities that will be affected most are literally fighting for their lives. It is vile to put tribal leaders in a situation where they must choose between fighting for their sacred spaces and fighting for the survival of their people, especially when it is well-known that they are one of the hardest hit communities in the nation.

Our country has a very poor, and bloody track record of interacting with its native people. Even just by allowing this process to continue virtually is a travesty. As many people have mentioned in previous meetings, a lot of our tribal neighbors have disproportionate access to the technology needed to continue their participation in this process. If you truly value our voices, you must listen to us now. Please put this on pause and extend the public comment period until after the pandemic subsides. Otherwise, you are affirming the suspicion that you have already made up your minds, and this appeal to the public is nothing but a farce designed to make us feel like we have a say in how our public land is used when we do not.

Beyond that, why are we so eager to see more countless pump jacks invade our beautiful homes? Are we really ready to embrace a future where we have to equip ourselves with H2S monitors to be able to go outside and enjoy our public lands without fear of actual death? If new wells are drilled within a mile of Chaco Park, this will be a serious threat to public health, as wells are known to release the extremely toxic hydrogen sulfide gas.

Are you prepared to be responsible for the poisoning of the precious water supply that give life to the great Navajo Nation and allows them to continue to occupy their ancestral homeland? Because I'm not. The people of this country are remembering that our voices carry power and when joined together. I implore BLM leadership and project managers to think long and hard about what side of history you want to be on, and use the power that you have been given for the good of the people you represent. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you for your comment, Hannah. We appreciate your feedback. After Hannah, we have Brandon. Brandon Velivis, if you can raise your hand on your device. Hi, Brandon. You should be able to speak now.

BRANDON VELIVIS: Good morning, Theresa. Hi.

THERESA ANCELL: Good morning.

BRANDON VELIVIS: My name is Brandon Velivis-- B-R-A-N-D-O-N, V as in Victor, E as in echo, L-I-V as in Victor, I, S as in Sam. And I am the Community and Economic Development Advisor for Ojo Encino Chapter. These comments are on behalf of Ojo Encino Chapter. My other title as of probably the end of March, early April, is the Section's Planning Chief for the Ojo Encino Chapter's Incident Command System.

As some of the federal employees know who have had to go through your FEMA training, when an emergency hits you have-- generally speaking, an instant command system is established. As of March 13th, both the United States Government and the Navajo Nation Government declared emergencies due to the pandemic. The state of New Mexico, I believe, actually issued one March 11th. So the comments that are being made here are going to revolve more around the process and its legitimacy, as opposed to substantive comments regarding directly the RMPA.

During these situations, leadership and character are incredibly important. And I have to ask the head leadership who spoke in the beginning here if they actually believe that this process is a good process to be continuing forward. I'm asking this personally, but also Ojo Encino Chapter is asking this as an entity as well, too-- both the BLM and the BIA. We have a hard time understanding the logic, especially from the BIA's perspective, on how this process can continue.

From the BIA's opening salvo from Mr. Stevens, believing in the health and safety of the public is paramount. However, currently, at this very moment, you are diverting necessary resources that should be allocated towards this pandemic towards this process which has been delayed for years and years, and now all of a sudden has to be urgently concluded. Not quite sure if the logic is holding through.

I believe that Mr. Stevens does believe in the health and safety of the public, and of the tribal communities, and in certain, the Navajo Nation itself. However, that is not logically following through to policy actions that the BIA seems to be taking along with the BLM. So the question is, how is the BIA, at this moment--

THERESA ANCELL: 30 seconds.

BRANDON VELIVIS: [INAUDIBLE] out for the tribe. I'm sorry, as Ojo Encino Chapter, and we've now diverted resources, I'm going to take a couple extra minutes here because I am representing the interests of the Chapter itself, and of the broader community.

We had a moment of silence, now the question is, can we have a moment of pause? We need time to be able to adapt to what is going on. Counselor Chapter neighbors are being hit incredibly hard. This exploitative pattern has to change when it comes down to it.

THERESA ANCELL: Brandon? I'm sorry to interrupt you, Brandon. We will be able to come back to you, sir. We have directions that we have to limit it at 3 minutes. We're extending the

government extension of the time, but we only have a few more commentators so you will be able to come back and provide as many comments as you'd like. Thanks Brandon.

OK. Next up, we have Felina Romero, Stephen Platt, and Loreen Rafael. Felina? Here we are, Felina.

FELINA ROMERO: It's Felina Romero, F-E-L-I-N-A, R-O-M-E-R-O. So I had recently seen a video of a farmer who lives in Pennsylvania, and he said that 10 of his cattle have died because of the poisoned water. People in the state had actually turned on their faucet, and their-- I literally seen their water turn on fire. And we do not need to have this type of impact in New Mexico. That's very devastating and very scary to see water literally being lit on fire.

I want to also bring up what this guy had said. When you put pressure along with the lubrication inside, under the ground, that provides disruption under the surface. So when you put the pressure, it literally-- [REVERBERATION] oh, sorry. My computer went off. When you put the pressure, it literally messes up the form below the surface.

And along with that, you guys also place lubrication, so you basically pollute just so it could basically sink. So that's-- well, not sink, but it's how the sinkholes and the earthquakes continue to happen, because you guys disrupt the underground surface. We need to leave the surface alone, and it should not be touched or messed with.

And this is a form of genocide itself. Like I've been saying, back in the day when Hitler had placed the Jews in the gas chambers, he was doing that to annihilate the race, a form of genocide itself. And you guys are placing these oil gas chambers in front of these people's homes, which is providing genocide itself.

Like my sister had said earlier, she was born with a birth defect and premature weight loss. This could have been her. She could have been a miscarriage because of what you've done in the past and what you guys want to do now. It is a form of genocide itself, and you guys need to stop poisoning people and transition this dependency on this fossil fuel. You guys are stealing this off to another country just so they can put it in their cars, despite what's happening to the people.

It's time to put people's lives over the profit of these industries.

THERESA ANCELL: 30 seconds.

FELINA ROMERO: How we all wake up. Because it is time for us all to wake up. We don't want to take this waste any more, as you've been hearing. You guys are literally creating a new form of genocide itself. Have you heard the reactions? Have you seen what happens to people who are born in poisonous water? I mean, who were held in poisonous water inside their wombs? They're affected.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Felina.

FELINA ROMERO: Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: We appreciate your feedback, Felina. Up next, we have Stephen Platt. After Stephen, we'll have Loreen Rafael, John Blue Eyes, and Jeremy Nichols. OK. Stephen, if you're available you can hit star 9 to join, or to raise your hand on the phone. There's Stephen. Good morning, Stephen. You may have to un-mute it on your side.

STEPHEN PLATT: OK. How's that? Yes sir we can hear you now. Thank you.

STEPHEN PLATT: Can you hear me now?

THERESA ANCELL: We can hear you, sir. That sounds great. If you could state your name and spell it for the audience. And then after that, your three minutes will begin. Thank you.

STEPHEN PLATT: Can you hear me now?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you.

STEPHEN PLATT: I'm not sure if I'm on.

THERESA ANCELL: Yes sir, you're on. Can you hear me Stephen?

STEPHEN PLATT: Try that. Here we go?

THERESA ANCELL: Yes, sir. I can hear you.

STEPHEN PLATT: Hello?

THERESA ANCELL: Hello, Steven. You should be able to--

STEPHEN PLATT: OK, hi. I'm a Midwesterner, I live in St. Louis area. What I want to say has to do with, probably, the more important, which is protecting national treasure. I'd like to offer the idea that if we were about to be drilling in around the Washington Monument would crumble, Mt. Rushmore could crumble. None of that would be considered OK.

I've been to Chaco twice. I've sat in Pueblo Ganado, I've hiked above the canyon wall. And this is a very special place and can never, ever be reconstructed or replaced. We could rebuild Washington monument, or even Mount Rushmore, but you can not replace, ever, what is an Chaco Canyon. This is a very important and sacred place to the Nations, to our Indian Nations that were here, and developed this land, and were the forerunners of what was to become America.

I am a business man, retired. The products I helped produce have sold billions of dollars, so I do understand the implication of business, of the need for energy. But I would like to offer, when we start running out-- truly running out of energy-- then we should think about-- and if we are desperate, we'd think about areas that we have protected for all these years. But I don't foresee that as coming for centuries.

So I would like to simply offer my heartfelt condolences to the Pueblo Nations who have withstood the onslaught of commercial needs. They have every same right as every other American, as I do sitting here in St. Louis, and we need to honor that. We need to support that. There is plenty of oil and gas to be found, and minerals, besides in that Four Corners area and the Chaco Canyon area.

THERESA ANCELL: 30 seconds.

STEPHEN PLATT: For those of you that would like to see a symphony with videos dedicated to Chaco, to understand and learn more about it's important and sacred, you can go to YouTube and look at Symphony Chaco, a Journey of the Spirit, by Gary Gackstatter. Symphony Chaco, a Journey of the Spirit, and you will be really blessed. Let's do this the right way. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Stephen. Appreciate your comments. OK. At this time, I would like to announce that Al Elser from the BLM has asked that we go ahead and extend Brandon the microphone again so that Brandon can continue his conversation, or his comment, without interruption. Thank you for your patience with this as we navigate these difficult times. I apologize, and we would like to have-- Brandon, you should be able to have the microphone, please.

BRANDON VELIVIS: Hey Theresa. The--

THERESA ANCELL: Brandon, we can hear.

BRANDON VELIVIS: I guess I'll try to-- you can hear me? OK.

THERESA ANCELL: Yes, sir. We can hear you. I'm sorry. Yeah. You should be to state your name and spell it again, and then begin your comment. And we'll pause the timer there, for you. OK, Brandon?

BRANDON VELIVIS: Sounds good. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you.

BRANDON VELIVIS: My name is Brandon Velivis, B-R-A-N-D-O-N, V as in Victor, E as in echo, L-I-V as in Victor, I, S as in Sam. And the Ojo Encino Chapter's Community and Economic Development Advisor. Also their Planning Sections Chief for their Incident Command System, at the moment as well, too, due to the SARS COV-2 pandemic.

So as I was saying to you before, Counselor community is being hit incredibly hard right now, with the pandemic, along with the rest of the Navajo Nation. I know that that's diverting resources at the Navajo Nation level. Because it's certainly diverting resources at our local, regional level at the Ojo and Tri-Chapter level as well, too, as we're trying to take this pandemic very seriously because it is hitting our communities at a disproportionate rate. Also would like to remind everyone that the changes in development patterns for which this plan was derived also has hit the Counselor community incredibly hard as well, too.

So the question is, why do we have to choose where we allocate our limited resources? Why are we creating this triage situation in which we have to allocate resources towards this plan while we need to be allocating those precious, limited resources towards the pandemic? A deadline extension is simple. It's easy. All it takes is one leader to stand up, to have backbone and character, and state that this is incorrect and that we need to do the right thing.

I believe that the leadership on this line know what the right thing is. The question is, is how can they do it, and what do they need? What help do they require in order to be able to execute the correct decision in this situation? Particularly with the BIA. The BIA, especially the Navajo region, is completely and totally aware of how horrendous this pandemic is hitting our communities out here. And it is beyond me why the BIA would continue to participate in this process, even if they disagree.

Participation at this point, I always worry, means that we're condoning these activities. After conversations with the Chapter president, Chapter leadership, and others, Ojo Encino decided to make comments on this final day in order to just, at least, formally log our protest to this process continuing under the current conditions.

It's a simple decision-- deadline extension. It's easy. Nature doesn't decide that, we do. Nature decides a lot of the other things that are going on, that are outside our control. This one is easily within the purview and control of humans. All you have to do is just make that deadline extension.

I know that this is still being considered. The Chapter is aware that this is still being considered. However, the fact that you are delaying to extend this deadline means that now, precious resources are being directed towards this process. Whereas before, you could have just easily extended the deadline when a national emergency to deal with a global emergency was declared by-- technically, who's your boss? The President of the United States.

To log just a few other elements, we don't believe that Alternative C is balanced for the community needs of the Tri-Chapter region. Additionally, previously passed resolutions by most of the Eastern Agency Chapters, and the Eastern Navajo Agency Council requested a specific planning area for the Eastern Agency BLM lands. This was completely discarded by the BIA and the BLM. And to us, this just indicates that this planning process never really was interested in adapting fundamental planning initiatives and alternatives that would address the exploitative issues which occur within Eastern Agency due to the checkerboard nature of the area.

For right now, I'll go ahead and read some excerpts from a resolution that was passed by Ojo Encino Chapter. Currently, Chapter meetings are being conducted by the leadership, and the public is not able to attend the meetings due to the pandemic. However, since we were under the understanding that you guys are still continuing forward with these meetings, we thought that it would be important for us to formally put a resolution of protest forward regarding this process that is ongoing.

Resolution OJOE05-12-20/003. I'll read a couple excerpts from the whereas clauses. Number 9, per 40 CFR subsection 1503.2, Ojo Encino Chapter, as a cooperating agency, is not satisfied that its views have been adequately reflected in the draft RMPA for either the BIA or BLM.

And 10, the BLM has refused the option of non-leasing of tribal trust surface federal mineral underlying lands or a less restrictive suggestion of no surface occupancy, because it has commenced in the wholesale leasing of such estates within the Navajo Eastern Agency with the BIA's consent, starting since January 2017 lease sale, which flagrantly violates 40 CFR subsection 1506.1 and 40 CFR subsection 1502.2 F, thus reducing potential alternatives.

And number 11, the BLM has refused to entertain alternatives that incorporate the Eastern Agency as a planning area within their RMPA, which has special planning needs to its unique planning environment.

Therefore-- now I'll read the therefore section. Number 1, the Chapter insists that the BLM BIA must delay the deadline for comments for the RMPA and accompanying programmatic agreement so that cooperators and the public can sufficiently being involved in the planning processes. And 2, this delay must be sufficient to allow for the pandemic to pass, and to allow for appropriate and reasonable resource allocation by the Chapter and Navajo Nation government.

And number 3, the Chapter is disappointed in the leadership of the BLM and BIA for allowing such planning activities to continue while such an unprecedented global-scale emergency is ongoing. And 4, the Chapter is further saddened and disappointed in the callousness of the federal government's decision to continue such planning efforts with no delay while the Navajo people are being infected and dying at some of the highest rates with SARS COV-2 anywhere seen on the planet.

And 5, the Chapter believes that this is part of a pattern of abusive behavior by the federal government in regards to its resource exploitation of the Eastern Agency area. And the pandemic emergency further illustrates the illegitimacy and inappropriateness of the BLM's public planning processes for this area of the United States. And 6, lastly, the Chapter believes that the BIA has capitulated to demands by the BLM and Secretary of Interior, although the BIA leadership knows and understands that it is not acting in good faith, in the interest of the Navajo people.

I just want to say this has to be a very hard time for folks that are working in the federal government, and I feel for you. Decisions are being made that I know are putting people into having to do things that they know is wrong. I just want to say, I hope for the best for everybody, and I hope that you can do the things that you know are morally and ethically correct, in spite of being given directives which are opposite to that.

There are people that need your help. These people live in these areas that will be affected by this planning. They have been affected already by these changing patterns of development. Those changing patterns of development were intense. Things have slowed down a bit now, up in Counselor. We don't hear the deep whining sounds of the pump jacks going all night long.

That is more of an economic reason, why that's changed. However, we know that things go down and things come back up.

We've still suffered the consequences of improper planning for those changing development patterns. And that proper planning is going to be needed in the future to help mitigate even more impacts to the communities that live out in these areas, and to other communities as well, outside the Eastern Agency.

Thank you all. I have a good deal of respect for you all and I know you're trying your best. But right now is a time for real leadership and real character. And these are the times that bring that out in us, and I hope that those are brought out in a good way. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you so very much for all of your feedback and your comment, Brandon. We really appreciate it. We will go on with our comment list. Right now, we have three more signed up. After we've finished with our participants that previously registered to give a comment, we will open the floor again for those that weren't able to register to sign up for that comment, but we will open the floor.

Right now, we have three individuals left-- Loreen Rafael, John Blue Eyes, and Jeremy Nichols. OK. Loreen, you should be able to un-mute yourself.

LOREEN RAFAEL: Hello?

THERESA ANCELL: There you are Loreen. We can hear you.

LOREEN RAFAEL: Could you hear? OK, thank you. This is just in regards to what everybody's commenting about. I live in the Lybrook area, we call it Twin Pine. And we own interest out in the Chaco area and the land parcels out there. And I'm just speaking on behalf of some of my family, and some of my neighbors that do own land down there. And we have every right to do what we will with our property.

We've established patents on our properties, so I believe that the outside entities that come in, that give their opinion on how the BLM should continue-- should not continue with the progression of oil and gas-- is going to hurt a lot of us that depend on that as revenue. Back in January of 2020, the Navajo Nation 24th Council agreed to this as well. Legislation resolution number NABIJA-05-20, legislation number 0366-19, and it states here, "complete."

Plain and simple, they oppose HR2181 and S1079. So I don't see how anybody could even say that they care about indigenous people, Native Americans, if they are trying to take out the rights for those people that do own land there.

So the history of Chaco for Navajos, we hear it from our elders. We don't hear it from the books, textbooks. And this is what-- I'm going to read this real fast. The most prominent story about Chaco Canyon is about the gambler. In Navajo oral history, enslaved Chacoan people and forced them to build the structure that's at Chaco Canyon. The gambler may be a person or a group of people.

THERESA ANCELL: Seconds.

LOREEN RAFAEL: In any case, [INAUDIBLE]. The challenger at defeat, the story of the challenger goes far west as Rainbow Bridge, north of Navajo Mountain. The teaching about gambler played an important role in the public discussion of the Navajo Nation's venture into casinos more than 20 years ago.

So with that history, we know that the Chaco area was built, basically, by a trader. It wasn't built by the Pueblos and the Chacoan people. So I really hope you guys do your studies.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Loreen. Thank you, Loreen. We appreciate your comments. Next on board, we have a gentleman that just joined us from the Zuni Pueblo, and we'd like to extend the courtesy of allowing him to go. So, on the phone, we have Arden Karcute-- sorry, Arden, about your last name, there. Arden, if you're available on the phone, can you please press star 9, and that will allow us to see you on the phone, there. If you've joined, in the meantime, online-- there we are. Maybe this is Arden.

ARDEN KARCUTE: OK. Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: We can hear you, sir.

ARDEN KARCUTE: Thank you. Thank you, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. Hello, my name is Arden Kucate, A-R-D-E-N. Last name is spelled K-U-C-A-T-E. I serve as the Tribal Councilman for the Pueblo of Zuni. I have been authorized by Governor Val R. Panteah to make these comments on behalf of the Pueblo of Zuni.

The leadership of the Pueblo of Zuni is not able to attend this, or any of these virtual public meetings, because currently, we must remain laser-focused on addressing the urgent health and safety needs of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, the Pueblo of Zuni has significant interest in the RMPA due to potential impacts to the sacred landscape of the greater Chaco region, which contains many of our cultural resources, including traditional cultural properties. The Pueblo of Zuni, in addition to other Pueblos, maintain a significant and ongoing connection to the greater Chaco region. It is a vital part of our present identity, which we interact through song prayer and pilgrimage.

Now more than ever, connections to our public identities are a source of strength in difficult times. We must ensure that these connections will not be irreparably severed, but remain intact for future generations that will surely follow this crisis. Because of our deep connection and responsibility to this sacred landscape and future generations, we and other Pueblos have thus far been deeply engaged in the RMPA.

The All Pueblo Council Governors, individual Pueblos, and the Pueblo of Zuni, including the entirety of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation, state agencies, impacted communities, conservation organizations, and many others, have submitted requests for a pause in the RMPA,

including processes related to the draft RMPA and the EIS in section 106. We have not responded-- we have not received any kind of response from those requests.

The situation on the ground has only grown more dire since our first request. At present, San Juan County and McKinley County have the highest rates of COVID-19 in the state of New Mexico, and in the country. The Pueblos and the Navajo Nation have also significant COVID-19 cases in our communities, threatening the very lives of our people, and including our elders.

Our elders often play a critical role in advising our tribal governments on cultural resource issues, a significant area of evaluation under the draft RMPA and EIS. For this reason, we, and other stakeholders living in these affected communities are in no position to focus our attention on the RMPA. You are required by multiple federal statutes, your tribal consultation duties, and the trust obligation, to pause this RMPA so that we can meaningfully participate in commenting on it.

And although I am participating in today's virtual public meeting, I want to make clear that our Pueblo has not had the resources necessary, and meaningfully, to comment on the draft RMPA and EIS. A critical document such as the draft RMPA and EIS requires extensive review, internal convening and dialogue, and technical expertise in drafting comments. It is not possible to meaningfully convene and internally develop comments at this time, due to our capacity focused on the critical and life-threatening response measures.

We are opposed to the decision by the BLM and BIA to host these virtual public meetings on the draft RMPA and EIS, and we reiterate our request for a pause, including an extension of the May 20th deadline to provide comments on the draft RMPA and EIS.

In addition, the All Pueblo Council Governor Chairman Chavarria in a meeting with key officials from the BLM, BIA, and Assistant Secretary Indian Affairs Office in February, in Washington DC, requested government-to-government tribal consultation on the draft RMPA and the EIS. We reiterate this request, formally requesting on behalf of our Pueblo in person, full and meaningful tribal consultation on the draft RMPA and the EIS at a time when tribal, state, and federal public health directives indicate it is safe to meet in person.

Public meetings are no substitute for a government-to-government tribal consultation. And the Pueblos intend to comment on this important draft of the RMPA and EIS to ensure the final RMPA contains the cultural resource protections necessary to protect the irreplaceable sacred landscape of the Greater Chaco region. Your unwillingness to pass the RMPA, including by extending the comment deadline, is putting us in a position right now that is limiting our ability to do so.

So in closing, it's simply unconscionable to continue with the current schedule for the RMPA. And on behalf of the Zuni Pueblo, that we urge you to immediately halt the current schedule, and work with the tribes and other stakeholders on developing a feasible timetable. And we thank you for your time. Thank you very much.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you very much for your comment, sir. We really appreciate it. Up next, we have a couple more registered folks. And then we do have Mr. Richard Begay on the line. So Richard is a representative from the Navajo Nation, and we'd like to extend him the opportunity right now to provide some information, and some comments. Richard, you should be able to use your audio now.

ROBERT BEGAY: Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you, Richard.

ROBERT BEGAY: Good morning. This letter was sent to Rick Fields, the field manager of the Farmington Field Office this morning-- or I guess it was on May 15th-- by Navajo Nation President Nez. It's just a very short letter and I'll read it verbatim.

"Dear Mr. Fields. We understand that the US Bureau of Land Management is moving forward to finalize the resources management plan, RMPA, of the Eastern Navajo Agency by holding virtual hearings. Although Bureau of Indian Affairs advised BLM to consider Navajo input to the greatest extent possible, in light of the fact-- a fact of our concern, Navajo people do not have the means to provide virtual input. BLM is just moving forward without regard for this consideration.

We are greatly affected by this pandemic, and public health emergency orders have been issued by the Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico to protect our citizens. In consideration of these protections, virtual hearings may limit input by the Navajo people concerned about the RMPA, and there must be other options to gather input from the Navajo people.

BLM knows that there is a very limited telecommunication connectivity for communities in the RMPA areas, yet BLM is continuing with these virtual meetings. We object to BLM going forward with the ill-prepared and unworkable virtual hearings at this time, during a pandemic. We respectfully request BLM to halt the virtual hearings so that we may discuss alternatives to accommodate input of the Navajo people and others.

Thank you. And should you have any questions, please reach out to Mr. Milton Bluehouse Junior, Deputy Chief of Staff at MBluehouse@Navajo-NSM.gov with the office of the president and vice president. Sincerely," and it is signed by Jonathan Nez. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you very much, Richard. We appreciate your comment, and the comment of President Nez. Next in line, we have John Blue Eyes, Jeremy Nichols, and then Loreen Rafael had a request for Dolores House to use her platform to give a comment. So John Blue Eyes, if you're available you can raise your hand using the "participants" tab and the "raise hand" icon, or you can hit star 9 on your phone.

John had indicated that he was going to send in a written comment, so maybe we'll move on to Jeremy Nichols. I don't see John's hand. Jeremy? There we are, Jeremy.

JEREMY NICHOLS: Hi there. Good morning. Am I coming in OK?

THERESA ANCELL: Hi, Jeremy.

JEREMY NICHOLS: Hi there. So I appreciate the opportunity to comment again. My name is Jeremy Nichols, again, Climate and Energy Programming director for Wild Earth Guardians. I spell my name J-E-R-E-M-Y, N-I-C-H-O-L-S. And I've participated at a few of these hearings that have been held over the past few days, and I just want to reiterate how disappointed that we are in the Bureau of Land Management for not listening to people-- not listening to people in the slightest, it seems like.

The messages is delivered to the agency over the last-- well, throughout this virtual public meeting process. I mean, they've been resoundingly critical, and have definitely delivered a very powerful message that the Bureau of Land Management is really off-course when it comes to providing an opportunity for meaningful public involvement, and way off-course in terms of meeting its obligation to tribal communities that are impacted by this resource management plan amendment.

It's astonishing that the Bureau of Land Management is pressing ahead, still playing out this meeting and not providing any kind of signal, any kind of response regarding the numerous requests for extending the public comment period and for suspending this process while tribal communities are struggling to deal with the COVID-19 health crisis.

It's been very discouraging too, just the lack of interaction. This is so far away from what a public meeting would be like. It's laughable for the BLM to call this a public forum. I'm talking to my computer screen right now. I can't see anybody else who's involved here. I don't know who else is involved. I can't see any BLM official, they refuse to show their faces. They won't interact with the public. I mean, this is a joke.

And for the Bureau of Land Management to say, as they did in a recent news story, that these are successful-- that is outrageous. These are not successful. If anything, they're just underscoring that the Bureau of Land Management is completely out to lunch, and completely-- acting completely contrary to the public interest. The agency should be ashamed.

And I've got to say Al and Tim, you guys should be incredibly ashamed and embarrassed about how this process is unfolding. And I'm sorry to be harsh like that, but you guys-- you guys are professionals. You guys are supposed to be doing this for a living, serving the public and stewarding public resources, and this is what you're doing now? This is beyond outrageous.

And I hope that you guys might be able to exert some leadership in this process and turn things around, because this is off the rails at this point. This is a complete-- a complete train wreck. So Tim, Al, and other officials who the BLM says-- the people say that you guys are listening, you guys are paying attention--

THERESA ANCELL: 20 seconds.

JEREMY NICHOLS: --we have no confirmation of that. You refuse to show your faces. You refuse to respond to any comments. I mean, for all we know there is nobody from the BLM

watching or paying attention. And you know, to the extent that the consultants say otherwise, that's bullshit. Bullshit. This is a bullshit meeting, a bullshit process. You guys, you've got to get this fixed.

THERESA ANCELL: Thanks for your comment, Jeremy. [COUGH] Pardon me. Up next, we have Dolora Hesuse. Lorena Rafael had sent a chat that Dolora would like to speak. Lorena, if you're on the phone still and you have Dolores with you, you can raise your hand by hitting star 9 on the phone, or you can also--

DOLORA HESUSE: Hello, can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: There you are. We can hear you now, ma'am.

DOLORA HESUSE: All right, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Delora Hesuse-- D-E-L-O-R-A, H-E-S-U-S-E. First of all, I would like to let you all know that [AUDIO OUT] you have land within the Chaco Canyon buffer zone. I own land near Lybrook, New Mexico, as well. We Allottees family relatives in our area have never been consulted with these laws that were being in place. They never came and talked to us. We never met with any of the leaderships. It just seemed to have taken place without us, the Allottees that live in the area.

We have all these people saying that they had taken our voices in consideration, but not have [INAUDIBLE]. When the people met over in Chaco Canyon-- the legislation people, the leadership, the democratic leaders-- they totally ignored Allottees and [AUDIO OUT] really sad to [AUDIO OUT] miles to Sante Fe when [INAUDIBLE] in Santa Fe, again. Once again, we were ignored.

[AUDIO OUT] where I was worried about resources for Allottees within the area. We've been totally ignored. They say that these people meet with us, but they haven't. I've even asked Russell Begay, the former Navajo Nation President, at a Department of Interior Meeting in Albuquerque in [? 2018, ?] how are you going to help [AUDIO OUT] the 106. There has never been a one-on-one consultation at all.

So I'm hearing that these people, even the Pueblos, they say that they have met with the leaders of the Navajo Nation. You've got to remember, we live on the checkerboard area, and those laws don't apply. We do have [AUDIO OUT] talk to people in the area of Ojo Encino, Counselors, and Nageezi as well. The elderlies are worried about their income that we get from the resources from oil and gas.

THERESA ANCELL: 25 seconds.

DOLORA HESUSE: Has anybody come out to consider our revenue now that the oil prices have gone down? No. So we're going to act on our own, and speak for ourselves, once again. And I would like to tell you all that I have been attending these RMP meetings in Gallup and Farmington. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Delores. It's good to hear from you. We appreciate your comment.

DOLORA HESUSE: Delora. Yeah, OK.

THERESA ANCELL: That concludes our registered online participants. I do see a last-minute registration from Adele-- Adele Bernadette. Adele, if you're on the line you can hit star 9 on your phone to try to provide a verbal comment. We'll give Adele just a few seconds here. She may not be online yet.

At this time while we're waiting for Adele, I'd like to announce that we will continue to accept your verbal comments until 11:00 AM this morning. You can also submit comments, written comments or verbal comments. And Jill will be providing that information later down the line here. We'd like to continue to leave the phone line open. And if anyone that didn't sign up for a comment, if you have changed your mind or would like to comment, we are accepting commenters for the next, about 15 minutes.

So again, if you're on the phone you can hit star 9, and star 9 will allow us to see that you've raised your hand. If you're on an online version you can also comment. I do have a commenter in the queue. OK, the commenter with the phone number last four digits 3531.

REBECCA REPERT: Hello, this is Rebecca Reppert.

THERESA ANCELL: OK, Rebecca.

REBECCA REPERT: Yes. My name is--

THERESA ANCELL: You just spell your--

REBECCA REPERT: Spelled R-E-P-P-E-R-T. I enjoyed hearing all the comments. But I want to inquire if they have directed some of their remarks to their elected state officials, and also to the oil and gas companies themselves. I used to live in Farmington five years ago, and I lived 15 years on the Navajo reservation, and I have visited Chaco. I'm very concerned about these things. I now live in Pennsylvania, but I wanted to participate, to voice my support for what was said. But also that the tribal youth should be encouraged to go into public administration so they can also be the policy makers of this. And that I hope there is good, or improved feelings between the BLM and the people they must work with because you're all breathing the same air out there.

The future of our country is green. We do not need more oil wells. And I understand the concerns of the people living right in the area there. But this has been going on for a long, long time and now it's time to open the comment. I think this internet opportunity was a very good one, and I do hope you will consider extending the deadline for others.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Rebecca. You still have a minute 40 remaining if you'd like to continue, or you can end your comment there. It's up to you.

REBECCA REPPERT: Thank you. I did type in-- I wasn't sure if it would register that way. But anyway, I will say [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] to everyone, walk in beauty. And again, some of the anger and frustration I hope will be communicated to the oil and gas people themselves. They are the ones who need to hear that. Those are sacred sites around there, and also people's homesteads. And all the things that have already been said are quite valid, I think.

I hope that in the future, we will move in a more clear direction towards green energy and just not even be dependent on oil and gas anymore. So good luck to all those who live out there. And those of us who used to live there, I certainly wish you the best. It's a difficult situation, but everyone can and should be heard.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Re--

REBECCA REPPERT: This was a good format. This was a good format.

THERESA ANCELL: We appreciate your feedback, Rebecca. You do have 20 seconds, I don't mean to cut you off. But if you want to continue.

REBECCA REPPERT: Oh, thank you. I was a teacher there. So again, I encourage young people to get involved in this whole process. And that's it, so thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you. We really appreciate your feedback and input. At this time, I show Alicia [INAUDIBLE]. Alicia? There we are, Alicia. I hope I'm saying your name right. I apologize if I'm not. You should be able to state your name and spell it for us, please. Excuse us just a moment, it looks like we're working through a little bit of a technical glitch here with Alicia. Thanks to everyone for your patience. OK, Alicia. Try again.

ART: Let's-- I'm going to try one more thing real quick. So let me just see if I can help the situation here.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Art. We do have a phone number that has their hand raised as well, and so we can--

ART: So what we have going on is, Alicia is using an older version of Zoom so we're not able to activate her microphone as a result of that. So if she is the phone number that is 6228, then she can un-mute herself and talk. But we may have to ask her to call in, and when she does, to raise her hand in order to be-- so we can hear her. Because she is using an older version of Zoom that won't allow us to help her at this moment.

THERESA ANCELL: OK. Alicia, if you can hear us, hopefully you heard Art's directions there. We do have a phone number, 6228. 6228, you should have the ability to talk.

ART: And if you have that number handy, Theresa, you might want to give it to Alicia real quick and then she can try to call in.

THERESA ANCELL: Absolutely.

ART: Yeah. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Art. Alicia, if you're still on the line and you can hear me, you may need to call into phone-in option. It looks like you need to update your Zoom, it's not allowing it. So the phone number to call in, again, is 346-248-7799. And the password for that, the meeting ID, is 9-5-9-3-3-2-3-6-3-2-0. Again, 346-248-7799. And the password is 9-5-9-3-3-2-3-6-3-2-0.

While we're waiting for Alicia to log back in or call back in, we are still accepting comments. And I would welcome anyone that would like to either comment again-- if you've already commented, you're welcome to comment again-- or if you would like to comment for the first time. Again, if you are using the Zoom app on your phone, computer, or tablet, you hit the "participants" button and there's a "raise hand" icon under that button. If you're on the phone, you hit star 9 and that will also raise your hand.

We'll give everyone a couple minutes to-- oh, it looks like we do have a call-in number. Last four digits of your number are 9 588. And please go ahead and state your name and spell it for us. Thank you.

MARK LECLAIRE: Yeah. My name is Mark Leclaire, L-E-C-L-A-I-R-E.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Mark.

MARK LECLAIRE: I'm calling in from Albuquerque, New Mexico. And honestly, I'm just frustrated with this whole process. And I just want to speak for myself, for my children, for all my relatives out there. You know, I think at this point it's abundantly clear that we're all stakeholders. Every American is a stakeholder because the climate impacts from the drilling that's going on in New Mexico are global.

And it's also really clear to all of us-- we've read the mission statement. We know what you're supposed to do, and it's clear to us that it's just not true. It's just a bunch of bullshit. You guys are not acting as if you really are preserving this land for our children, for the common good of all people. It's crystal clear that you guys are only serving the interests of the oil and gas.

And it's also crystal clear to anybody with half a brain the cliff that we're about to walk right over, and there is no plan for that. We see oil prices have collapsed. We know there's going to be a massive issue with abandoned wells. We know-- we know those wells will continue to gush methane, and air pollution, butane, chemicals I cannot even pronounce into the air. And there is no plan in place to remediate that, or to protect the communities, and to protect all of us. Because methane is an extremely powerful greenhouse gas.

This whole thing is a sham. And how dare you all get on the phone and talk all polite to us, to our faces? Thank you very much. We really appreciate your comments. That's fucking bullshit. You don't give a shit about our comments. This is all just a sham. And I cannot believe that we're all just participating in it, because we're heading towards our own destruction with this.

And some of you do have a spirit. Some of you do have a heart, and I know some of you are bothered by this. And you know what? Stand up. We need you. We're praying for you. We're begging for you to stand up. You don't have to follow what comes down from Trump. You don't have to.

THERESA ANCELL: 30 seconds.

MARK LECLAIRE: You have a choice in this. You have power. You all could stand up and say, hey, there hasn't been adequate consultation. This virus is making it so no one can comment. We need to wait. And you could just be real with us. How many comments have you received stating opposition to this? How many? I know I've been involved in this for a long time, and you all have received tens of thousands of comments--

THERESA ANCELL: Time.

MARK LECLAIRE: --opposing more drilling. Tens of thousands, and you're going to sit there and say, thank you very much sir. We appreciate your comment, it's so meaningful to us. Fuck that.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Mark. At this time we're going to carry on with anybody else that would like to raise their hand and speak again. We do have a phone caller. Last digits are 8836.

ALICIA: Hi, this is Alicia. I'm calling in from New York, New York to say that this is bullshit. You are killing people. You are risking the lives of communities. Fracking is an extraordinarily harmful process to the environment and to the people around it. You are poisoning water supplies. You are causing stillbirths in indigenous communities, and you are not giving any say to the people most directed.

These meetings are fucking bullshit. So many people are unable to access them, and the people that are, aren't taken seriously. As the last caller said, you can tell us so politely, thank you for your comments, and not do fucking shit [INAUDIBLE].

THERESA ANCELL: Alicia, can I please ask that you refrain from using profanities? We do have a lot of folks on the line, and we would like to show mutual respect to our folks on the line. Thank you.

ALICIA: There's no mutual respect to the people whose communities you're destroying with fracking. You have thousands of comments coming in telling you not to desecrate sacred sites, not to ruin communities. You're fucking killing people. You are destroying people's lives. There is no accountability. You are cowards, you are colonizers, and you're killing people.

THERESA ANCELL: Alicia, you do have a minute 45 seconds remaining. Oh, she hung up. Felina Romero-- Felina, you're next in line. And then after Felina we have Mabel and Wayne Senger. Hey, Felina.

CHILD: Hold on, Mom.

FELINA ROMERO: It's Felina Romero, F-E-L-I-N-A, R-O-M-E-R-O. Unfortunately, right now I'm supposed to be attending and finishing up my last courses so I could graduate. But I have to attend these meetings so I have to fight for our land, for our water, and for the people of New Mexico.

I find it very, very disturbing that you held these meetings at 9 AM in the morning. Two of these meetings actually were held from 2:00 to 4:00 PM-- that was on the first day. Only one of the days you provided two frames for you to leave comment, from 9 AM to 11:00, and 2 PM to 4 PM. That was what I meant by the comment. It is very-- it is a literal way to silence people by placing it at 9:00 in the morning.

The other day I was not even able to comprehend and actually speak because it's so damaging and devastating to know that, at any moment, my water could literally be poisoned. Like I said before, I seen water being poured out of the faucet and people literally lit it on fire. The other day I made a comment about how my friend Penny lives 100 feet from a fracking rig in Hobbs, New Mexico, and her dog had drank the water-- the water, the rain water that came down, and it was filled with toxic chemicals. Her dad died, unfortunately, a few days after this water. He was seizing, and he was having some very bad timing, and shitting all over the place because his body was not able to handle these chemicals.

And this is what you're going to do to the people. You have to understand the whole cycle of the water. The methane is literally melting the Arctic ice. And since the Arctic ice is melting, more methane is being produced. And the methane is literally thinning our ozone layer that protects us from the sun radiation, so now you're going to cause more skin cancer to happen, along with lung cancer and respiratory issues.

This whole industry is literally set up to make the whole cycle of life fail. You know, the circle of life you learned about the Lion King, where everything is connected? Everything is connected. And what I learned in school, energy can never be destroyed-- it's only transformed or transferred. So you transfer these chemicals into the animals, the plants, and the people, and into the clouds--

THERESA ANCELL: 30 seconds.

FELINA ROMERO: --which come down and bring it down. And I don't appreciate you saying 30 seconds, because we can obviously see the time. And that's just a way to throw everybody off, and I don't like that either. And we need to hold more of these meetings at different time frames so people could come to these meetings.

It's very important for you to realize that this is a form of genocide itself. Placing gas chambers in people's homes is a way that Hitler organized. Do you want to be represented in a book that has Hitler himself?

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Felina. We do appreciate your comments. Next on board, we have Mabel and Wayne Senger. Mabel and Wayne, if you'd like to give a comment now.

MABEL SENGER: Hi, yes. Mabel Senger from Salina, Kansas. And I wanted to ask a question about the damage from the oil, whatever you guys are talking about, to the land, and where and when? Like I just don't understand. It's there-- I mean.

WAYNE SENGER: You own land in the area.

MABEL SENGER: I own the land there, and I get provided from it.

WAYNE SENGER: And this is Wayne, also here with my wife Mabel, who has relatives, family there. And the family experience, there in the Lybrook area with the oil companies is that they're more careful now than ever protecting environmental and historical resources, and have actually refused to drill in certain places where environmental or a historical resource was there and identified, and had to move someplace else. But, and no evidence of water pollution in that area.

We live in Kansas now, where there is also oil drilling. Fracking has not been documented to produce water pollution here in Kansas, so that's not a concern that we're aware of. In the meantime, the family has benefited from the development of these resources. And the radius around Chaco would tend to support the five mile versus the 10 mile radius. And also, on the options, would actually support option D, which is being able to open up resources for the local people so they can benefit from that financial, understanding that the green, renewable energy also needs to be developed. Our need for petroleum's going to last a good long time yet, but in the process, look at other options. That's not a problem.

But in the meantime, blocking oil drilling and that is blocking resource development for the families who have, in the past, lived basically, in poverty, but now can pull themselves out of that. What else? Also, still noting a very minimal amount of number of people from the area able to respond. Therefore, also extending this and setting up an environment where people can respond locally, either through a group internet thing, which is not desirable, or through actual face-to-face meetings. So we would advocate for that as well.

But the family there has worked closely with oil companies to make sure that environmental and new technologies have decreased the footprint out there in the family's experience. And other family members online can respond regarding that as well, if they want. Anything else Mabel?

MABEL SENGER: That's all.

WAYNE SENGER: That's it for now. Thank you.

MABEL SENGER: Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Mabel and Wayne. We really appreciate your comments and your feedback. At this time, I would like to thank you all-- I would, from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you for participating and having patience with this process. I know that it must be frustrating, but we appreciate you. And we appreciate your comments and all of your feedback.

At this time, I'm going to switch back over to Jill, and Jill's going to give some closing remarks with additional information on how you can still submit comments. So you can submit them, she will give you those. So if you need, grab a pencil and some paper, and she will provide those. Jill?

JILL ARAGON: Hi, everyone. [AUDIO OUT] Jillian Aragon, and I work for the Bureau of Land Management. And on behalf of the 50-plus BLM and BIA ID team members and management team that are here with us today, we want to thank you for your time and comments.

So BLM and BIA value your input, and we'll continue to accept your comments on the draft EIS through May 28th. Any comments received or postmarked after the May 28th date may not be considered. Please note that the May 28th date is a deadline for public comments. However, the BLM and the 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 your formal comments and who to contact directly if you need further assistance. You can go to the e-planning tab on the online portal at www.blm.gov/NM/Farmington. Or, 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, Project Manager Sarah Scott at 6251 College Boulevard, Suite A in Farmington, New Mexico, 87402. Or BIA Project Manager Robert Begay at 301 West Hill Avenue in Gallup, New Mexico, 87301.

If you would like to follow-up with additional questions, please contact Sarah Scott at 505-564-7689, or Robert Begay at 505-863-8515.

This concludes the scheduled virtual meetings for the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Associated Environmental Impact Statement. Thank you for joining us. Have a great day and stay well.