



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# Protecting the Legacy and Culture of the Chaco Canyon Landscape

In addition to its incredible beauty, the Chaco Canyon area is one of the world's most unique and culturally significant landscapes. Located in the high desert of northwest New Mexico, this valley served as the center of the Chacoan culture for a roughly 400-year span, from 850 - 1250. The sophistication of this culture is clearly visible in the grand scale of the architecture set in a landscape of sacred mountains, mesas, and shrines that have deep spiritual meaning to this day.



Guadalupe Ruin Chacoan Cultural Site

Credit: BLM

Today, much of the Chaco Canyon area is protected as Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The park and six other sites nearby were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. The broader landscape surrounding the park is made up of lands that also have important cultural resources, sacred sites and values to surrounding communities, and are owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Navajo allottees, the State of New Mexico, and private individuals.

The Chaco landscape also contains significant oil and gas deposits and solid mineral resources. Approximately 90 percent of BLM-managed energy and mineral resources in the area are leased, in addition to more than 40 percent of those managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

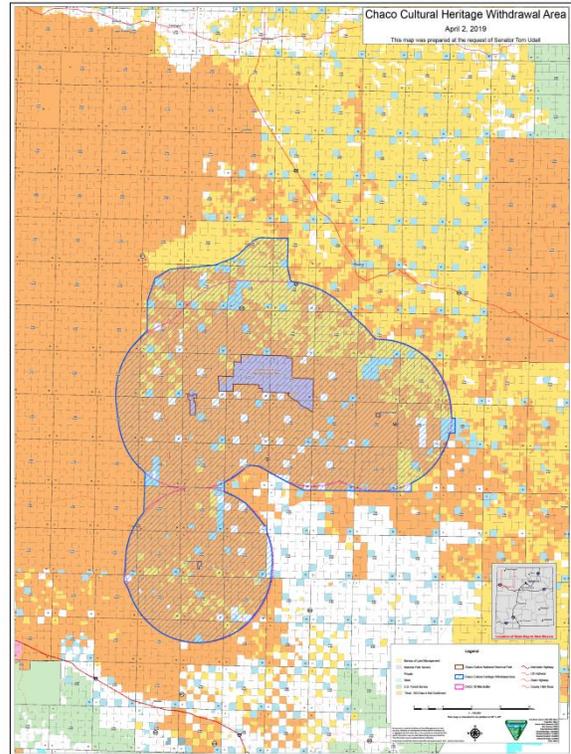
## Protecting Greater Chaco

Today, President Biden and Secretary Haaland are taking steps to ensure that the legacy of Chaco Canyon is protected for decades to come. The proposed withdrawal would establish a ten-mile buffer around the Park, removing the possibility of additional federal oil and gas leasing and new mining claims across hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands managed by the BLM. Valid existing rights in the area will not be impacted. A broader collaborative process to begin in early 2022 will bring Tribes and Pueblos, Native organizations, elected officials, and other

stakeholders together to establish a shared vision for protecting and celebrating this incredible landscape for future generations.

### **10-mile buffer around Chaco Culture National Historic Park**

The Secretary will propose withdrawal of approximately 325,000 acres of federal minerals under nearly 950,000 surface acres from eligibility for leasing and mining under applicable federal laws, establishing a 10-mile buffer around the Chaco National Historic Park. (See map.) The segregation and proposed withdrawal will publish in the *Federal Register* in the coming weeks, initiating a 60-day comment period. The BLM will also undertake formal Tribal consultation on the proposal. The segregation and proposed withdrawal would not affect existing rights of allottees or lease holders. The BLM will ensure that any development that may occur on these leases will be conducted in ways that avoid or minimize impacts to protected areas to the greatest extent possible. The proposal reflects the Administration’s commitment to protecting special places for future generations to enjoy as it responsibly develops energy resources.



### **Collaborative Process to Honor Greater Chaco**

In addition to the proposed withdrawal, the Secretary has directed the BLM and BIA to convene a regional conversation to create a vision for a broader approach to managing cultural and natural values across the Greater Chaco landscape.



Input from Tribes, elected officials, and stakeholders will inform the best ways to protect and celebrate Pueblo and Tribal culture in the region, address impacts from oil and gas impacts on millions of acres in the region, and secure a sustainable economic future. This conversation will kick off in early 2022 and will incorporate findings from ethnographic studies currently underway. Outcomes of the review may also inform current joint BLM/BIA land management planning in the region.