

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD WHITLEY
ACTING STATE DIRECTOR – NEW MEXICO
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
AT
FIELD HEARING ON S.2776, GALISTEO BASIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES PROTECTION ACT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO**

AUGUST 7, 2002

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing on the protection of archaeological sites in the Galisteo Basin in New Mexico. I understand the Committee will hold a hearing in Washington, D.C., on a later date, at which a witness representing the Department of the Interior will be invited to provide the Committee with the Administration's views on S.2776. My statement today will discuss the BLM's active work over the past several years to protect the archaeological resources on public lands in the Galisteo Basin.

The lands surrounding Santa Fe and the area known as the Galisteo Basin contain a rich cultural heritage of national significance. The first Spanish explorations in this area found thriving Pueblo Indian communities dating back to prehistoric times. Today, the ruins of these pueblos commemorate both the achievements of the ancestral Pueblo people and the events which shaped the early colonial history of New Mexico and the Southwest. Other important historical events which have left traces on this landscape include the development of the Camino Real, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the establishment of the Santa Fe Trail, a major Civil War battle, the coming of the railroads and the mining booms of the territorial period.

Lands to the north of Santa Fe are Pueblo Indian reservations, while the lands to the east and west are largely public lands managed by the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service. Portions of this land, such as the Pecos Wilderness and the La Cienega Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), have been set aside for special protection; other areas are managed under the principal of "multiple use" and other laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

The southern part of Santa Fe County has a pattern of mixed ownership, with private lands predominating. Development of this area is proceeding at a rapid pace as the population of Santa Fe County continues to grow. Both the State of New Mexico and the BLM manage key parcels in this area.

Natural processes take a toll on the cultural resources, but the threats posed by human uses are potentially more serious. Vandalism and careless excavations in the prehistoric and early historic ruins are a source of great concern to modern Pueblo peoples and threaten some of the most important archeological sites with wholesale destruction. Centuries of woodcutting and livestock grazing have altered the vegetative communities, as well as the riparian areas and the watersheds that support them. Development of both residential and commercial real estate presents risks to the ruins, trails, petroglyphs, and other traces of history and prehistory that remain in this landscape. Illegal trash dumping and other activities of this type have had a serious adverse impact on the natural and cultural resource values.

Of the 24 sites referenced in S.2776, nine (9) are currently managed in whole or in part by the BLM. The other sites are on state or private land. BLM archaeologists have done extensive research on these sites, and have developed long-standing, positive working relationships with the local communities of La Cieneguilla and La Cienega, Pueblo Indian communities, the affected state agencies, the University of New Mexico, and local conservation organizations on all aspects of the protection of the archaeological resources of the Galisteo Basin.

Through its planning process, the BLM has set aside land near La Cienega for special protection in its Resource Management Plan. The area encompassed by this plan includes the BLM-managed portions of

La Cienega Pueblo and Petroglyphs, La Cienega Pithouse Village, and La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs. Management prescriptions for the BLM sites include grazing exclusions, withdrawal from mineral entry, and a No-Surface-Occupancy stipulation for oil and gas development. These management prescriptions were developed by the BLM in consultation with Native American tribal governments, state and local governments, stakeholders, and the general public, through participation opportunities afforded by land use planning and environmental review processes.

The BLM manages additional sites in the Galisteo Basin: 68 acres at Burnt Corn Pueblo; 40 acres at Petroglyph Hill; 190 acres at Pueblo Blanco; 70 acres at Pueblo Galisteo/Las Madres; and 80 acres at San Lazaro Pueblo, a National Historic Landmark. The BLM's decisions on appropriate uses of the areas must take into consideration the impact of approved activities on the rich cultural and archaeological resources which are present there.

The BLM's Taos Field Office has been very involved with local government, stakeholders, and interest groups over the past several years to improve our resource management efforts in the Basin. In keeping with Secretary Norton's 4 C's – consultation, cooperation, communication, all in the service of conservation – our goal is development of a comprehensive community-based management program for the Galisteo Basin. BLM is working with the Trust for Public Lands, Santa Fe County, the county lands commission, and local community groups to acquire critical lands within a 5,000 acre green belt, to protect its open space and natural resource values. The BLM, Santa Fe County and the local community have been working together to develop a management strategy for the Cerrillos Hills, a prehistoric/historic mining district in the west-central part of the Basin. The BLM plans to continue these efforts to protect the cultural resources of the Galisteo Basin.

Thank you again for inviting BLM to participate in this field hearing. I would be glad to answer any questions.