

**Statement of
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**House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands
H.R. 2181, Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019
June 5, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 2181, the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019, which would withdraw approximately 200,652 Federal surface acres and approximately 333,827 acres of Federal subsurface mineral estate surrounding the Chaco Culture National Historical Park (CCNHP) in northwestern New Mexico from the public land, mining, mineral, and geothermal leasing laws.

Under President Trump's and Secretary Bernhardt's leadership, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made it a top priority to responsibly develop the vast domestic energy resources on public lands to create jobs, lower costs for working Americans, and build a strong economy. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, the total revenue generated from responsible mineral development on Federal lands in the State of New Mexico alone was over \$1.3 billion, the vast majority of which came from oil and gas operations. The Federal disbursement to the State of New Mexico was over \$634 million; the remainder was directed to the U.S. Treasury for the benefit of all American taxpayers.

The Secretary also recognizes there are some places that may benefit from enhanced protection. Striking the appropriate balance for public lands use – whether it be energy development, recreation, grazing, or historic preservation – can be a challenge, but it is a mission the Department takes seriously.

Early last week, Secretary Bernhardt traveled to New Mexico and visited CCNHP, along with New Mexico Senator Martin Heinrich and Tribal leaders. Following that visit, the Secretary gained a greater sense of appreciation of the site managed by the National Park Service, and a better understanding of the Tribal leaders' views of its cultural significance.

In response, the Secretary has directed the BLM to develop and publish a draft Resource Management Plan that includes an alternative reflecting the Tribal leaders' views, which are similar to the proposed legislative boundaries included in H.R. 2181. The Secretary also directed the BLM to defer leasing within the 10 mile buffer zone for one year.

Under Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution, Congress has the "power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States," and we respect Congress's role in this regard. As a result, the Department has no objection to H.R. 2181.