



National Congress of American Indians | 1516 P St NW, Washington, DC 20005 | (202) 466-7767 | www.ncai.org

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## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SEA-25-121

**Title: To Oppose the Bureau of Land Management’s Proposed Action to Revoke Public Land Order No. 7923, to Demand Suspension of the Revocation Process Pending Meaningful Government-to-Government Consultation, and to Reaffirm the Commitment to Protect the Greater Chaco Landscape.**

**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, the Greater Chaco Region, encompassing Chaco Culture National Historical Park (Park) and the surrounding cultural landscape, holds profound spiritual, historical, and cultural significance to many Pueblos and Tribal Nations in the Southwest; and

**WHEREAS**, the Greater Chaco Region encompasses thousands of traditional cultural properties and sacred sites that are located outside the Park’s boundaries, including but not limited to the Great North Road, the West Road, and Pierre’s Site; and these sites require permanent protection, along with region’s night skies, soundscapes, viewshed, and sightlines; and

**WHEREAS**, NCAI has consistently called for the permanent protection of the Greater Chaco Region; and



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**WHEREAS**, in 2017, NCAI adopted Resolution #MKE-17-008, calling for a moratorium on oil and gas leasing and permitting in the Greater Chaco Region to protect traditional cultural properties and sacred sites until proper studies and planning processes could be completed; and

**WHEREAS**, in June 2025, NCAI adopted Resolution #CT-25-012, urging the Secretary of the Interior to defend and fully implement Public Land Order (PLO) No. 7923, to sustain cooperation with the New Mexico State Land Office and Tribal governments, and to immediately restart and complete an update to the 2003 Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Farmington Field Office, which directs management on BLM lands in the Greater Chaco Region; and

**WHEREAS**, since December 2019, Congress through appropriations legislation has maintained a moratorium preventing new oil and gas leasing and development on federal land in the 10-mile buffer area; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2023, the U.S. Department of the Interior issued PLO No. 7923, withdrawing approximately 336,404 acres of federal land from new oil and gas leasing within a 10-mile buffer around Chaco Canyon for 20 years; and

**WHEREAS**, the issuance of PLO No. 7923 followed over a decade of advocacy from Pueblos and Tribal Nations to protect the Greater Chaco Region from the lasting and irreversible impacts of oil and gas leasing, including several years of formal government-to-government consultation between the federal government and sovereign Pueblos and Tribal Nations; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to lengthy government-to-government consultation with Pueblos and Tribal Nations, the issuance of PLO No. 7923 was supported by a thorough public process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act which lasted approximately 1.5 years and included two separate opportunities for public comment, a 120-day initial comment period and a subsequent 30-day public comment period; and

**WHEREAS**, PLO No. 7923 only limits new development within the negotiated 10-mile buffer and explicitly does not limit development of valid existing rights on federal lands, including existing leases, and it does not withdraw state, private, or Tribal trust or allottee land; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2023, the New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands issued Executive Order No. 2023-001, which extended a 2019 state moratorium on new oil and gas and mineral leasing on state trust lands within the 10-mile buffer for a 20-year term, creating a cooperative framework to preserve the Greater Chaco cultural landscape across state and federal land-ownership boundaries while recognizing private, Tribal, and allottee property interests and valid existing rights; and



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**WHEREAS**, Executive Order No. 2023-00, issued by the New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands, remains in effect; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14154, titled "Unleashing American Energy", which directs the Secretary of the Interior to reassess all public land withdrawals for potential revision; and

**WHEREAS**, on February 3, 2025, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum issued Secretarial Order No. 3418, titled "Unleashing American Energy", which directs the review and potential revision of all withdrawn public lands consistent with existing law; and

**WHEREAS**, on October 30, 2025, the BLM Farmington Field Office issued formal written notice initiating a process to revoke PLO No. 7923 in whole or in part citing Executive Order 14154 and Secretarial Order 3418, and proposing to revert management of the area to the outdated 2003 RMP; and

**WHEREAS**, BLM proposes to expedite the revocation process by preparing an Environmental Assessment (instead of a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement) and by providing a truncated 14-day public comment period, without any assurance that it will conduct adequate prior government-to-government consultation; and

**WHEREAS**, BLM's expedited process is procedurally and substantively inadequate to assess the cumulative, cultural, and environmental consequences of opening over 336,000 acres of exceptional cultural landscape to new mineral leasing and mining; and

**WHEREAS**, BLM's plan to expedite the revocation of PLO No. 7923 and to conduct a 14-day public comment period without adequate prior government-to-government consultation contravenes Tribal sovereignty and the legal and moral obligations of the federal government under the National Historic Preservation Act and the United States' trust responsibility as evidenced, in part, by Executive Order 13175 and the Department of the Interior's Tribal Consultation Policy; and

**WHEREAS**, the timing of BLM's notice, which was sent during a federal government shutdown, and proposed 14-day public comment period overlaps with the time of the year when Pueblo, Tribal communities, and the general public have limited capacity to timely and meaningfully communicate and engage due to myriad reasons including cultural periods in Pueblo and Tribal communities which extend into the new year, Tribal leadership transitions that occur in December and January, and the broader holiday season; and



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**WHEREAS**, proceeding with either consultation or public comment during such times when Tribes and Tribal communities have limited capacity to participate would fail to provide meaningful and timely engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, Department of the Interior Secretary Burgum has not yet committed to visiting the Greater Chaco Region during the Tribal consultation process, despite invitations from Tribal leaders and members of New Mexico's Congressional Delegation to do so; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary David Bernhardt accepted an invitation to visit Chaco Culture National Historical Park and, following his visit, Secretary Bernhardt acknowledged that he developed a better understanding of Tribal leaders' views and appreciation of the Greater Chaco Region resulting in his agreement to defer oil and gas leasing within a 10-mile radius of the park for at least one year to allow consideration of longer-term protections; and

**WHEREAS**, considering revocation of the withdrawal before BLM completes an amendment or revision of the outdated 2003 RMP would return management to a plan that predates horizontal drilling technology and fails to account for the extensive oil and gas development, cumulative impacts, and updated scientific and cultural information that have emerged since the 2003 RMP was adopted; and

**WHEREAS**, all future planning and decision-making for the Greater Chaco Region should be informed by the Chaco Heritage Tribal Association (CHTA) ethnographic study, a federally funded study specifically done to address the absence of needed information in BLM records and to provide a foundation for understanding the cultural significance of the Greater Chaco Region; and

**WHEREAS**, working in good faith with Pueblos and Tribal Nations to reach consensus on federal actions affecting Tribes and Tribal communities must continue to be a central tenet of government-to-government consultation; and

**WHEREAS**, BLM's recent action threatens to dismantle years of Tribal, federal, and state coordination, undermines trust, respect, and the integrity of the government-to-government consultation process, and places the Greater Chaco Region at renewed risk for significant and irreversible damage to cultural and spiritual properties caused by new extractive development.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians strongly opposes the revocation of PLO No. 7923, in whole or in part, and demands that the Department of the Interior immediately suspend all actions related to the revocation pending full, meaningful government-to-government consultation with affected Pueblos and Tribal Nations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI calls on the Secretary of the Interior to personally visit Chaco Culture National Historical Park and meet with Pueblos and Tribal Nations as a part of any government-to-government consultation on PLO No. 7923; and



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**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI urges the Department of the Interior to ensure meaningful government-to-government consultation and foster trust, respect, and shared responsibility with Pueblos and Tribal Nations by extending the timeline for consultation into the new year to account for the impacts of the federal government shutdown, Tribal leadership transitions, and cultural period; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI reaffirms its demand that the Department of the Interior restart and complete an update to the 2003 Farmington RMP that incorporates robust Tribal consultation, ethnographic data, and updated scientific analysis to ensure that future management decisions are culturally and environmentally responsible; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI urges the U.S. Congress to expedite passage of the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act to make the 10-mile buffer permanent, protecting the Greater Chaco Landscape from future administrative reversals; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI calls upon the New Mexico State Land Office and other state and local partners to maintain the state moratorium and other protective measures, and to coordinate with Pueblos and Tribal Nations in opposing the federal revocation effort; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall serve as a reaffirmation of NCAI Resolution #MKE-17-008 and NCAI Resolution #CT-25-012, and as an urgent response to the BLM's October 30, 2025, action, because NCAI recognizes that the proposed revocation poses an imminent threat to the cultural and spiritual integrity of the Greater Chaco Region; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.



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## CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2025 Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians, held November 16 to 21, 2025 at the Seattle Convention Center in Seattle, Washington.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Macarro', written over a horizontal line.

Mark Macarro, President

### ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christie Modlin', written over a horizontal line.

Christie Modlin, Recording Secretary