

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 22, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Since your confirmation, we have written numerous letters and spoken to you directly expressing why protections for the greater Chacoan landscape are important and popular in New Mexico. Yet the process to revoke the protections continues to move at a rapid pace. Today, we write in response and in strong opposition to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) draft environmental assessment proposing the full revocation of Public Land Order No. 7923, which protects approximately 336,404 acres surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park. We would like to register immense concern and frustration with the fourteen-day public comment period. Fourteen days does not represent the scope of this action, is arbitrary, and not representative of the work that went into implementing PLO No. 7923.

The Chacoan region is a natural and cultural landscape and not represented by isolated individual sites. The withdrawal you are proposing to erase was built from over a decade of community and Tribal input. Over the span of a year-and-a-half, the BLM conducted 150 days of public comment, eight public meetings, full and meaningful Tribal consultation, and a full environmental review to implement the existing withdrawal. BLM is now proposing to completely undo it after a seven-day scoping period and a fourteen-day comment window, while characterizing the revocation as a mere "continuation" of the original process. The previous public process was robust and ended in protection of the Chacoan landscape. In contrast, the current process to remove protections is based on an inadequate and incomplete review. It certainly does not constitute full and meaningful Tribal consultation.

Two months ago, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the Greater Chaco Cultural Landscape as one of America's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places. There are 4,730 documented cultural sites within the 10-mile withdrawal radius and there could be countless more needing protection. This is a process that should not be rushed.

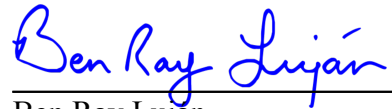
On June 12, 2025, you committed before the House Natural Resources Committee to send an official with decision-making authority to conduct in-person consultation with every Tribe with an interest in Chaco. The draft assessment itself shows that commitment has not been met. Several Pueblos received nothing more than an invitation, others received only "informational meetings." No Secretarial-level official appears anywhere in its consultation record. An informational briefing or a group meeting in D.C. is not consultation. And despite repeated invitations from Pueblos and from every member of this delegation, you have not yet visited Chaco.

We, therefore, call for an actual review process regarding revoking protections for the Chaco region, with genuine Tribal consultation, as with the previous public process included. We request that the Department immediately extend the comment period to no fewer than 90 days. And, most importantly, we urge you to stand down, withdraw this proposal and leave Public Land Order No. 7923 in place. Further, we once again invite you to come to Chaco before taking any action that would put this irreplaceable landscape at risk.

Sincerely,



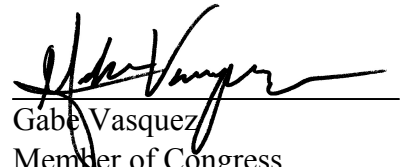
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress