

House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
July 13th, 2023
Written Testimony on H.R. 4374 - “Energy Opportunities for All Act”
Cheyenne Antonio, Greater Chaco Coalition

Cheyenne Antonio, Navajo Nation Citizen from Pueblo Pintado, Enrolled Navajo Nation Citizen Number [REDACTED] - Greater Chaco Coalition Coordinator with Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment, HCR 79 Box 3102 Cuba, NM, 87103, July 13, 2023

Chair Stauber Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives 145 Canon HOB, Washington, DC, 20515

RE: Official Testimony in Response to House Natural Resources Committee Hearing Memo on HR 4374

Dear Chair Stauber, Ranking Member Ocasio-Cortez, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Greater Chaco Coalition (Frack Off Chaco), I hereby submit this official testimony in response to the House Natural Resources Committee Hearing regarding HR 4374. I appreciate the committee's attention to the critical issues surrounding the protection of the Greater Chaco region and its cultural landscape.

The Greater Chaco Coalition, a collaborative effort between Indigenous community leaders, Native organizations, nonprofits, and public lands and water protectors, is dedicated to advocating for greater protections for the Greater Chaco Landscape. Guided by the Jemez principles of democratic organizing, our coalition collectively pursues a platform that includes crucial goals such as:

- Putting an end to sacrifice zones and further oil and gas extraction across the Greater Chaco region.
- Ensuring meaningful Tribal and community consultation and consent at every stage of decision-making.
- Considering the cumulative impacts and the health and holistic wellness of impacted communities.
- Advancing environmental justice and just transitions for the Greater Chaco region beyond extraction.

We express our unwavering support for the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management in their efforts to foster the groundbreaking Honoring Chaco Initiative. This initiative provides a crucial opportunity to address the legacy impacts of sacrifice zones across the Greater Chaco Landscape and prioritize the health, justice, equity, and sustainability of this culturally significant region.

Throughout the past decade, the Greater Chaco Coalition has actively engaged in numerous actions to advocate for the protection of the Greater Chaco region, garnering

overwhelming support from diverse stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, conservation organizations, and concerned citizens. Notable milestones in our collective efforts include:

- In 2013, the Eastern Navajo Agency Council passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on horizontal fracking.¹
- Resolutions from the Navajo Nation Torreon Chapter, Counselor Chapter, and Ojo Encino Chapter in 2015 also called for a moratorium on horizontal fracking.²
- Since 2015, the Greater Chaco Coalition has actively protested quarterly federal oil and gas lease sales in New Mexico, resulting in over 2 million individual protest comments.
- In 2016, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) joined the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as a co-leading agency in the Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) process for the Farmington Field Office (within the Greater Chaco region), facilitating collaboration between the agencies. The Greater Chaco Coalition mobilized impacted community members to provide over 1,000 in-person comments during the RMPA public scoping process.³
- A joint statement opposing horizontal fracking in the Greater Chaco region was issued in 2017 by the All Pueblo Council of Governors and the Navajo Nation President and Vice President.
- The National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution in 2017 to support a moratorium on leasing and permitting in the Greater Chaco region.
- In 2017, the New Mexico Legislature passed House Memorial 70 that reaffirmed the state's commitment to protecting and preserving tribal, cultural, and historical sites and resources in the Greater Chaco landscape.⁴
- In 2018, over 200 advocates rallied at the BLM New Mexico State Office, leading to the deferral of parcels in the Greater Chaco region for further analysis of cultural sites.
- In 2019, the Greater Chaco Coalition delivered over 33,000 protests opposing a BLM oil and gas lease sale in the Greater Chaco and Greater Carlsbad regions.
- The All Pueblo Council of Governors and Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President held a historic summit in 2019 to support protections for the Greater Chaco Landscape.⁵
- The New Mexico State Land Office issued Executive Order 2019-002, imposing a moratorium on new oil and gas and mineral leasing within a roughly 12-mile area around Chaco Culture National Historical Park.
- The completion of the Counselor Health Impact Assessment - K'é Bee Hózhqoqo liná Silá Committee (HIA/KBHIS) study in 2021, approved by the Navajo Human

¹ Resolution No. ENAC 12-2013-03.

² See for example the Resolution of Torreon Star Lake Chapter passed on March 9, 2015; Counselor Chapter Resolution passed on March 10, 2015; and Ojo Encino Chapter Resolution 03-09-15/002 passed on March 9, 2015.

³ See *Frack Off Chaco* blog for lease sale actions and comments submitted: https://www.frackoffchaco.org/_blog#_blog

⁴ House Memorial 70, 2017 1st Regular Legislative Session, available at: <https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/17%20Regular/final/HM070.pdf>

⁵ See press release from All Pueblo Council of Governors, available at: [Historic Joint Convening between the All Pueblo Council of Governors and Navajo Nation 2019](#)

Research Review Board which culminated from a health and cultural impact assessment that began in 2016.⁶

- In 2021, during the Biden-Harris administration's first White House Tribal Nations Summit, President Joe Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced steps to protect Chaco Canyon and the greater connected landscape, including initiating a 20-year moratorium on new oil and gas development on unleased federal lands within a 10-mile radius of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Secretary Haaland also unveiled the Honoring Chaco Initiative.⁷
- In 2022, the BLM and BIA conducted public Q&A sessions and extended the comment period on the proposed mineral withdrawal. Members of the Greater Chaco Coalition delivered nearly 80,000 in-person comments, emphasizing the need for broader landscape-level protections and truly honoring Chaco.
- In 2023, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit ruled in favor of conservation groups, rejecting nearly 200 Trump-era approved drilling permits defended by the Biden administration, due to the Bureau of Land Management's violation of NEPA.

These milestones and the broad support they reflect underscore the urgent need to prioritize the protection of the Greater Chaco region. I call on the House Natural Resources Committee to champion the cause of Greater Chaco and support legislation that aligns with the goals outlined by the Greater Chaco Coalition.

In conclusion, I express my deep appreciation to the committee for addressing this critical matter and providing an opportunity to submit our official testimony. We remain steadfast in our commitment to safeguarding the Greater Chaco region, advancing justice and equity, and ensuring a sustainable future for all.

Thank you for your dedicated service, and I appreciate your consideration of our testimony. I am available for further information or clarification.

Cheyenne Antonio,
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⁶ K'é Bee Hózhqoqo liná Assessment available at: [Final HIA-KBHIS July 2021.pdf](#)

⁷ See BLM's Honoring Chaco Initiative website at: [Honoring Chaco Initiative | Bureau of Land Management](#)