



Stephanie Garcia Richard, Land Commissioner  
State of New Mexico

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Commissioner Garcia Richard Signs Executive Order Placing a Moratorium on New Oil and Gas Leasing on 72,776 Acres in the Greater Chaco Region**

**SANTA FE, NM** – Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard has signed Land Office Executive Order 2019-002, ([view here](#)) placing a moratorium on new oil and gas development on state trust land in a buffer zone around Chaco Canyon. The Executive Order, signed at the Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter House on Saturday, will protect 72,776 acres near the renowned World Heritage site. In addition to placing a moratorium on new leasing, the Order also creates the Chaco Canyon Land Office Working Group. The first meeting of the Group took place directly following the signing ceremony.

“Placing a moratorium on new oil and gas leasing in the Greater Chaco Region is a huge step forward in safeguarding archaeological and cultural resources of New Mexico’s tribes, nations, and pueblos,” Commissioner Garcia Richard said of the Executive Order. “The Chaco working group, comprised of tribal and environmental leaders, have already started important discussions about how we can protect the area and manage all of the land responsibly. Tribal members will lead the way in making sure their ancestral land can be revered for all future generations.”

The purpose of the Working Group is to make recommendations to the Land Office regarding land uses that may be more compatible with the nature of the Chaco area including potential land exchanges, as well as recommendations regarding land

management in conjunction with tribal communities, private land owners, and the federal government.

“This Executive Order and Working Group are symbolic of Commissioner Garcia Richard and the Land Office’s commitment to managing the land sustainably and responsibly, and in this context, it is essential to bring in the people most affected by our decisions,” Assistant Commissioner of Engagement and Tribal Liaison Rachael Lorenzo said.

The next working group meeting will take place Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from 1:30-3:30 at San Juan College in Farmington.



**Statement from All Pueblo Council of Governors Chairman E. Paul Torres:**

“Thank you, Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard, for your leadership and commitment to support the efforts of our tribal nations to protect the Greater Chaco Region through this executive order. The Greater Chaco Region is sacred. Many of our Pueblos still remember and use this place as a vital part of our present identity through story, song, prayer, and pilgrimage. We are grateful for the historic partnership established in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation between the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Navajo Nation, the NM State Land Office, our entire NM Congressional Delegation, and other stakeholders, and look forward to continued collaboration that affirms the protection of Greater Chaco as an ongoing part of our collective story - past, present, and future.”

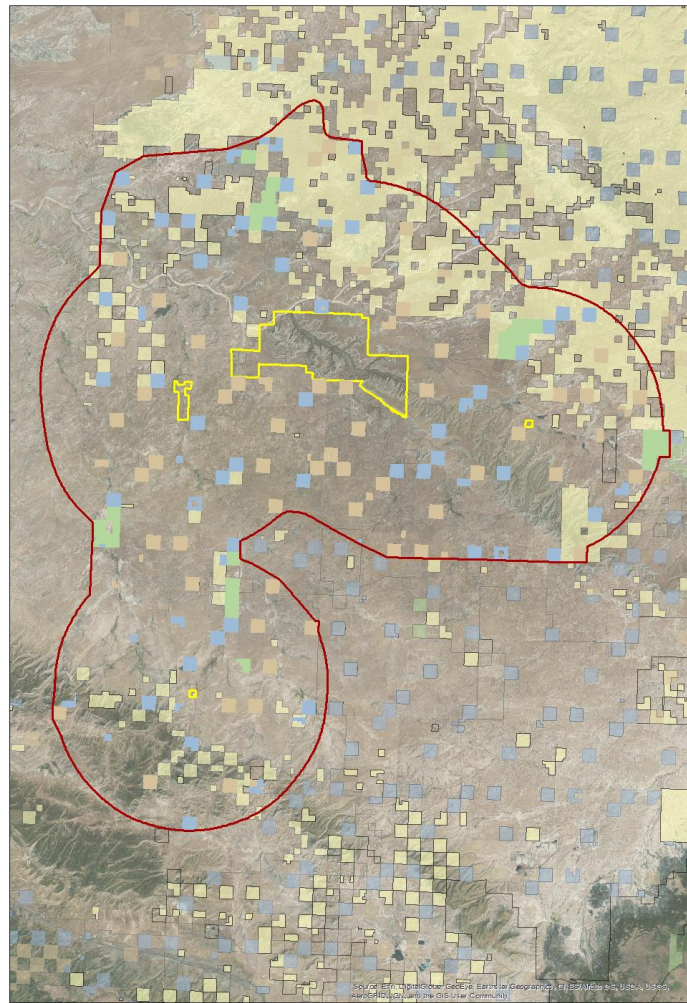
**Statement from Wilderness Society Director Michael Casaus:**

“It doesn’t matter if oil and gas leasing is happening on federal or state land around Chaco Canyon—the impacts do not recognize boundary lines. The leadership by State Land Commissioner Garcia Richard to protect this too wild to drill landscape should set a model for how the BLM and other federal agencies approach the management of this

region. We applaud the steps taken today by the State Land Office to protect the health of nearby communities and the interests of the Pueblos and Navajo Nation.”

**Statement from New Mexico Wild Executive Director Mark Allison:**

“Many Chacoan sites exist outside the Park's official boundaries, so oil and gas development on nearby state trust lands almost always mean the loss of artifacts, history, and sacred sites as well as wildlands, habitat and dark skies. Commissioner Garcia Richard’s actions are exactly the kind of common sense, balanced, and forward thinking leadership this sensitive area needs.”



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**LURC No. 01-19, Exhibit A**

Area of Land Use Restriction or Condition (LURC), Governing New Mineral Leasing in the Vicinity of the Chaco Culture National Historical Park

State Lands Office (SLO)	SLO
Surface and Subsurface	Subsurface
Chaco Culture National	SLO
Historical Park Boundary	Surface
	SLO-PC

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***Oil, gas, and mineral production, ranching and farming, and commercial development on State Trust Lands support public schools, seven universities, New Mexico Military Institute, New Mexico School for the Deaf, New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, three hospitals, correctional facilities, water conservation projects, and public building construction and repair. In fiscal year 2018, the State Land Office collected \$852 million from lease payments, oil and gas lease sale earnings, rights-of-way, permits, interest, fees, and oil, gas, and mineral royalties.***