



## Stephanie Garcia Richard New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands

### NEW MEXICO STATE LAND OFFICE PROPOSAL FOR LONG-TERM PROTECTION OF CHACO

**Background:** In 2019, as one of her first acts as Land Commissioner, Stephanie Garcia Richard issued an executive order banning new oil and gas leasing on almost 73,000 acres of state lands within ten miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park ([EO-2019-002](#)). The order was subsequently extended in 2023 for an additional 20 years ([EO-2023-002](#)). However, because there was no payment associated with the order, the prohibition on new oil and gas leasing can easily be reversed by a future commissioner.



**How can we ensure restrictions on new oil and gas leasing are not reversed in the future?** The State Land Office's primary mission is to earn money for public schools and other institutions in New Mexico. Historically, the Land Office has relied on extractive industries for revenue, such as oil and gas; but the agency can also make money through the conservation of our cherished landscapes. Commissioner Garcia Richard is seeking to collaborate with organizations committed to protecting the Chaco cultural landscape to raise the money for a restriction on new oil and gas development that cannot be reversed at the whim of another commissioner.

**How much would these protections cost?** The State Land Office contracted with the [Center for Applied Research, Inc.](#) to perform an evaluation of potential forgone revenues due to restrictions on new oil and gas leasing near the Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The report found that under the most probable development scenario the lost opportunity cost would be about \$1.6 million over 20 years.

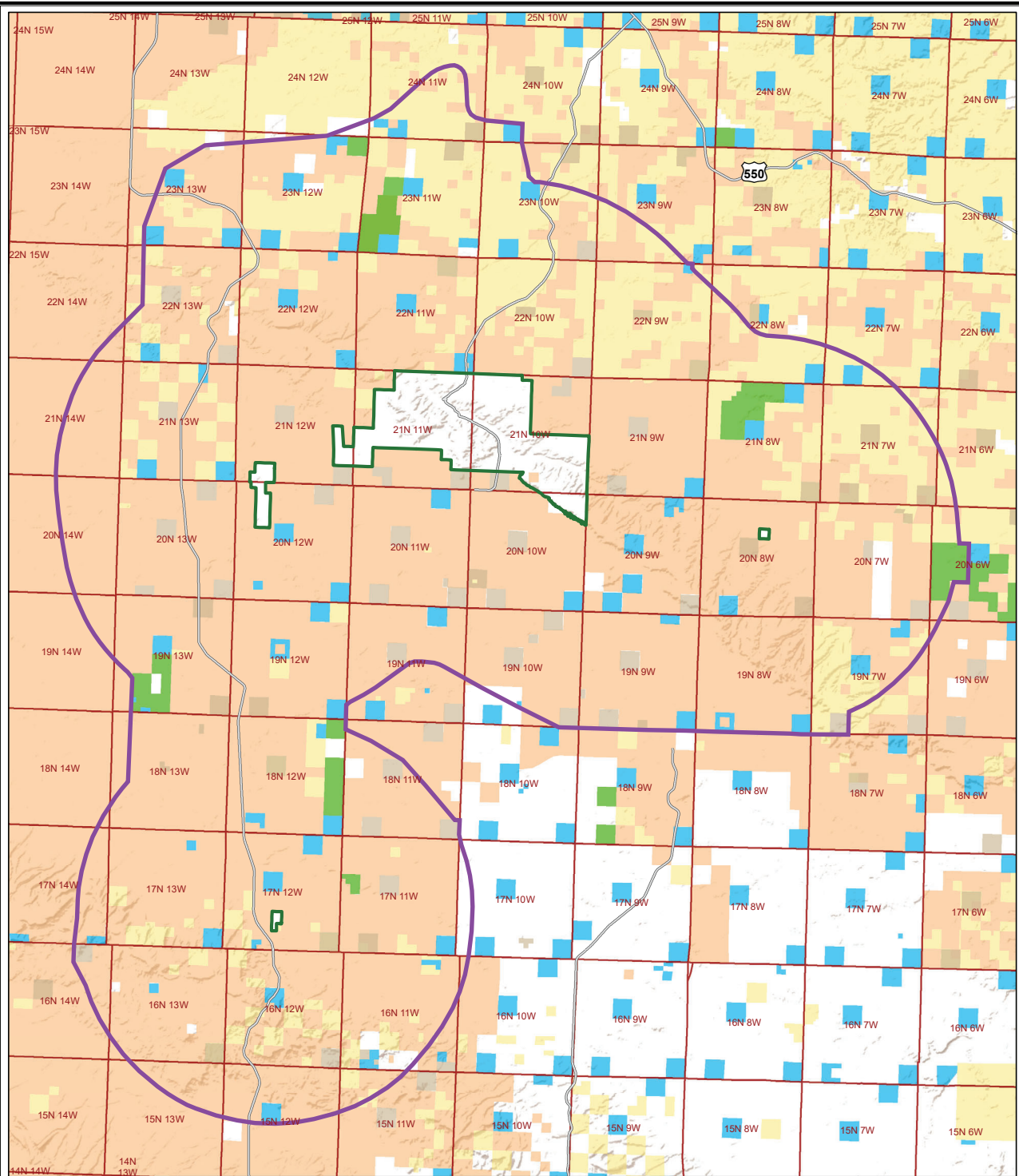
**Who would pay?** As the lands the agency stewards were taken from Indigenous communities, the State Land Office is not asking tribes to provide any financial contributions. Instead, the agency is asking advocates and other interested stakeholders to help raise the funds.

**Where would the money go that is received by the State Land Office?** The public schools are the assigned trust beneficiary of the lands situated within the 10-mile Chaco buffer so the money contributed for this purpose would be distributed to New Mexico's schools.

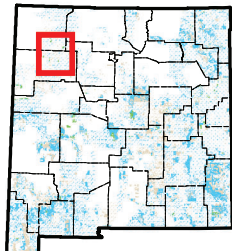
**What activities would be prohibited and for how long?** New oil and gas leasing and ancillary development would be banned under a legally enforceable contract for a period of 20 years.

**Which lands would be restricted?** The prohibition on new oil and gas leasing and associated activity would include about 72,776 mineral acres and 52,113 surface acres, as described in the Exhibit A.

**Would the 2023 executive order be repealed once the new prohibition goes into effect?** No. The order, and its broader protections on all mineral development, would remain in effect. However, it could be repealed at any time by a future commissioner.



## Exhibit A: Protected Lands Around Chaco Culture National Historical Park



- NMSLO Chaco Restriction Area
- Chaco Culture National Historical Park Boundary

- State Trust Lands**
- Mineral Estate
  - Surface Estate
  - Both Estates

- Other Surface Ownership**
- Bureau of Indian Affairs/Tribes
  - Bureau of Land Management



Stephanie Garcia Richard  
 Commissioner of Public Lands  
 505-827-5761  
[www.nmstatelands.org](http://www.nmstatelands.org)