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**Greater Chaco Coalition Calls on Administration to Follow Through with  
“Honoring Chaco”**

*Advocates Urge Secretary Haaland to Re-commit to the “Honoring Chaco Initiative” to Protect  
Community Health, Well-being and the Broader Landscape*

Counselor, N.M. - On the two-year anniversary of the launch of the [Honoring Chaco Initiative](#) (HCI), the Greater Chaco Coalition is [calling on](#) Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to follow through with her promise to protect all of Greater Chaco and move forward with the Honoring Chaco Initiative. The Coalition is grateful for her work on Chaco and continues to encourage her to protect the broader landscape.

In June, the Department of the Interior approved a [20-year mineral withdrawal](#) prohibiting any new mineral leasing of unleased federal lands within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The withdrawal, one step in the two-part Honoring Chaco Initiative, was announced by President Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Halaand at the Tribal Nations Summit in November 2021. The Initiative is intended to bring federal agencies, Tribes, impacted Indigenous community members, advocacy groups, and stakeholders together to address the need for landscape-level management of the Greater Chaco Landscape. It also promises to finally address cumulative environmental and social injustices by adopting a cultural landscape management framework. Initial convenings took place as part of phase 1 of the Initiative last fall, but the process has since stalled.

“As the Administration deepens its plans to address environmental justice on ancestral tribal and public lands, following through with the Honoring Chaco Initiative is a chance to build bridges and move forward to Protect Greater Chaco, and for meaningful action for Greater Chaco communities,” said Cheyenne Antonio, Greater Chaco Coalition Co-Coordinator with Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment.

The Greater Chaco Landscape is plagued by nearly 40,000 oil and gas wells and a legacy of pollution, including abandoned, orphaned, and non-producing wells, and ongoing impacts to air and water quality. Since the Honoring Chaco initiative was announced, spills of liquid toxic waste from oil and gas production have [more than quadrupled](#) in the Greater Chaco Landscape. While the 20-year mineral withdrawal is in place, by the agency's own estimates, it will have [minimal impact](#) on oil and gas drilling and production in the region.

“This region has been managed as a sacrifice zone for far too long,” said Daniel Tso, former Navajo Nation Council Delegate. “The Bureau of Land Management continues to approve new oil and gas activities, having never analyzed the cumulative impacts of fracking, and failing to provide cultural landscape protection and community wellbeing. Now is the time for the Honoring Chaco Initiative to chart a new path forward for Navajo communities, phasing out

extractive economies and centering protection of the land, air, water, and the sacred in Greater Chaco Landscape management.”

Earlier this year, the [Greater Chaco Coalition](#) provided the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management with a [road map](#) to ensure that the outcomes of the Honoring Chaco Initiative are long-lasting.

Since 2014, over two million people have called on federal agencies to address the impacts of sacrifice zones in the Greater Chaco region and pause all oil and gas proposals. Groups have called for meaningful tribal and community consultation at every stage of decision-making; for the cumulative impacts of oil and gas extraction to be considered, analyzed and addressed; and for the advancement of environmental and economic justice.

Advocates are calling on the agencies to follow through on their promise to truly honor Greater Chaco and recommit to the Honoring Chaco Initiative, which presents an opportunity to establish a new model for public lands management in the region, centering economic and environmental justice, and sustainability for impacted communities.

**Additional statements:**

"The premise that air has no boundaries rings true for all, most specifically in the Greater Chaco region for the people who live, recreate, and work here daily who are concerned about the toxic pollutants that are freely released into the environment from the thousands of permitted oil and gas wells that are scattered across the landscape. Where are the true protections for the folks who are in isolated, rural areas? Where is the prioritization for our safety and health? Long-term protections from the Administration for our health and safety need to be addressed immediately with solutions that will ensure our future generations have access to clean water and clean air."

- Kendra Pinto, Frontline Community Member in Greater Chaco

"The Honoring Chaco Initiative has brought the promise of protecting the Greater Chaco landscape beginning with the mineral moratorium. It is important to see out the entirety of the Honoring Chaco Initiative to not leave behind opportunities to create processes for frontline communities to participate in decisions to better landscape management practices, address public health and environmental impacts, and honor the people who live and have a cultural affinity to the Greater Chaco landscape."

- Julia Bernal, Executive Director of Pueblo Action Alliance

"Native Organizers Alliance stands in unity with the Greater Chaco Coalition in their call on the Department of Interior to recommit to the Honoring Chaco Initiative. The DOI must respond with action immediately to stop permitting new extraction, restore our lands, and put Tribal co-management at the center of a just transition and sustainable economic future. Ending the harmful resource extraction, which has significant impacts on the health of local Native communities across generations, will have long-lasting positive improvements if the DOI actively engages Native communities who live and work in the Greater Chaco region to establish an effective Tribal co-management plan."

- Carol Davis, Managing Director of Native Organizers Alliance.

"Greater Chaco deserves heightened protection. The Department of Interior answered the call of this community two years ago to start a process that could produce meaningful outcomes for communities dependent on oil and gas for income, or who have borne the brunt of oil and gas

impacts. We hope that the Honoring Chaco Initiative is able to live up to its initial promise and usher in a new era of collaborative, just, and sustainable management for the Greater Chaco Landscape. We call on the Department of Interior to see that process through."

- Rose Rushing, Attorney for the Western Environmental Law Center

For years, advocates and impacted community members have called on federal agencies to protect the cultural integrity of the Greater Chaco landscape and community well-being from fracking. When Secretary Haaland announced the Honoring Chaco Initiative and advanced the mineral withdrawal, hope was restored. But the area is still plagued with nearly 40,000 oil and gas wells and the community and environment still bear the brunt of oil and gas development. It's time to address the legacy impacts of drilling. The Honoring Chaco Initiative can be the solution to longstanding issues and we hope the agencies will follow through with their promise to Honor Chaco.

- Miya King-Flaherty, Organizing Representative with Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter

"Every minute of inaction exacerbates the compounding impacts extractive industry has on Greater Chaco communities, clean air, water, and the climate. The Honoring Chaco Initiative is a chance for the Biden Administration to start cleaning up the mess."

- Rebecca Sobel, Organizing Director of WildEarth Guardians

"The path to protecting the Greater Chaco Landscape has been clear for years and we need the political will to act now. As more unnecessary and unpopular lease sales were shoehorned into the Five Year Plan, Secretary Haaland and the Department of the Interior must protect the well-being of the Greater Chaco community as they promised. They owe it to Tribal Nations living in the broader landscape to follow through on their Honoring Chaco Initiative commitments."

- Raena Garcia, Senior Fossil Fuels and Lands Campaigner with Friends of the Earth

"It's high time that the Interior Department honor the Greater Chaco Landscape by phasing out fossil fuels on public lands. The long history of extraction in this region has had devastating effects on land, air, water and public health across the Greater Chaco region. The administration must clean up this mess."

- Silas Grant, New Mexico Campaigner with the Center for Biological Diversity