

For Immediate Release

June 20, 2019

Photos and video available on <https://www.facebook.com/FrackOffChaco/> and [https://www.flickr.com/photos/wildearth\\_guardians](https://www.flickr.com/photos/wildearth_guardians)

Contact:

Rebecca Sobel, Senior Climate & Energy Campaigner, WildEarth Guardians, (267) 402-0724, [rsobel@wildearthguardians.org](mailto:rsobel@wildearthguardians.org)

Eileen Shendo, Jemez Pueblo, (505) 980-1998, [wns.shendo@gmail.com](mailto:wns.shendo@gmail.com)

**Groups Call for Comprehensive Greater Chaco Protection**  
*Demand Consistency from BLM Planning and Protection Efforts*

*Albuquerque, NM:* Alongside the June 20 oil and gas lease sale, Native groups and allies working to stop fracking across the Greater Chaco Landscape hand delivered a [letter](#) today to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Santa Fe. The letter demands the agency stop its plans to continue drilling and leasing lands in the Greater Chaco area managed by the Rio Puerco Field Office and immediately initiate a meaningful planning process that honors tribes and environmental justice.

Traditional Navajo government bodies and more than two dozen Native groups and allies representing over 2.5 million members and supporters signed the letter, which details the hypocrisy of the Bureau of Land Management's decisions to cherry-pick cultural protections across the landscape. The letter was delivered as part of a 50-mile #RunningForOurLives prayer run<link to PR>, where indigenous youth ran from the BLM Rio Puerco office in Albuquerque to the Santa Fe headquarters, protesting further sacrifice of land, water, and lives for fracking.

At the June online lease sale today, the agency is offering close to 40,000 acres of New Mexico public and tribal land throughout the state, including more than 37,000 acres of land in the northern portion of the Rio Puerco Field Office.

"Youth are literally running for their lives, today," said Eileen Shendo of Jemez Pueblo. "In the face of a growing climate crisis and yet another BLM oil and gas lease sale in the Greater Chaco Landscape, we are running to include the voices of youth and compel action for our collective future."

The BLM received protests for today's sale from [Counselor, Ojo Encino, and Torreon/Star Lake Chapters of Navajo Nation](#) as well as [Acoma](#) and [Santa Clara Pueblos](#), the [All Pueblo Council of Governors](#), environmental groups, and over [12,000 individual citizens](#), highlighting the growing controversy and unrest over oil and gas development in Chaco Canyon and the surrounding Greater Chaco Landscape.

Department of Interior Secretary Bernhardt recently [announced](#) a one-year moratorium on leasing in part of the Greater Chaco Landscape considered for permanent protection under the [2019 Chaco Cultural Heritage Protection Act](#). But last March, former Secretary Zinke [directed](#) the BLM to defer leasing in the same area where parcels are offered today, pending the completion of an ongoing analysis of more than 5,000 cultural sites. That analysis has yet to occur.

“We are dismayed that oil and gas leasing could be considered under a thirty-year old Resource Management Plan, when current day technologies like horizontal drilling did not even exist. Nor should such leasing or development be authorized until cultural sites have been surveyed and protection guaranteed.”  
Shelley Silbert, Executive Director, *Great Old Broads for Wilderness*,  
[shelley@greatoldbroads.org](mailto:shelley@greatoldbroads.org)

The current plan guiding resource management for the Rio Puerco office was approved in 1986 and never considered the impacts of industrialized fracking. In light of the recent [decision](#) by the Tenth Circuit which found BLM illegally approved drilling in the region by failing to analyze the cumulative impacts of fracking, groups hope BLM will heed the letter’s call and comply with the mandate to stop leasing and drilling in the area.

“The BLM is playing bait and switch with Greater Chaco protections and the games must stop,” said Rebecca Sobel, Senior Climate and Energy Campaigner with WildEarth Guardians. “After promising extensive cultural studies and being reined by the courts, the Bureau of Land Management has no reasonable basis for continuing to lease the Greater Chaco Landscape. Arbitrary protections must become meaningful, and we’re demanding every BLM office follow the same rules.”

A copy of the letter is available [here](#).

See [here](#) for a map of oil and gas leasing and Chacoan Great Houses in the region.