



U.S. Department of the Interior In Case You Missed It

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Secretary Haaland Celebrates Historic Investments in Indian Country During the White House Tribal Nations Summit

WASHINGTON — The White House convened the Tribal Nations Summit this week, where President Biden, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, and Administration leaders celebrated the Biden-Harris administration's early investments in Indian Country, including in the American Rescue Plan and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. At the Summit, President Biden and Secretary Haaland made major announcements around protections for Tribal lands and sacred sites, preserving Native languages, improving co-stewardship of lands and waters, new mechanisms for Tribal engagement, and more.

Select press coverage is below:

The Biden-Harris Administration's Commitment to Indian Country

USA Today: [Building a new era of engagement between tribal nations and the federal government](#)

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and Domestic Policy Advisor Susan Rice Susan: When President Joe Biden took office at the height of the pandemic, tribal nations were in crisis. Indigenous people were contracting the virus at over three times the rate of white Americans. Schools and tribal economic operations had shuttered, bringing local economies to a halt. Longstanding disparities and shortages in Indian Country were intensifying. From day one, the Biden administration has mobilized the entire federal government to address the urgent issues facing Indigenous people and to usher in a new era of nation-to-nation engagement on tribal issues.

Protecting Chaco Canyon

President Biden announced that the Department of the Interior is taking steps to protect the [Chaco Canyon](#) and the greater connected landscape with a rich Tribal and cultural legacy in northwest New Mexico. The Bureau of Land Management will initiate consideration of a 20-year withdrawal of federal lands within a 10-mile radius around Chaco Culture National Historical Park, which would bar new federal oil and gas leasing on those lands.

Washington Post: [Biden proposes 20-year drilling ban around Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a sacred tribal site](#)

The Biden administration on Monday proposed a 20-year ban on oil and gas drilling in Chaco Canyon and surrounding areas in northwestern New Mexico, a sacred tribal site that also contains valuable oil and gas. President Biden discussed the move at the opening of the White House Tribal Nations Summit, one of several steps intended to strengthen the relationship between the federal government and American Indian tribes. Biden also signed an executive order directing his Cabinet to develop a strategy to improve public safety and justice for Indigenous Americans.

KOB 4: [New Mexico lawmakers and Native communities win big on gas, oil hold](#)

There was a big win for the Pueblo people this week in the battle over New Mexico's Greater Chaco region. For years, they have been trying to push back oil and gas companies from mining near the site they consider sacred, and Monday their wish came true thanks to an executive order signed by President Joe Biden. Sen. Ben Ray Lujan, alongside now Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, have been introducing legislation to protect the area for at least the last three presidential administrations. When Biden signed the order, they were excited to see their years of work pay off.

Protecting, Preserving, and Promoting Native Languages

The Departments of the Interior, Education and Health and Human Services announced the launch of a new interagency initiative to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop [Native languages](#).

KULR: [Multi-agency initiative aims to protect and preserve native languages](#)

The U.S. Departments of the Interior, Education and Health and Human Services joined five others in signing a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to further the Native American Languages Act of 1990 by establishing new goals and programs that support the protection and preservation of Native languages spoken by federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and other Native American groups in the United States.

Protecting and Increasing Access to Indigenous Sacred Sites

Secretary Haaland announced a new [interagency initiative](#) to improve the protection of and access to Indigenous sacred sites through enhanced and improved interdepartmental coordination, collaboration and action. A new Memorandum of Understanding, signed by eight agencies, will increase collaboration with Tribes to ensure stewardship and access to sites, and incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into management, treatment, and protection procedures.

Religion News Service: [Haaland announces effort to protect, improve access to Indigenous sacred sites](#)

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland has announced a new initiative to protect and improve access to sites across the United States considered sacred by Indigenous peoples. "Since time immemorial, the Earth's lands and waters have been central to the social, cultural, spiritual, mental, and physical wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. It is essential that we do everything we can to honor sites that hold historical, spiritual or ceremonial significance," she said in a written statement from the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Arizona Republic: [Feds move to strengthen protection for Indigenous sacred sites on public lands](#)

Eight federal agencies announced a new deal to coordinate efforts to protect Indigenous sacred sites, strengthening protections in an area where advocates have long said the government has fallen short. The agencies will work to provide Native peoples more access and co-management of those sites, which include better protection for sites such as Red Butte, a Havasupai site just south of the Grand Canyon, and enhanced co-management of the Grand Canyon National Park, according to a memorandum of understanding obtained by The Arizona Republic.

Formation of First Tribal Advisory Committee to Strengthen Nation-to-Nation Relationship

The Department of the Interior announced the formation of a new [Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee](#), which formally establishes a mechanism for Tribal leaders to engage in routine and robust conversations directly with Secretary Haaland. This important move will further strengthen the Department's nation-to-nation relationship with federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and their leadership.

Tribal Business News: Interior Dept. creates tribal consultation committee; advocates hope model could improve other federal agencies

The Department of the Interior is announcing a new plan for consultation that some hope will provide a model across federal agencies for how to do it right. Interior's announcement comes as part of the White House Tribal Nations Summit, the first such large-scale meeting of tribal leaders — albeit a virtual one due to the ongoing pandemic — since the end of the Obama administration. The department is forming what is to be called a Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC), which is intended to create a mechanism for tribal leaders to engage in routine and robust conversations directly with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland.

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