

Chaco Coalition Press Statement:
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, March 25, 2021

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Greater Chaco Coalition Responds to DOI Virtual Forum on Federal Oil and Gas Leasing

In response to The Department of the [Interior virtual public forum](#) the Greater Chaco Coalition, a collaborative effort between over 200 Indigenous community leaders and groups, environmental justice advocates, and environmental groups representing thousands of New Mexicans and millions of Americans issued the following statement:

Over 90% of the Greater Chaco region in northwest New Mexico has already been leased to oil and gas threatening the culture, communities, and climate of the sacred landscape. Due to unchecked oil and gas, Indigenous Peoples and Greater Chaco communities are saddled with countless public health and environmental justice impacts including some of the worst air quality in the nation and a hovering methane cloud the size of Delaware.

The Greater Chaco Coalition has been calling for the need to restore the balance and end new leasing in the Greater Chaco Landscape since 2014, organizing dozens of [people's forums](#) highlighting issues in the region. The Coalition welcomes the Biden Administration's pause and comprehensive review of the federal oil and gas leasing program. We thank Interior Secretary Haaland for her leadership in directing the Interior Department to adequately address environmental justice and equity issues and hold hope for a new era of respect for sovereign Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples.

For justice in Greater Chaco and beyond, the federal oil and gas leasing program must be fundamentally reformed. The Greater Chaco Coalition has long called for an end to new leasing and for meaningful tribal consultation at every stage of decision making, community protections including fair share distribution and reparations for tribal landowners, comprehensive health and social impact assessments for impacted communities--including ethnographic studies, and for the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Affairs to study alternative economic development opportunities in order to provide relief and restore balance to the land and lives of impacted communities.

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