



CHACO CULTURE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

The largest methane hot spot in the United States, attributable to oil and gas drilling, sits above one of the most important cultural sites in the National Park System.

Between 850 and 1150 A.D., Chaco Canyon was the hub of the Puebloan civilization and is the ancestral homeland of numerous Southwestern tribes. The scale and sophistication of these communities and economies were unparalleled in the region. The structures completed by these Native populations were some of the largest buildings constructed in North America until the 19th century. For generations, their complex culture brought people together from areas as distant as southern Mexico to engage in commerce, share knowledge and celebrate important milestones and religious events.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park was first established as a national monument in 1907 to preserve and tell the story of Chaco Canyon, which continues to be an important cultural center for tribal communities today. The park protects many of these impressive structures and is one of the largest collections of ancestral sites north of Mexico.

While the footprint of Chaco Culture National Historical Park itself is

small, the larger connected cultural landscape is vast. For many Native peoples, the boundaries of the park do not encompass all that is important spiritually and culturally.

The park's location within the San Juan Basin, a geologic formation rich in fossil fuel resources, creates an ongoing threat to the park's cultural resources. The oil and gas industry has already heavily developed the region on a patchwork of private, state, federal and tribal lands. Such development has scarred the landscape with tens of thousands of oil and gas wells and roads that now cut through the Chaco landscape, trafficked by trucks and heavy equipment, which destroy and endanger numerous ancient archaeological sites. This only makes it more important that federal lands in the region be protected for their cultural values, not opened to even more drilling.

The Bureau of Land Management's Farmington Field Office in New Mexico has already leased more than 91 percent of Chaco's surrounding public

RESOURCES THREATENED

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

NIGHT SKIES

PUBLIC HEALTH

AIR QUALITY

BY THE NUMBERS

2,500

Size, in square miles, of the methane hot spot above the Four Corners region²

316,076

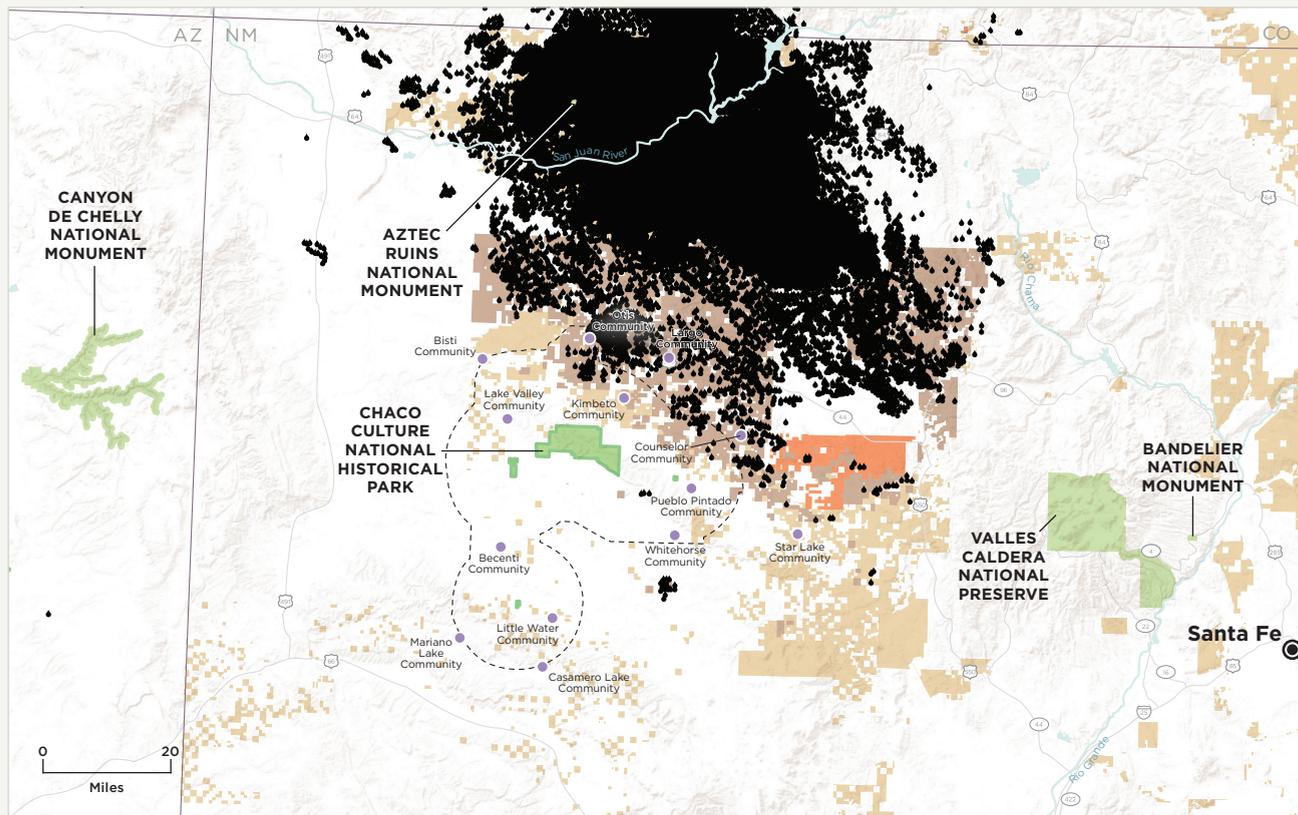
The proposed number of federal acres withdrawn from new mineral extraction in the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act

5,000

Conservative estimate for number of cultural sites currently unprotected in the Greater Chaco region³

75

Percentage of residents of San Juan County who live within a half mile of oil and gas infrastructure⁴



land to the oil and gas industry.¹ Gas flares light up the dark night skies, and pollution from flares and leaking infrastructure endanger the health of the Native American communities who have lived in the area for centuries. Rampant methane waste, particularly in the San Juan Basin, has created a 2,500-square-mile methane cloud—the size of the state of Delaware—over the Four Corners region and national parks including Chaco.

All of the drilling advanced by this

administration has taken place without meaningful consultation with the local tribal communities.

Fighting back, a historic coalition of the Pueblo and Navajo peoples in the region have come together to protect the landscape. Along with the entire New Mexico congressional delegation, they are advancing legislation to permanently protect the area surrounding the park from new oil and gas development (depicted on the map as the “Chaco Withdrawal Area”).

¹ San Juan Citizen’s Alliance, 2019, <https://www.sanjuancitizens.org/chaco>

² Environmental Defense Fund, “New Study Confirms (again): New Mexico’s methane hot spot largely tied to oil and gas pollution,” June 15, 2017, blogs.edf.org/energyexchange/2017/06/15/new-study-confirms-again-new-mexicos-methane-hot-spot-largely-tied-to-oil-and-gas-pollution/

³ Senator Tom Udall, 2019, <https://www.tomudall.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Chaco%20Cultural%20Heritage%20Area%20Protection%20Act%20One-Page.pdf>

⁴ Earthworks, <https://earthworks.org/stories/san-juan-county-new-mexico/>