



## The threat has become clear: public lands are on the chopping block

### FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Just two years ago....**the conservation community was celebrating the Department of Interior's approval of a 20-year mineral withdrawal within a 10-mile protective zone around the Chaco Culture National Historical Park. This came after years of effort to protect these sensitive lands.

**Chaco protection is now at risk...**on May 28, the Department of the Interior began formal proceedings to revoke protections around Chaco Canyon by reducing or eliminating the mineral withdrawal that the Pueblos, New Mexico Wild, and many partners worked to secure for over a decade. Opening these lands to oil and gas development would desecrate sacred ground, harm the local economy, and increase public health consequences.

**An attempt to reverse the Antiquities Act...**which has created 167 national monuments nationwide and 10 in New Mexico, including two recent monuments: Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. The Justice Department recently determined that a century-old opinion from the then U.S. Attorney General was incorrect. The DOJ found Trump has the power to abolish or reduce the size of national monuments established by other

presidents. This new opinion lays the groundwork for potential massive changes to lands and waters protected as national monuments.

**A growing movement to sell or "unprotect" public lands...**may be gaining traction in Congress. In the budget now under review, a provision mandates the sale of 2-3 million acres of public lands in 11 states across the West, including New Mexico. This provision also mandates more oil and gas leasing and requires mass timber sales in national forests.

**Our strategy at New Mexico Wild...**will be to fight any harm to our public lands on two fronts: legal and outreach. With partners, we can use the courts to delay or even stop what we believe to be illegal seizure or misuse of public lands. At the same time, we are increasing our outreach efforts to the broader public who may not know about these threats. Public support is vital to long-term protections.

On the other side of this Advisory, we provide more detail on these three specific attacks on our public lands and how you can help. Your membership makes a difference!

Mark Allison  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Wild



**Right now, our national parks,  
monuments, and other public lands  
face unprecedented risks.**

**Your support matters.**





### Chaco protections threatened

The mineral withdrawal protecting Chaco's 10-mile buffer zone, put in place after years of advocacy, is now in peril. To date, The Bureau of Land Management has leased over 90% of federal lands in the Chaco landscape for drilling, and that has spawned more than 37,000 wells and 15,000 miles of roads to service those wells. The Chaco Culture National Historical Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and draws 50,000 visitors each year, bringing the local economy over \$3.2 million. As a large, intact landscape, it is one of the last remaining areas of northwest New Mexico where wildlife can escape human activity. Perhaps of greatest consequence, the landscape is sacred ground for many Pueblos and Tribes who have been vocal supporters of these protections.

### National monuments at risk

During President Trump's first term he reduced the size of two of Utah's national monuments in his effort to increase oil, gas, and coal production. Now, the threat is even greater. Monument borders are being reviewed by the Secretary of the Interior. On his first day in office last January, the President declared a "national energy emergency" to pave the way for these reductions or eliminations. The newly published 50-page U.S. Department of Justice opinion could contribute to rolling back protections for 13.5 million acres of our monuments. National monuments safeguard water and wildlife, boost the outdoor recreation economy, protect trails, and preserve culturally and geographically significant sites.



### Public lands for sale

Proposals to sell off significant parcels of public lands have been floated for years but have taken on new life under President Trump. In the budget bill being reviewed as this Advisory was written, Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) proposed a budget text that mandates the sale or exploitation of public lands. Utah recently lost a



Supreme Court case seeking to transfer federal lands to state control which would pave the way for changes in protections or even for land sales. Unfortunately, twelve states supported Utah's lawsuit along with a coalition of Arizona and New Mexico counties. Despite this recent loss, the fight continues. For example, Luna County recently passed an anti-public lands, anti-national monuments proclamation. While that cannot override federal law, it indicates one of the many challenges our public lands face.

To increase protection for our public lands, New Mexico Wild just launched its

## Legal+Outreach Fund

- + To help fund, with our partners, legal action to stop or delay policies adverse to our public lands, wildlife, and water.
- + To increase broader public awareness of the risk to the lands we all treasure.



Please consider a special donation to our new Legal+Outreach Fund and check our website for action alerts as well as ways you can voice your support for our public lands.

[nmwild.org](http://nmwild.org)

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