

United States Bureau of Land Management  
New Mexico State Director Melanie Barnes  
301 Dinosaur Trail  
Santa Fe, NM 87508

September 3, 2025

**Re. Cancel the Q4 2025 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale - Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Offices - DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2025-0011-EA**

Dear State Director Barnes,

I strongly urge the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) New Mexico State Office to cancel the planned November 2025 oil and gas lease sale in the Farmington Field Office (FFO) and the Rio Puerco Field Office (RPFO). The BLM is planning to auction off 3,722.6 acres of ancestral Diné lands in the Greater Chaco Landscape within or near Ojo Encino, Torreon/Star Lake, and Counselor Chapters. This lease sale is part of a series of BLM actions that threaten land, air, water, sacred places, public health, and the global climate.

For over a decade, the BLM has failed to meaningfully analyze and address the cumulative impacts of fracking in the Greater Chaco Landscape, including in both the FFO and RPFO. The FFO 2003 Resource Management Plan does not even contemplate fracking, while the recent RPFO RMP does not adequately address its cumulative impacts for communities or the climate. The BLM FFO has already leased 91% of its lands for oil and gas extraction. With nearly 40,000 wells across the landscape, frontline communities in this region are already overburdened. The November lease sale will exacerbate the many harms of oil and gas extraction that frontline and Diné communities experience every day, including: dangerous air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, toxic spills of liquid waste, destruction of sacred sites and places, degradation of local roads vital for community transport, and elevated risks to public health. Moreover, the BLM FFO and RPFO have failed to meaningfully consult with impacted and Indigenous communities on this lease sale.

The BLM acknowledges in its Environmental Assessment for the November 2025 lease sale that all seven nominated parcels contain Native American cultural resources, and that all seven parcels are within known or potentially suitable habitat for sensitive or endangered species. All of the nominated lease parcels contain surface water features: six of the parcels (474, 517, 562, 530, 531, and 532) contain ephemeral or intermittent streams or rivers, while two nominated lease parcels (562 and 570) contain an intermittent lake or pond. Additionally, BLM notes that two local springs are within parcel 474 and another spring is only 200 meters from the boundary of parcel 570. Local communities depend on these water sources for their survival.

Contamination from a spill from oil and gas activities would cause irreparable harm. The risk of harm to cultural resources, nonhuman relatives, and local water sources cannot be adequately mitigated with a lease stipulation or a condition attached to a drilling permit. Contrary to what BLM proposes, it is completely inappropriate to defer more site-specific mitigation measures to the drilling permit stage. The only way to protect local waters, communities, and lands is to stop leasing and drilling. It is unconscionable that despite knowledge of these risks and others, the BLM proposes to move forward with the November 2025 lease sale.

This lease sale must be cancelled, as must all planned sales for the Greater Chaco Landscape. Furthermore, BLM must reverse its erroneous decision to reissue 2019 leases in the FFO and RPFO. We urge BLM to undertake a landscape-level analysis and planning process for the Greater Chaco region, to fulfill its trust and treaty obligations, and abide by the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

Sincerely,

[Individual signatory]