

## Heinrich, Luján secure protection for Chaco Canyon

Written by gallupsun  
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WASHINGTON - U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) secured a provision in the Omnibus Appropriations Agreement for Fiscal Year 2022 to maintain the moratorium on oil and gas leasing on federal land in the withdrawal area of the Greater Chaco Region.

Maintaining the moratorium is critical to preserving the Greater Chaco Region for the enjoyment of present and future generations of Americans, to protecting and facilitating the continued expression of indigenous cultural and spiritual practices, and to conserving the irreplaceable landscapes that form in the country's shared heritage. Tourism in the Greater Chaco Region is also a growing economic engine in the region whose value depends on the preservation of the landscape and its contents from over/misuse, degradation, and destruction.

“Chaco Canyon is one of the most precious landscapes on Earth and holds deep meaning for Tribes, Pueblos, and communities in northern New Mexico,” said Heinrich, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. “I am grateful for all of the New Mexicans who have worked to preserve the integrity of Chaco’s irreplaceable resources. I will keep doing all I can to permanently protect the important cultural and religious sites and the sacred landscape of the greater Chaco region for future generations.”



“It has always been a priority of mine to defend the environmental and cultural riches of the beautiful Chaco Canyon,” **Luján said.** “I’m pleased to have secured permanent protections for Chaco, which is sacred to many of New Mexico’s Tribes, Pueblos and communities, preserving the Greater Chaco Region for generations to come.”

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In November 2021, the Biden administration announced it would begin the process to withdraw federal minerals within the Chaco Culture Heritage Withdrawal Area from future mineral development, including new oil and gas leasing.

Senators Heinrich and Luján intend to reintroduce legislation to permanently withdraw the federal lands around Chaco Canyon from further mineral development.

Located in Northwestern New Mexico, the Greater Chaco Landscape is a region of great cultural, spiritual, and historical significance to many Pueblos and Indian Tribes and containing thousands of artifacts that date back more than 1,000 years. Chaco cultural sites were listed as a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site in 1987 and are one of only 24 sites in the United States.