

No More Leases in Greater Chaco

Bureau of Land Management Farmington Field Office and Rio Puerco Field Office Q3 Oil and Gas Lease Sale

The United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to [lease](#) 12 parcels of ancestral lands totaling 16,855.5 acres within the BLM Farmington Field Office and Rio Puerco Field Office on August 19, 2026. These parcels are located within the Greater Chaco Landscape in northwestern New Mexico.

This lease sale comes as the Trump administration seeks to revoke the 10-mile buffer around Chaco Canyon while simultaneously accelerating quarterly oil and gas lease sales across the Greater Chaco landscape. Rather than respecting years of Tribal consultation, BLM is moving to reopen protected lands and continue industrializing one of the world's most significant cultural landscapes.

Greater Chaco has been treated as a sacrifice zone for generations. Continuing quarterly lease sales while communities live with the legacy of pollution, contaminated water, industrial traffic, and damaged sacred places is incompatible with environmental justice.

BLM is accepting protest comments regarding this lease sale until **July 20, 2026 @ 4 pm MT**.

In this toolkit:

1. [Where to submit your protest](#)
2. [Background](#)
3. [Strategies for submitting a protest to BLM](#)
4. Sample protest letters
 - a. [Sample letter 1](#) - Cumulative Impacts and Just Transition
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 - c. [Sample letter 3](#) - Consultation
5. [Why BLM should cancel this lease sale](#)
6. [Social media graphics](#)

Call to Action: Submit a Protest Today!

Option 1: Email

To: BLM_NM_Q3_2026Protest@blm.gov

Email Subject: August 2026 Protest

Option 2: Mail or In-person Delivery

BLM New Mexico State Office

Attention: State Director

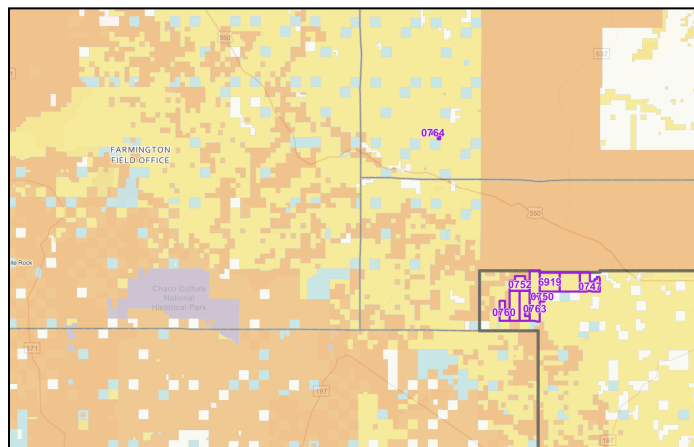
301 Dinosaur Trail

Santa Fe, NM 87508

Background

The Greater Chaco Landscape is a vast living and cultural landscape that extends throughout the Four Corners region. At its center is Chaco Canyon, where the ancestors of Pueblo and Diné peoples lived and stewarded the land for generations. Pueblo, Diné, and other Tribes maintain profound spiritual and cultural connections to Chaco Canyon and the broader landscape today.

With over 40,000 oil and gas wells across the landscape, the Greater Chaco region has been under threat from oil and gas extraction for decades. The vast majority of federally managed lands in the region are already leased for extraction. Frontline Diné communities face health and safety risks from noxious emissions, regular toxic spills, heavy truck traffic, and the



Map of proposed August 2026 lease sale in Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Offices

degradation of sacred sites. Rather than addressing decades of cumulative harm, BLM continues to auction the few lands that remain unleased.

Currently, the Trump administration is doubling down on fracking in Greater Chaco under an agenda of “energy dominance”. Trump’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is holding oil and gas lease sales every three months and issuing new drilling permits for fracking across Greater Chaco.

On August 19, 2026, [the BLM will auction off](#) nearly 17,000 acres of ancestral lands in Sandoval and Rio Arriba Counties, within the Greater Chaco Landscape.

The BLM is accepting protest comments about this lease sale until **July 20th at 4 pm MST**. Please submit your protest today and tell BLM enough is enough. **Greater Chaco is not for sale. No more sacrifice zones.**

Strategies to Make Your Comment “Acceptable” to BLM

BLM has the authority to dismiss a protest that does not meet its requirements. A dismissed protest is not counted, not responded to, and does not strengthen the public record. The strategies below will help make sure your comment is received, reviewed, and harder to push aside.

1. Meet the Minimum Filing Requirements (43 C.F.R. § 3120.13)

- Identify specific parcel(s) by name or number
- Include your full name and mailing address
- Include a statement of reasons why the parcel should not be leased
- Sign the protest -- unsigned protests are automatically dismissed
- Email to BLM_NM_Q3_2026Protest@blm.gov, subject line: "August 2026 Protest"

2. Be Specific About Which Parcels You Oppose

- The sale covers 12 parcels, 16,855.5 acres in Sandoval and Rio Arriba Counties. You do not have to oppose all of them, but you can. You can find information about specific parcels in [BLM's Environmental Assessment](#). The parcel numbers are 924, 764, 919, 763, 760, 759, 758, 752, 751, 750, 748, 747.
- Name specific parcels and connect your reasons to those places
- Reference the EA number (DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA) in your protest

3. Connect Your Concerns to Federal Law

- NEPA (42 U.S.C. § 4321): Argue BLM failed to analyze cumulative impacts of this sale on top of 40,000+ existing wells, roads, and waste facilities
- FLPMA (43 U.S.C. § 1701): Argue continued quarterly leasing constitutes

unnecessary and undue degradation inconsistent with BLM's Resource Management Plan obligations

- NHPA Section 106 (54 U.S.C. § 306108): Argue BLM has not completed meaningful government-to-government consultation with affected Pueblo and Dine communities -- sending letters is not consultation. BLM identified 190+ archaeological sites and traditional cultural places in the affected area.

Pick one or two laws that fit what you know. A focused protest is stronger than a scattered one.

4. Use Your Own Experience!

- Personal testimony carries real weight in the administrative record
- If you haul water, have family nearby, have health conditions linked to nearby wells, or have witnessed spills or damage to sacred places -- describe it specifically
- Pair lived experience with a legal argument above

5. Avoid Language BLM Can Sidestep

- General opposition alone ("I oppose fracking") is not sufficient -- to the extent that you can, anchor every concern to a specific place, a specific law, and a specific inadequacy in the EA
- The toolkit's "[Why BLM Should Cancel This Lease Sale](#)" section identifies key factual deficiencies you can cite

6. If You Represent an Organization, Say So

- Include your title and a statement that you are authorized to file on the organization's behalf
- Tribes and Chapters carry distinct legal weight -- file separately from NGO partners, not as a co-signer on a shared letter

7. Stagger Your Submissions -- Do Not All Submit at Once

- ☐ Under 40 C.F.R. § 1503.4, BLM can treat substantially identical comments as a single protest and respond with one form reply
- ☐ Spread submissions across different days between now and July 20
- ☐ Personalize at least the opening and closing of your letter
- ☐ Tribes and Navajo Chapters should file their own independently authored protests

50 personalized protests staggered across two weeks are more powerful than 500 identical letters sent at noon on the same day.

This guidance was prepared to support public participation in the BLM Q3 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale (DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA). It is not legal advice.

Sample Protest Comment Letter #1 — Cumulative Impacts and Just Transition

Please personalize your comment by editing this text and adding reasons you oppose this lease sale.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico State Office
Attn: State Director
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87508

Re. Protest of DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA, Q3 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale - Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Offices

I / my organization hereby protest the proposed August 2026 lease sale in the Farmington Field Office and Rio Puerco Field Office and the inclusion of all the parcels described in DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA. [If submitting for org, add a statement: I, [role at org] have been authorized to submit this statement on behalf of org]

The BLM should cancel the Q3 competitive oil and gas lease sale in the Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Offices. BLM's Environmental Assessment of the impacts of the proposed lease sale is inadequate. BLM fails to analyze and disclose the multiple impacts of the proposed lease sale within scales and contexts that are relevant to impacted communities. The Greater Chaco region is already overwhelmed by 40,000 active and abandoned oil and gas wells that cause numerous health, cultural, and environmental harms on a daily basis. Frontline communities face health and safety risks from noxious emissions, regular toxic spills, and heavy truck traffic. Pueblos, Tribes, and Indigenous peoples with cultural and spiritual ties to the Greater Chaco region are harmed by the ongoing degradation of the land and sacred places. The proposed Q3 lease sale will exacerbate all of these ongoing and existing harms, while causing new and unacceptable forms of destruction in the Sinsateel Mesa area. BLM fails to address the cumulative impacts of this sale.

Instead of perpetuating a legacy of environmental injustice, BLM must work with Pueblos, Tribes, Navajo Chapters, and local communities to remediate the harms that oil and gas extraction has already caused, and engage in landscape-level planning to support local communities in a just transition.

The Q3 lease sale threatens sacred sites, communities, plant and animal relatives, precious water sources, and the global climate. It will increase the cumulative toxic emissions that local communities are exposed to and increase the likelihood of toxic spills. The lease sale will bring

more heavy truck traffic into rural communities, degrading roads and increasing the risk of accidents.

I/we respectfully urge BLM to cancel the Q3 lease sale in Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Office, and engage in meaningful Tribal and public consultation about future land management in the region.

Sincerely,

[your name and address]

Sample Protest Comment Letter #2 — Focussing on Water Impacts

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico State Office
Attn: State Director
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87508

Re. Protest of DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA, Q3 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale - Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Offices

I / my organization hereby protest the proposed August 2026 lease sale in the Farmington Field Office and Rio Puerco Field Office and the inclusion of all the parcels described in DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA. [If submitting for org, add a statement: I, [role at org] have been authorized to submit this statement on behalf of org]

The lease sale must not go forward because BLM has failed to analyze and disclose the effects of the lease sale for groundwater and surface water in a manner that is relevant for local communities who will be impacted by the sale. This is a violation of NEPA. BLM estimates that drilling and completing the 12 wells currently planned for the proposed lease parcels will require 318 acre feet or 103,620,754 gallons of water. Shockingly, BLM states that this is an insignificant amount of water, but this is only because BLM compares this water use to the total estimated water use for oil and gas development and other sectors in the region. 318 acre feet of water is not an insignificant quantity, especially in a region that is dealing with a megadrought and where many families do not have running water. BLM has failed to adequately analyze and disclose the impacts of this water use within local lived contexts. Every new lease commits scarce water resources to oil and gas extraction in one of the driest regions in North America. BLM treats these competing demands as unrelated when they are inseparable.

Local residents depend on the aquifer. BLM states that development of the proposed leases will deplete the aquifer and that the aquifer will only recover upon recharge. Recharge could take thousands of years in current drought conditions. BLM has failed to assess how the depletion of the aquifer will affect water availability for local communities and nonhuman relatives. Knowing that the aquifer will be depleted as a result of this lease sale, it is capricious to move forward with the proposed action.

BLM states that the development of proposed lease parcels is likely to generate more than 41 million barrels (1.3 billion gallons) of toxic oil and gas waste known as “produced water”, yet largely assumes this waste can be safely managed. New Mexico spill data demonstrate otherwise, with liquid oil and gas spills occurring every 6-7 hours across the state. Spills of this toxic waste occur routinely, contaminate soils and waterways, and frequently result in unrecovered pollution. Rather than acknowledging this documented pattern, BLM treats spills as isolated incidents as opposed to a reasonably foreseeable consequence of expanded drilling. BLM does not present an adequate plan to ensure protection of public health and the environment during disposal of this waste, or a plan to prevent waste from being spilled during production or transportation. BLM cannot defer responsibility for spills to the State of New Mexico and must instead acknowledge that spills are direct consequences of its leasing actions.

I/we respectfully urge BLM to cancel the Q3 lease sale in Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Office, and engage in meaningful Tribal and public consultation about future land management in the region.

Sincerely,

[your name and address]

Sample Protest Comment Letter #3 — Focussing on Cultural Impacts and Consultation

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico State Office
Attn: State Director
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87508

Re. Protest of DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA, Q3 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale - Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Offices

I / my organization hereby protest the proposed August 2026 lease sale in the Farmington Field Office and Rio Puerco Field Office and the inclusion of all the parcels described in DOI-BLM-NM-F010-2026-0020-EA. [If submitting for org, add a statement: I, [role at org] have been authorized to submit this statement on behalf of org]

The development of the proposed leases would have profound and irreversible effects for the Sinateel Mesa Complex, an incredibly sacred place for Diné people. The Sinateel Mesa Complex is a 20-mile sacred area. There are many culturally important places within it that are central to Diné history and culture. It is unacceptable that BLM is planning to lease lands for oil and gas extraction in this area, especially without the consent of local Navajo Chapters and communities. The BLM has identified nearly 200 archaeological sites and traditional cultural places within the area affected by the proposed lease parcels. BLM has not convincingly demonstrated that the lease sale will have no adverse effects on these sacred places.

BLM cannot move forward with this lease sale because BLM has failed to consult with impacted Tribes and Indigenous communities, which is required under NHPA. BLM's concept of Tribal consultation is to send letters to Tribes affected by this lease sale. Letters are not meaningful consultation. BLM must meaningfully engage Pueblos, Tribes, and impacted communities, including Navajo Nation Chapters and allotment shareholders who will be directly impacted by this lease sale. BLM must hold forums in impacted Navajo Nation Chapters and provide information about the proposed lease sale in Diné Bizaad so that impacted communities can weigh in on this action.

I/we respectfully urge BLM to cancel the Q3 lease sale in Farmington and Rio Puerco Field Office, and engage in meaningful Tribal and public consultation about future land management in the region.

Sincerely,

[your name and address]

Why BLM Should Cancel This Lease Sale

- The region is already overleased.
- Existing harms have not been addressed.
- BLM continues to approve drilling while failing to analyze cumulative impacts.
- The agency should prioritize restoration.

Cultural Impacts

- The development of the proposed leases would have profound and irreversible effects for the Sinateel Mesa Complex, an incredibly sacred place for Diné people. The Sinateel Mesa Complex is a 20-mile sacred area. There are many culturally important places within it that are central to Diné history and culture. It is unacceptable that BLM is planning to lease lands for oil and gas extraction in this area, especially without the consent of local Navajo Chapters and communities.
- The BLM has identified over 120 archaeological sites and traditional cultural places within the area affected by the proposed lease parcels. BLM has not demonstrated that the lease sale will have no adverse effects on these sacred places.
- The BLM does not address impacts to ancient junipers on the Sinateel Mesa.

Water and Waste

- BLM estimates that drilling and completing the 12 wells currently planned for the proposed lease parcels will require 318 acre feet or 103,620,754 gallons of water. Shockingly, BLM states that this is an insignificant amount of water, but this is only because BLM compares this water use to the total estimated water use for oil and gas development and other sectors in the region. 318 acre feet of water is not an insignificant quantity, especially in a region that is dealing with a megadrought and where many families do not have running water. BLM has failed to adequately analyze and disclose the impacts of this water use within local lived contexts. Every new lease commits scarce water resources to oil and gas extraction in one of the driest regions in North America. BLM treats these competing demands as unrelated when they are inseparable.
- Local residents depend on the aquifer. BLM states that development of the proposed leases will deplete the aquifer and that the aquifer will only recover upon recharge. Recharge could take thousands of years in current drought conditions. BLM has failed to assess how the depletion of the aquifer will affect water availability for local communities and nonhuman relatives.
- BLM states that the development of proposed lease parcels is likely to generate more

than 41 million barrels (1.3 billion gallons) of toxic oil and gas waste known as “produced water”, yet largely assumes this waste can be safely managed. New Mexico spill data demonstrate otherwise, with liquid oil and gas spills occurring every 6-7 hours across the state. Spills of this toxic waste occur routinely, contaminate soils and waterways, and frequently result in unrecovered pollution. Rather than acknowledging this documented pattern, BLM treats spills as isolated incidents as opposed to a reasonably foreseeable consequence of expanded drilling. BLM does not present an adequate plan to ensure protection of public health and the environment during disposal of this waste, or a plan to prevent waste from being spilled during production or transportation.

Health and Environmental Justice

- The development of proposed lease parcels will result in dangerous emissions of hazardous air pollutants, nitrogen oxide, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, and the formation of ozone, all of which are harmful to human health.
- BLM previously leased lands in this area for oil and gas extraction. A federal district court found that BLM had failed to analyze the cumulative climate impacts of its leasing decision and ordered BLM to redo its analysis. EOG Resources, the company that held these leases, ultimately rescinded them, but during an initial development phase, EOG Resources destroyed a sandstone bluff to build a new road and caused other irreparable harm to the landscape. BLM does not have a good record of holding oil and gas operators accountable in this region.
- The development of proposed lease parcels will result in carbon dioxide and methane emissions that fuel climate change. Climate impacts — such as heat, drought, and wildfires — are already disproportionately affecting communities in the Greater Chaco region.
- Communities surrounding Greater Chaco are not being exposed to emissions from a single project. They are living amid more than 40,000 existing wells, compressor stations, roads, pipelines, and waste facilities. Every additional lease compounds these cumulative exposures. Before authorizing additional leasing, BLM should prioritize plugging orphan wells, remediating spills, reclaiming abandoned infrastructure, and addressing the cumulative impacts of decades of extraction across the Greater Chaco landscape.

Tribal Consultation

- BLM’s idea of Tribal consultation is to send letters to Tribes affected by this lease sale. Letters are not meaningful consultation. BLM must meaningfully engage Pueblos, Tribes, and impacted communities.

- BLM must consult and hold informational sessions with impacted Navajo Nation Chapters.

Social Media Tools

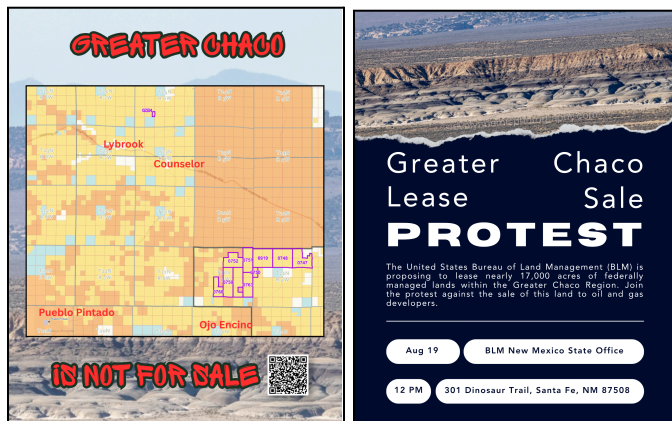
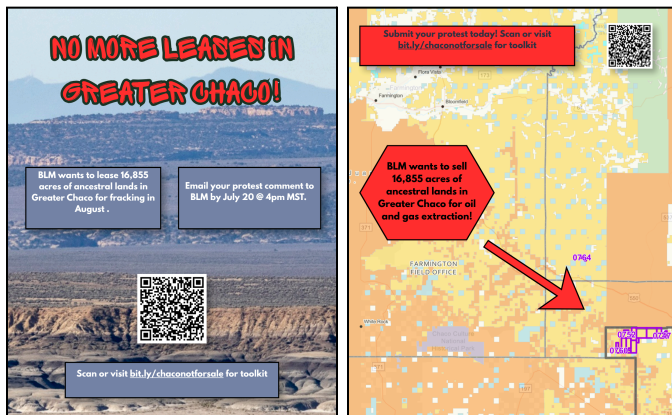
For a better resolution, please download the images:

Social Graphic #1: ■ Stop August Lease Sale-1.png

Social Graphic #2: ■ Stop August Lease Sale-2.png

Social Graphic #3: ■ Stop August Lease Sale-closeup 3.png

Social Graphic #4: ■ Chaco Lease Sale Protest Flyer.png



Sample Caption: The Bureau of Land Management wants to lease 16,855 acres of ancestral lands in the Greater Chaco region for fracking. This lease sale would desecrate sacred lands and exacerbate ongoing harms of extraction that frontline communities already face. Email your protest comment to BLM by July 20th (cut off at 4pm) at BLM_NM_Q3_2026Protest@blm.gov . Learn more about the issues and find tips for writing your protest in this toolkit:

bit.ly/chaconotforsale

And save the date. On the day of the lease sale, August 19th, 2026, we will gather at the BLM New Mexico State Office in Santa Fe to call on BLM to cancel this lease sale and all future lease sales in Greater Chaco. #NoMoreLeases #EndSacrificeZones #ProtectGreaterChaco