

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 19, 2017

Aden Seidlitz
Acting New Mexico State Director
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 27115
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115

Dear State Director Seidlitz:

We write to express our concern about the potential impacts of leasing some of the parcels proposed for the March 2018 Farmington Oil and Gas Lease Sale. Oil and gas development is critically important to New Mexico's economy and it is important that leasing and development is done in a responsible manner that minimizes negative impacts, especially on rural, low-income, and tribal communities.

We are concerned that some of the parcels currently included in the lease sale may not be appropriate during this interim period while the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are updating the joint Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM and BIA joint RMPA is a historic opportunity to thoroughly assess the impacts of mineral development and safeguard cultural and natural resources for present and future generations. We urge the BLM to assure that any parcels leased in March are done so in a way that does not undercut the larger process being conducted in the joint RMPA.

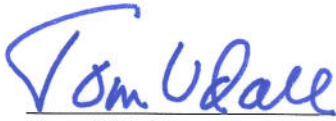
We have heard concerns from our constituents about the safety and health impacts of oil and gas wells and facilities near homes and buildings since the July 2016 incident in which 55 residents were evacuated near Nageezi from an explosion on BLM lands just 14 miles from Chaco Culture National Historical Park. We encourage the BLM and the BIA to carefully assess the current stipulations for oil and gas operations near occupied residences and structures as part of the RMPA process and defer parcels in this lease sale which have an inadequate distance to protect people living in the area.

We appreciate the New Mexico BLM State Director's decision to defer several parcels from inclusion in the March lease sale that were within the 10-mile protection zone around Chaco Culture National Historical Park as part of the RMPA planning process. We ask that you exercise discretion and consider deferring leasing on public lands during the RMPA process where special places and values within the Greater Chaco Landscape may be threatened.

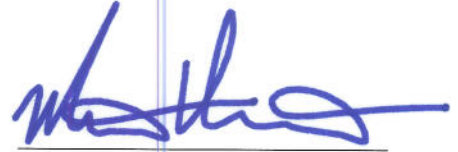
In a landscape as rich with history and culture and the Greater Chaco Area, it is especially important to thoroughly understand the consequences of any action before moving forward. We ask that you work with affected communities and engage in thorough and meaningful tribal

consultation before proceeding with any lease sale in this special place. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative



Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative