



NewsMAC

Newsletter of the New Mexico Archeological Council

**P.O. Box 25691
Albuquerque, NM 87125**

NewsMAC Spring 2023 (2023-1)

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Greetings New Mexico Archeological Council Members,

2023 promises to be a busy year for the New Mexico Archeological Council (NMAC). After a successful Annual Meeting last fall highlighting underrepresented groups in New Mexico's history, the Executive Board has chosen to examine how the organization can adapt its programs to support new ideas and diverse viewpoints within the historic preservation community. To that end, we are currently working on a letter supporting the revised traditional cultural properties National Register Bulletin, as the Board seeks to recognize the impact the bulletin has had on the evaluation of places of cultural significance to Indigenous and other traditional communities within New Mexico and throughout the country. In addition, we eagerly await the Biden Administration's decision on the proposed 10-mile administrative withdrawal around Chaco Culture National Historic Park, which was supported by NMAC and numerous American Indian tribes throughout the Southwest. You can read NMAC's letter supporting the proposed administrative withdrawal in this issue.

We are also examining potential programs aimed at diversifying the historic preservation field in New Mexico. This includes potentially starting a mentorship program to support young professionals and students interested in the field, as well as a potential new grant program targeting students studying anthropology in New Mexico. The hope is these potential new programs can encourage and engage a new generation of historic preservation professionals in New Mexico.

As 2023 continues, we'll be examining additional ways NMAC can better support a diverse and inclusive historic preservation community in New Mexico. We encourage members and non-members alike to offer their ideas and consider volunteering their time on the Executive Board.

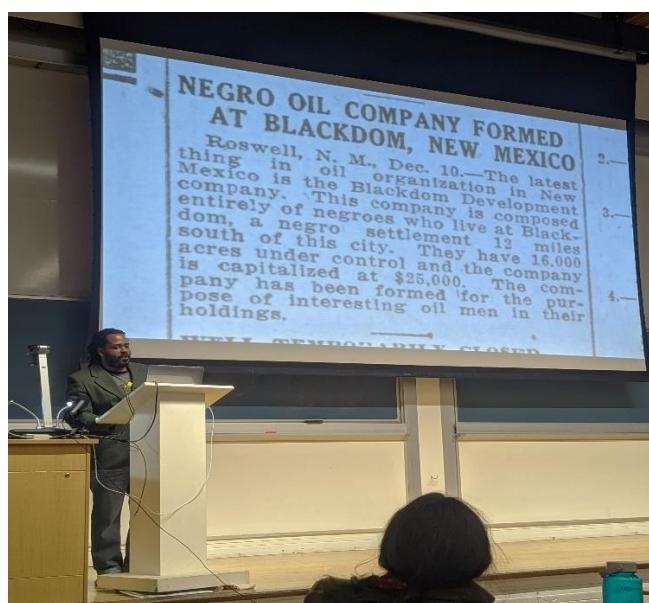
Sincerely,

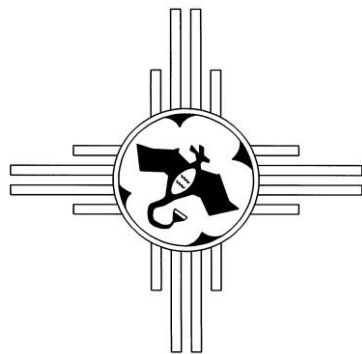
Michael Spears
NMAC President, 2023
mspears6@gmail.com

Report on NMAC 2022 Fall Conference: *Underrepresented Groups in New Mexico History*

The 2022 NMAC Fall Conference was held on November 12, 2022 in the Hibben Center on the University of New Mexico campus. A live-stream version of the presentations was available for those who were unable to attend the event in person. On Friday evening, keynote speaker Dr. Timothy E. Nelson provided an engaging and interactive presentation on the significance of Blackdom in New Mexico's history. This presentation set the stage for the conference theme and offered a glimpse into cultural connections that the Blackdom townsite had during its heyday and continues to have into the 21st century.

Presentations during the Saturday conference covered a range of topics focused on the underrepresentation of certain groups in the historical and archaeological records of the state. This includes populations historically underrepresented in the written record, in archaeological research, or even in some cases, underrepresented and/or underrecognized groups within the archaeological community. The final session of the day was presented by the Historic Preservation Division and included an overview of the importance of historic contexts for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Eligibility. Recordings of the live-streamed conference sessions can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/2afaf8d4>.





NEW MEXICO ARCHEOLOGICAL COUNCIL
P.O. Box 25691, Albuquerque, NM 87125

December 9, 2022

Sarah Scott
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
6251 College Blvd., Suite A
Farmington, NM 87402

Submitted via eplanning

Re: Draft Environmental Assessment for Proposed Chaco Area Withdrawal

Dear Ms. Scott,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input on the draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Chaco Area Withdrawal (Draft EA) prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The New Mexico Archeological Council (NMAC) is a New Mexico-based nonprofit organization whose purpose is to maintain and promote the goals of professional archaeology in New Mexico. NMAC strongly supports the action of the draft Proposed Chaco Area Withdrawal Environmental Assessment and encourages the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to act swiftly to ensure protection for the next 20 years for the culturally sensitive 10-mile zone around Chaco.

The significance and importance of the 10-mile zone revolves around its values—spiritual and scientific. Chaco Canyon and the surrounding Greater Chaco Landscape constitute a living cultural and ancestral landscape of great spiritual significance to the 19 Pueblo Tribes of New Mexico, the Navajo Nation, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, and the Hopi Tribe. These tribes view archaeological sites across the Greater Chaco Landscape as an important part of their history and continue to maintain ties to these archaeological sites and other traditional cultural places across this rich landscape.

The New Mexico Cultural Resources Information System (NMCRIS) database shows that there are more than 4,200 archaeological and historic sites in the proposed protective zone. As less than 20 percent of

the area enclosed by the proposed 10-mile protective zone has been archaeologically surveyed, the actual number of archaeological and historic sites is undoubtedly much higher.

At least ten significant Chacoan-era communities are within and just beyond the proposed 10-mile protective zone with hundreds of associated cultural and historic sites. The data from Pierre's Community illustrate the density of resources in the currently, largely unprotected 10-mile withdrawal zone. Pierre's Community encompasses at least 160 sites of varying ages (primarily Chacoan with some Archaic, early Navajo, and historic Navajo manifestations). BLM designated two ACEC zones of protection in the 1990s, designed to protect Pierre's and two sections of the Great North Road. However, the ACECs only protect a subset of the sites within Pierre's Community, leaving much of the community without protection from ongoing oil and gas development.

Recent ethnographic projects, including those related to the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project and the Chaco Heritage Tribal Association, have identified thousands of Traditional Cultural Properties associated with Indian tribes within the Greater Chaco Landscape. These studies demonstrate the profound ongoing and historical connections Indian tribes have to the proposed 10-mile protective zone and the Greater Chaco Landscape. A failure to protect Federal lands in the proposed 10-mile protective zone would undoubtedly result in loss of sensitive cultural resources and continue to degrade an important part of the cultural landscapes of many Indian tribes.

The site avoidance policy pursued by the BLM, BIA, and other agencies has spared many cultural resources from outright destruction, but has also resulted in a highly fragmented cultural landscape across many places of the American West, and in particular, across the Greater Chaco Landscape. As a result, many indirect and cumulative effects have built up across the Greater Chaco Landscape as it has been slowly but persistently in-filled by the industrial infrastructure of the oil-gas industry.

In our view, a better perspective looks at cultural sites not in isolation, but as pieces of larger communities on the landscape. This community- or landscape-based approach has been part of archaeological research for nearly 25 years, but it has not yet been implemented by the BLM in their land use planning. Although the BLM lands in Greater Chaco are currently leased at more than 90 percent, this landscape-level approach can be implemented to protect communities and site clusters that have not yet seen impacts.

These values underscore that the 10-mile zone of protection is not arbitrary. The 10-mile zone contains irreplaceable ancient and historic sites and communities that merit greater protection than BLM and BIA regulations currently provide. This reinforces the need for permanent withdrawal of the 351,000 acres in Secretary Haaland's order, as well as the need for legislation to permanently remove the threat of future oil-gas development from this land.

In summary, we offer our full support for the BLM's currently proposed action to withdraw Federal surface and subsurface lands in the 10-mile zone around Chaco from oil-gas development for a period of 20 years. Thank you for the opportunity to provide commentary on this most important issue.

Sincerely,
Christina Chavez, President New Mexico Archeological Council



Christina Chavez, President
New Mexico Archeological Council



NEW MEXICO ARCHEOLOGICAL COUNCIL PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM (rev/2020)

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send form and CHECK to:

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PO Box 25691
Albuquerque, NM 87125

NMAC is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to maintain and promote the goals of professional archaeology in New Mexico.

NMAC's goals are to:

- promote archaeological research within New Mexico and disseminate knowledge arising from that research
 - promote awareness of New Mexico's cultural resources among public agencies, corporations, and members of the public.
 - encourage the legal protection of cultural resources, and encourage high standards for professional archaeology
-

2023 NMAC Contacts

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