June 4, 2019

The Honorable Tom Udall  
531 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
303 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján  
2323 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debra Haaland  
1237 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Xochitl Torres Small  
430 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Udall and Heinrich, and Representatives Luján, Haaland, and Torres Small:

As organizations dedicated to preserving cultural and historic resources, we write today in support of the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act (S. 1079/H.R. 2181).

We appreciate that your legislation provides a permanent withdrawal for approximately 316,000 acres of federal lands surrounding Chaco Canyon in recognition of the extensive and interconnected cultural resources across the landscape. We also applaud your work with the All Pueblo Council of Governors and the Navajo Nation to develop this legislation.

Chaco Canyon and the surrounding landscape hold remarkable examples of ceremonial buildings, distinctive great houses, and an elaborate network of engineered roads that link Chaco Canyon with outlying sites. This landscape was designated a World Heritage Site in 1987 for preserving outstanding elements of Chacoan culture, which dominated the region from the mid-9th to early 13th centuries.

Energy development associated with the Mancos-Gallup Shale formation in northwest New Mexico has increasingly threatened cultural resources and the broader landscape affiliated with Chaco. Recognizing this threat, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the Greater Chaco Landscape among America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2011. In September 2017, Archaeology Southwest released a new report summarizing recent research by the archaeological and academic communities on the Greater Chaco Landscape that underscores the critical need to enhance protections for the area.

Thank you for introducing the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act and for your continued leadership in protecting this important cultural landscape.

Sincerely,

National Trust for Historic Preservation
American Alliance of Museums
American Anthropological Association
Archaeological Institute of America
Archaeological Society of New Mexico
Archaeology Southwest
Arizona Preservation Foundation
Association of Iowa Archaeologists
Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley
Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians
Cienega Watershed Partnership
Coalition for American Heritage
Conservation Lands Foundation
Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology
Council of Texas Archeologists
Crow Canyon Archaeological Center
Desert Archaeology, Inc.
Friends of Cedar Mesa
Friends of Ironwood Forest
Heritage Ohio, Inc.
Illinois Archaeological Survey
Montana Preservation Alliance
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers
National Parks Conservation Association
New Mexico Archaeological Council
New Mexico Wild
Newark Earthworks Center
Pala Band of Mission Indians
Preservation Action
Rainbow Heritage Network
Save Our Heritage Organisation
Sedona Heritage Museum
Society for American Archaeology
Society for California Archaeology
Society for Historical Archaeology
SRI Foundation
Suquamish Tribe
The Amerind Foundation, Inc.
The Archaeological Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
US/ICOMOS
Vail Preservation Society
Washington Trust for Historic Preservation
Wisconsin Archaeological Survey
World Monuments Fund