

FMG-RMPA-EIS VPM Meeting 1 - 2020-05-14

- Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement virtual public meeting. My name Theresa Ancell, and I will be your moderator today.

| a little bit about me. I work for a local consulting firm here in the Four Corners, and I was born and raised in the Four Corners area, and have spent 17 years working in the San Juan Basin.

We're going to wait for just a moment for others to join. In the meantime, I'm going provide some verbal instructions on how you can join the online webinar from the Zoom application on your computer, phone, or tablet using the log information-- log in information provided during registration. We also have a phone-in option should your computer, tablet, or phone not have capabilities to run the online Zoom application.

If you're registered for the online portion, your confirmation email should provide you with the phone-in option as well. If you registered using your phone, our phone operator system, you will only have the option to join by phone. To have the best chance at seeing and hearing the presentation, please download the Zoom application if you haven't done it done so already and use that instead of your web browser.

We're going to take a moment to see-- this would be a good moment to update your Zoom version to five or greater. So please do that now. And the presentation will begin soon.

Welcome, everyone. We're just going to give everyone a chance to join the presentation. So I'll just be going over just some brief instructions. Again, I want to introduce myself. My name is Theresa Ancell, and I work for a local consulting firm here in Farmington. And we are helping the BLM. I will be your moderator today.

You can join the online webinar from the Zoom application on your computer, phone, or tablet using the login information provided during registration. We also have a phone-in option should your computer, tablet, or phone not have the capabilities to run the online Zoom application. The phone number is 1-346-248-7799, and the meeting ID is 93789662657. And I will repeat that here in just a few minutes.

If you're registered online, your confirmation email should have provided you with a phone-in option as well. If you registered using our operator phone number, you will have the-- you will only have the option to join by phone. To have the best chance at seeing and hearing the presentation, please download the Zoom application if you haven't done so already and use that instead of the web browser. If you haven't updated your resume to version 5.0 or greater, please do so now. We will begin the presentation very soon.

Hello again, everyone. We're just going to take just one or two more minutes. We have some individuals that are having some trouble logging on, so we need to work with them to make sure that everyone is getting on OK.

Again, my name is Theresa Ancell. And we will be starting here in just a few minutes. I'll be your moderator today. We will take just two more minutes, and then we will get going with the presentation. Thank you.

Thank you for your patience, everyone. I will now turn it over to Jill Aragon with the BLM. Jill?

- Hey, everyone. My name is Jillian Aragon, the Public Affairs Specialist for the Bureau of Land Management Farmington District Office. We want to welcome and thank you for participating in the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment, an environmental impact statement virtual public meeting. For this presentation, we will refer to this project as the RMPA. The Bureau of Land Management, BLM, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA, appreciate you joining us virtually as we navigate through these difficult times.

Before we begin the presentation, we would like to take this opportunity to go over some housekeeping items to ensure that you are able to access the information we are providing today. The audience is joining us through a variety of different ways. Some are listening and viewing this through Zoom, others by telephone, and some may be viewing this presentation after this session has ended. During this presentation, all participants' audio will be muted with video streaming turned off. Once the presentation is complete, we will begin the comment portion of this meeting. Additional instructions will be given once we get to that point.

We want to inform you that this presentation is being recorded and will be made available on the project's website after the conclusion of this meeting. Closed captioning is available for this presentation by clicking the CC button on the right-hand corner of your Zoom screen. This feature will only be available during the presentation, and not during the public comment portion. Transcripts of these comments will be available in the final RMPA EIS.

If you're having technical issues with the Zoom interface, you can let us know through the chat box by submitting a question in the Q&A feature. You can do so by clicking the Q&A icon at the bottom of your Zoom window. We will also be using the Q&A feature to address minor clarifications about public meetings or the draft RMPA EIS. More complex questions about the RMPA EIS should be submitted as formal comments.

If it would be easier for you to join by phone, please use this number. 346-248-7799. The member ID that you'll need once you dial that number is 93789662657. If you dial that number, you'll only be able to listen to this session. However that might be able to help you stay engaged as we move forward if you're having issues with Zoom.

Additionally, this webinar is being live streamed on BLM New Mexico's Facebook page. Those viewing this from Facebook live need to know that any comments submitted via the Facebook live page are not considered official comments on the draft RMPA. At the end of this presentation, we will be providing the information on how you can provide your formal comments.

Now, we will hear from the BLM New Mexico State Director Tim Spisak and the BIA Navajo Regional Director Bart Stevens.

- Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tim Spisak, and I'm the State Director for the Bureau of Land Management New Mexico. With me is Bart Stevens, the director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Regional Office. The BIA has teamed up with the BLM as co-lead for this BIS process. Now, the BLM and BIA welcome you to the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Resource Management Plan Amendment virtual public meeting.

We understand that these conversations are often preferred to be done in person, but right now, it is critical that we do our part to keep the American public and BLM and BIA employees healthy and safe. It is also important, though, that we maintain a capable and functioning government to the greatest extent possible during the COVID-19 outbreak. To achieve this, BLM and BIA are using current technology, where possible, to move forward with important projects, like this Farmington RMPA. Thanks to all of you who have joined us on this meeting online or by phone today, we appreciate your interest and input.

I will now turn this over to Director Stevens who has also prepared some remarks for this presentation.

- Good afternoon. This is Bart Stevens. I'm the BIA Regional Director for the Navajo Regional Office, and I, too, want to welcome everyone and thank you for joining us today. For these meetings that are very important to all of us, we all had to adapt to cope with the pandemic. And our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of our public is paramount. And we all-- we are also dedicated to fulfilling section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and our government-to-government consultation responsibility.

We will continue to be available to consult with tribes throughout the EIS process. We look forward to our continued work throughout this whole process. During this crisis, our grocery store clerks, delivery drivers, transit utility workers, and all those providing essential service, along with so many others, have all been selflessly getting up every day and making sure that we have all the things that we need.

Social distancing bends the curve and relieves some pressure on our home-- on our own heroic medical professionals. In moments like these, moments of crisis, we look out for one another to guide us through one of our darkest times and heal us through a long recovery. And they are risking their lives fighting the front line-- fighting on the front lines of this pandemic. And for that, we all want to say thank you.

So at this time, I would like you all to join me in a moment of silence to acknowledge and honor our community that are experiencing hardships during these difficult times. We are now going to switch off the audio for the moment of silence. Thank you.

- Thank you again for participating. We will now review the agenda for the meeting. We will begin with a presentation, and then we will accept comments from the public. The presentation will cover the EIS team, the purpose of the meeting, the NEPA process, and the project overview. We expect the presentation to last approximately 25 minutes. I'm going to go over a few logistics at this time, so if you want to grab a pen, now would be the time to do so.

As a reminder, this meeting is currently being recorded, and it will be made available after the meeting has concluded. A Navajo recording of a newsletter describing the project and this process is available and can be found on the project's e-planning website. If you're on the computer, feel free to ask simple questions in the Zoom Q&A feature during the presentation, where the BLM and BIA specialists will be working to answer you. Due to our time limitations today, these questions will not be read during the meeting, and we are asking participants to submit more complex questions as formal comments on the RMPA EIS.

We ask that you remain courteous to other attendees by not spamming or using profanity in your chat boxes. The public comment portion of this meeting will begin after the presentation. At the close of the presentation, individuals that have signed up during the registration can submit comments. Once we have gone through all those who have acknowledged that they wanted to provide a comment during registration, we will then open up the phone line to anyone else wishing to make a comment. We do have translators available, so feel free to make your verbal comments in Navajo.

Just so you know, there are four additional meetings beyond this one. You may register for these future meetings either online or by calling 505-635-9701. We will repeat this information at the end of the presentation.

We are here today to help orient you in reviewing the document and provide you an opportunity to provide your verbal or written comments. The BLM and BIA have placed additional meeting materials on the project's e-planning website for your review. Beyond these meetings, comments will also be accepted through e-planning or by mailing them to the BLM Farmington Field Office or to the BIA Navajo Regional Office. We will be providing these addresses at the end of the presentation.

Now, onto the presentation that will be facilitated by the BLM Farmington District Manager Al Elser.

- Thank you, and hello to all of our participants. My name is Al Elser, and I am the BLM Farmington District Manager. Your participation in this process is valued, and I appreciate you taking the time out of your days to join us as we look for innovative ways to continue our mission while ensuring that our community remains safe.

The BLM is preparing the draft EIS due to changing oil and gas development patterns in the Mancos shale and Gallup sandstone, collectively known as the Mancos-Gallup formations, including innovations in horizontal drilling technology and multi-stage hydraulic fracturing. The BLM will use this EIS to consider amending decisions in the 2003 RMPA related to impacts of oil and gas development, as well as rights of way, lands with wilderness characteristics, and vegetation. It's important to remember that the BLM's 2003 RMPA is still valid, and that this amendment could provide the agency with additional management tools within the decision space defined for the draft RMPA EIS.

The BIA does not currently have an RMP for these lands, so they will be using this EIS to evaluate alternatives and resource impacts related to its authority over mineral leasing and

associated activity decisions within the planning area. The BLM and BIA are preparing the draft EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of proposed federal actions prior to making decisions.

While preparing this document under NEPA, the BLM and BIA were required to comply with all federal-- applicable federal regulations. Examples of these include the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Clean Water Act.

Our project managers for this project are Sara Scott from the BLM and Robert Begay from the BIA. We also have a team of resource specialists from both agencies, collectively known as the interdisciplinary team. This team assisted in the development of the draft environmental impact statement, or EIS, and they are joining us today to help with minor clarifications about the draft EIS. They will be doing so through the Zoom Q&A function noted previously.

The draft EIS was developed based on input from agency staff, cooperating agencies, and the comments we received during our public scoping process. There are 23 cooperating agencies in total, including federal, state, and local governments, tribes and pueblos, and Navajo Nation chapter houses.

This slide provides an overview of the NEPA process. The first step of the EIS is to publish a notice of intent in the federal register. For this EIS, the BLM published a notice of intent in 2014. After publication of that notice of intent, the BLM conducted public and internal scoping to identify issues, provide resource and other information, and develop planning criteria to guide preparation of the draft EIS document.

In 2016, after the BIA joined as co-lead, another notice of intent was published in the Federal Register, followed by an additional round of public scoping. After the completion of scoping, the agencies began preparing the draft EIS. Scoping input from the public and ongoing work with corroborating agencies, resource specialists, and other stakeholders helped the BLM and BIA to develop a range of alternatives and establish a framework for our analysis.

The notice of availability of the draft EIS was published in the Federal Register on February 28 of this year. This began the 90-day public review and comment period, and is the step that we are currently on for this NEPA process. The agencies will be accepting comments on this document through May 28. After the 90-day public review period, the BLM and BIA will review the comments that were submitted and begin to incorporate them into the final EIS document. Once the final EIS document development is complete, we will publish a notice of availability announcing the final EIS, which will begin the 30-day public protest period.

The draft EIS can be found online at www.BLM.gov/nm/farmington. Hard copies have been distributed throughout Northwest New Mexico. Please contact us and we can direct you to the nearest location.

There are four volumes of the draft EIS. Volume 1 contains the draft EIS itself. It introduces the project and explains the purpose and need. It also describes the alternatives, the affected

environment, and the consequences of each alternative. The environmental summary in this document will give you a brief overview of the purpose of the project and what to expect to find within the document. Tables 2-2 and 2-3 offer a look at the specific range of alternatives for which resource management updates are being considered.

Volume 2 includes a series of appendices with a variety of supporting information, including maps and figures. And volumes 3 and 4 are supplemental reports that describe in more detail the affected environment and the environmental consequences of each alternative.

The map you are seeing now is of the state of New Mexico. Highlighted on this map in the northwest corner of the state are the lands referred to as the planning area. As we zoom into that portion of the state, we are showing the planning area that is being covered by BLM's analysis. The boundaries of the planning area expand from the Colorado/New Mexico border to the north, down the south, near the Becenti and Pueblo Pueblo Pintado chapter house areas, and from the area known as the Hogback to the west, reaching to the eastern edge of the Jicarilla Apache Nation border.

The planning area includes San Juan, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, and McKinley counties, covering almost 4.2 million acres, with the BLM and BIA responsible for managing approximately half of those acres. However, the decision area, those lands affected by this RMPA, is much more focused and does not include all lands within the planning area.

The map is now showing the BLM's decision area for this RMPA EIS effort. Only the areas in yellow on this map are subject to the updated management prescriptions being considered in the document. Existing leases will continue to operate under the continued lease-- under the current lease terms and are subject to the decisions outlined in BLM's 2003 RMP. Once the final decision on this document is made, any new lease issued would be subject to land use allocations and management decisions of the RMPA EIS.

Next, we will show BIA's decision area. Similar to the BLM, only the areas shown in brown on this map are subject to considerations in this document. Now we will merge the two maps to show you the decision area for both agencies. As you can see, the agencies are working together to manage the overlapping, complex landscape.

The alternatives that the BLM and BIA developed offer a range of possible management approaches for the decision area. We have each identified five alternatives, including eight BLM sub alternatives, that would apply specifically to fluid mineral leasing management around the boundary of Chaco Cultural National Historic Park. The draft EIS presents the varying degrees to which resources could be impacted under each alternative. This will be dependent on the theme of the alternative, nature of the resource, location of the resource and the proposed action, and other factors.

While each agency developed its own range of alternatives, the general themes of each alternative were similar across agencies. The no-action alternative consists of continuing current management outlined in the 2003 RMP. Alternative A places an emphasis on natural ecosystems. Alternative B emphasizes the Chacoan and cultural landscapes. Alternative C places an emphasis

on land health and traditional and cultural life ways. And finally, alternative D emphasizes maximizing resource production while minimizing impacts to surrounding areas.

The BLM and BIA are responsible for signing their own records of decision for this project, and both agencies are recommending alternative C as the preferred alternative. The goal behind the agencies identifying a preferred alternative is to get the public to provide more focused comments. It's important to understand that even though the agencies have both indicated a preferred alternative, they are not obligated, nor required, to select alternative C for their final decisions. They may select another alternative, or the final decision may include components of each alternative provided that the impacts of the management tools are consistent.

In accordance with NEPA, the next step in this process will be to review the comments we received during the public comment period and prepare the final EIS. A notice of availability will be published when the final EIS is ready for public review. This will begin the 30-day public protest period for the plan. Upon completion of the protest resolutions, the agencies will prepare and sign the record of decision under the approved RMPA. The BLM and BIA will each sign their own records of decision for this process. Once the records of decision are signed, the updated management tools will become available for use by the agencies.

Our goal is to sign a record of decision in early 2021. This wraps up the presentation phase of this meeting. And we will now be shifting into the public comment portion. I'm going to transition back to Jill so that she can provide you with further instructions.

- As AI stated, we will begin the public comment portion of this session. If you have not had the opportunity to review the draft EIS, you can find the document on the BLM's e-planning website, where you can also provide comments.

The comments you provide on the draft EIS assist the agency in ensuring that we have completed a thorough analysis so that we are able to make an informed decision. Substantive, specific comments are the most useful for this process. These comments could include new information about the proposed action, alternatives, or analysis, identify factual corrections or flaws in the analysis, or provide information on different sources of research that better inform the analysis.

Examples of comments that are not substantive and may not help us change the draft the IRS would include those in favor or against the proposed action or alternatives without providing any rationale, agreeing or disagreeing with agency policy or decisions without justification or supporting data, not being relevant to the decision area or proposed management decisions, or vague or open-ended questions.

Here are some examples of some comments. A poor comment might include, this document is terrible. I am against it. A good comment could be, this document is terrible in that you do not adequately address X impacts that this may have on X resources. The best comment would include something like this. This document is terrible in that you do not adequately address X impacts that this may have on X resources. I'm attaching the results of a study that was done for your review.

A comment moderator will be assisting in the comment portion by announcing the speakers and ensuring that your phone line is unmuted for commenting. We will be taking comments in the order that requests were received during registration, online registrants first and then phone registrants. When it is your turn to comment, the moderator will announce you by the name you registered under. If you are on the web application, when you hear your name, please use the Raise Hand feature so that the moderator knows that you are available and ready to provide your comments.

For the commenters that are providing-- that are joining us by phone, the moderator will identify you by the last three digits of your phone number. When you hear that phone number, press star 9 and the moderator will unmute your line. As a reminder, everyone will have three minutes to provide their comments.

Once all registered comments have been given, and if time allows, we will open the floor to additional comments. We will offer this to callers on the phone first, and then offer to those joining by Zoom. If a person is cut off or does not get an opportunity to comment, they are welcome to submit their comments via the means listed on this screen.

To ensure that we are able to receive as many comments as possible, we are limiting each commenter to three minutes. After three minutes are complete, the commenter's microphone will be muted, and we will move on to the next person.

We want to remind commenters that they are being recorded, and to please be courteous to the audience by not using profanity while providing your comments. We ask that once it is your turn to speak and your line is open, to please state both your first and last name and provide a spelling of those names. We'd also like to remind commenters that the BLM and BIA are here to take your comments. However, we will not be responding to these comments at this time. Responses to comments will be included in the comment report that will be published with the final EIS.

Theresa will now start announcing our callers.

- Thank you, Jill. We will go ahead and begin with Wendy Atcity. Wendy, I'm going to unmute your phone, and then you will be allowed to comment verbally. Please state your name and spell it for the audience.

OK, Wendy, you should be unmuted. Wendy, can you hear us?

- Sorry. I don't think she's unmuted. I see her there. Have you made her allowed-- have you allowed her to talk yet, Theresa? Have you clicked allowed to talk with her?

- I did. Try it again, Wendy.

- Yeah. So now your mic is closed. Wendy, you have a virtual microphone on your screen, or when you push your device, you'll see that the microphone will come up. Just push it again, and the line will go away, the red line, and we'll be able to hear you at that point, Wendy. So you'll

have to unmute yourself, but we have given you a virtual microphone. There you go. Hi, Wendy. Go ahead and talk to us, if you can.

WENDY ATCITY: Hello?

- Yeah, we hear you. Hi, Wendy. How are you?

WENDY ATCITY: I'm fine.

- Good. Could you spell your first and last name for us, and then we'll let you go, OK?

WENDY ATCITY: Oh. I think it's on there, isn't it?

- It is, but also, we want to have it as a verbal indicator, too, for the transcript.

WENDY ATCITY: Oh, OK. Well I thought you could-- it's just so long. W-- my first name, or just my last name?

- First and last name, please, if you can, would be great. Thanks.

WENDY ATCITY: Yeah. Yeah. You've got Wendy there, and the last name is A-T-C-I-T-T-Y.

- Thank you, Wendy. And you can begin your comment when you're ready. And once you start speaking, we will hit the three-minute timer. There will be a chime at-- when you have 30 seconds left, and then once it's-- your time is up, I will mute you again.

WENDY ATCITY: OK. Can you hear me? Hello?

THERESA ANCELL: We hear you--

ART: We do hear you, yep. You can go ahead whenever you're ready.

WENDY ATCITY: OK. All right

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you.

WENDY ATCITY: Your welcome. Yeah. I-- thank you for your time, for having a comment today. I am a bit out of range and isolated-- you know, out of area, so I'm hoping that you can still be able to hear my comment today. But yeah, just sharing comments on the--

AUTOMATED VOICE: Battery 80%.

WENDY ATCITY: [INAUDIBLE]

- Wendy, we still hear you just fine. You can continue if you'd like. Wendy, do you hear me? I see that your microphone is still unmuted, so we still have connectivity with you. Go ahead and just give us a talk. Just say hello if you can, Wendy.

OK. Well, we may have-- somehow-- there must be something going on with that, so Theresa, we might need to move on to the next person. And Wendy, you may want to disconnect and reconnect, and we'll try to get back to you. That might be the best thing we can do, because your microphone shows open.

You still have your microphone. But I'm not sure what's going on with your system. So if you can hear me, you may want to disconnect. Or if you can hear me, go back to-- if you were walking around, go back to where you were originally, because you had good cell service there, or you had good connection there.

So Theresa, you may want to-- we may want to move on to the next person, and then we'll try her again later, OK?

- Thanks, Art. So I'm going to go ahead and mute you, Wendy, and we will go with Rebecca Sobel next. Rebecca, I'm going to allow you to talk. And then like we said before, Art will go ahead and start the timer again. OK, you should be unmuted.

REBECCA SOBEL: Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: I can hear you great.

REBECCA SOBEL: Great. My name is Rebecca Sobel, R-E-B-E-C-C-A, S-O-B-E-L. Great. Let me know when--

THERESA ANCELL: We're ready when you are Rebecca. Once you start talking, we'll begin the timer.

REBECCA SOBEL: Great. I think we're already seeing how this platform is significant and inadequate in meeting public consultation needs. But what I will say is that members of the Navajo Nation and Pueblos are among the hardest hit by coronavirus, and many tribal leaders have closed down nonessential and essential government operations. The Navajo Nation is literally not in session right now. Virtual meetings do not constitute meaningful tribal consultation, and they fall short of the Trump Administration's trust and treaty obligations to tribes. Members of the Navajo Nation and Pueblos have repeated repeatedly expressed this concern.

At the same time, Navajo Nation and Pueblos disproportionately lack adequate access to broadband internet and also cell phone and telephone coverage. By choosing to prop up these virtual meetings instead of extending the comment period, Secretary Bernhardt is silencing critical voices, and in some cases-- cases, forcing people to participate in what is supposed to be a free and public process. Instead, this process has systemically marginalized tribal and public input, and it threatens to cement a legacy of industrialized fracking across this sacred landscape.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 32, states "Indigenous peoples have the rights to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development of use of their lands or territories and other resources. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization, or exploitation of mineral, water, or other resources. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress of any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural, or spiritual impact."

Environmental racism is the placement of low-income or minority communities in the proximity of environmentally hazardous or degraded environments, such as toxic waste and pollution, like is this fracking plan. Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

Again this is a farce of a meeting that is used as a farcical excuse to steamroll this drilling plan, and I encourage the final draft environmental impact statement to include a plan that does not allow for any more drilling or fracking of this landscape. Also, as a note on process, it would be great if you gave us at least a three-person heads up on who's going to be talking so that we can prepare to give public comment. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you Rebecca.

- Yeah, and Theresa I think-- if we could do that, that would be a really helpful thing. I think maybe you could have the next two people raise their hand ahead of time and they'll move to the top of the list, and that'll make it easier for both you and I to get them--

THERESA ANCELL: Yeah.

--quicker. Does that make sense?

THERESA ANCELL: That sounds great, Art.

- OK.

THERESA ANCELL: Absolutely.

- And Rebecca, thanks for your comment. Appreciate it.

- So on deck, I have a Belinda Aze? Belinda? You may be calling in. I don't see your name on here. So if you are calling in press, star 9 on your phone to raise your hand. In the meantime, we

do have Betsy Walker and James Nichols up next. So Betsy Walker, James Nichols, you guys are next in the queue.

Belinda from Mesa, Arizona, star 9 to unmute your phone. Or-- I'm sorry, star 9--

- Yeah, it's--

THERESA ANCELL: --raise your hand.

- --star 9 to raise your hand if you're on the phone. You just can press star 9. And then also, if-- we could also go back to Wendy and see if her microphone is better, too. She has a microphone right now, so you could ask her to unmute real quick, if she's able to try to talk to us.

- That sounds great, Art. Yeah, I do not see a hand raised for Belinda, so I'll go ahead and unmute Wendy.

WENDY ATCITY: And one shared--

THERESA ANCELL: Wendy, on--

ART: Oh, [INAUDIBLE]

THERESA ANCELL: --unmuted now.

WENDY ATCITY: Kind of taking notes and want--

- Hey, Wendy, are you there? Can you hear us?

- Hey, Wendy, we can hear you. If you want, you're unmuted, and if you want to start your comments again, you're welcome to.

WENDY ATCITY: Oh, OK. Yeah, I thought you were helping me before.

- So we-- you were muted, but we have time for you now if you're willing to give us your comment. We would really like that.

WENDY ATCITY: OK.

- OK? Sorry for the-- sorry for the challenges, but here we are. And--

WENDY ATCITY: Yeah, I--

- --start whenever you're ready, OK?

WENDY ATCITY: OK. Well, you got my last name.

- I'm going to get that-- yeah, just go ahead give me your last name again real quick if you can.

WENDY ATCITY: A-T-C-I-T-T-Y.

- OK. I've got it thank you very much. And you can start whenever you're ready, OK?

WENDY ATCITY: OK, well, I just want to share that there is some-- from United Nations Declarations of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 32, "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of all their lands or territories and other resources. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization, or exploitation of mineral, water, or other resources. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural, or spiritual impact."

And so Navajo and Pueblo communities are-- disproportionately lack access to broadband internet in their homes. These virtual sessions highlight inequality and injustice of this process that is systematically disenfranchising tribes and the public from participating. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Wendy. And do we have Belinda? Belinda, if you're on the phone, you can hit star 9, and that will raise your hand. On deck, we have Betsy Walker and James Nichols. OK, I'm still not seeing a handraise from Belinda, so Betsy Walker, if you're available, please-- if you're on the phone, as well, please hit star 9, and that will unmute your phone.

- So maybe we should call off the next three or four, and we'll see if we can get them in order and have them raise their hands, either virtually or on the phone with star 9. I think that'd be the best thing, Theresa, and we'll be able to get--

- That sounds great.

ART: OK.

- OK. Sounds great. So we have James Nichols up next after Betsy Walker. James, are you on the line? Star 9 to raise your hand.

- I don't see James on the list. But he-- so we don't see James. We do have-- somebody did raise their hand.

- We have Mario Attencio. Mario, we will definitely be getting to commenters that didn't sign up. Or I think you have signed up. I'm sorry. You are in the queue later. So we have Belinda we're not hearing from, Betsy Walker, James Nicole, Steve Gray, Rebecca Fischer, and Santorini.

- So any of you that Theresa just brought up, if you could raise your hands. OK, so we have Ana. Ana was one of the people that you just called off, Theresa. So, Theresa, I don't know if it's your microphone or my microphone that-- or your connection might have been.

So I think what I'll do is Ana, I can allow you to talk real quick. Let me see if we have you. I don't know if we've lost Theresa or not. There you are, Theresa. Can you hear me now?

THERESA ANCELL: Can you hear me?

- Yeah, I hear you now. OK.

- OK, great. So, yeah--

- Do you want to try go with Ana, then? Is that what you want to do?

- Rebecca Fischer is on, and she's next, before Ana.

- OK. I don't-- let me see if I can-- do you have her there? Rebecca?

- I see Rebecca Fischer, yes.

- OK. So you go ahead and-- you can go ahead and have her-- you can-- if she can raise her hand, that would help us out. But then you can go ahead and-- yeah, thank you, Rebecca. Appreciate it. Now you can go ahead and allow her to talk.

THERESA ANCELL: Thanks, Rebecca.

ART: OK.

- I will allow her to talk. I just want to say next on deck, we have Samantha Ruger and Logan Glasenapp. OK, I am allowing Rebecca Fischer to start speaking now. OK, Rebecca. You should be--

WENDY ATCITY: Great.

THERESA ANCELL: --unmuted. We can hear you now.

REBECCA FISCHER: Great. Good afternoon. My name is Rebecca Fischer. And that's R-E-B-E-C-C-A, F-I-S-C-H-E-R, and I am the climate and energy programming attorney with Wild Earth Guardians. And I'm commenting today to express my extreme disapproval with the Bureau of Land Management's proposal to allow thousands of new oil and gas wells within the culturally-unique Greater Chaco Region.

As currently drafted, the RMPA would allow between 1,000 to 2,000 new oil and gas wells in the decision area, and between 2,000 to 3,000 new wells within the planning area. And all of these would occur in a community already punctured by more than 20,000 existing oil and gas

wells. BLM's preferred, alternative C, would be 94% of the public mineral estate open to fracking. This is the exact same amount of land open to fracking under the current RMP and current management. Thus, in essence, BLM is not proposing any additional protections under the RMPA.

New oil and gas wells would undoubtedly use multi-stage hydraulic fracturing coupled with horizontal drilling, a process which will industrialize the area and harm public health, the environment, and cultural resources. And although BLM claims that the purpose of the RMPA is to study the impacts of oil and gas in the landscape, this is clearly not the case. Rather, it is to grease the skids for the fossil fuel industry to make a profit at the expense of the rest of us.

Numerous courts have been clear that BLM has broad discretion within its multiple use mandate to limit and prohibit oil and gas development. BLM is not required to sacrifice the Greater Chaco Region to fracking. Rather, it is choosing to do so with an RMPA that continues business as usual at the expense of the communities and the environment.

I would also like to note that this public process is extremely exclusive, as other commenters have noted. The Navajo Nation is experiencing incredible impacts from the COVID-19 virus, and in the midst of this, the Bureau of Land Management is proposing a thousand-page document, which should govern management for the next 20 years. The community has no time to participate in this process. We are looking after our public health, and we need to be focused on that, rather than engaging the public process that can barely be called that. It is extremely exclusive.

So we would like to continue to request an extension of the comment period until the coronavirus threat has passed. And so we hope that the BLM will heed that warning. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thanks, Rebecca. Next, we have Ana. I don't want to say your name-- last name wrong, so I will unmute you. Or I have muted you, so you should be able to join.

ANA SANTORINI: Thank you. My name is Ana, A-N-A, Santorini, S, like in Sam, A-N-T-O-R-I-N-I.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Ana. When you're ready, we will begin the three-minute timer. Begin speaking when you're ready.

ANA SANTORINI: OK. I would like to thank all the previous speakers, Wendy, Rebecca Sobel, Rebecca Fischer, because you've obviously come much more prepared than I have, but I have the same basic questions.

And they're questions, so I would like an answer from the BLM and all the people who are involved. Why are these public comment meetings happening now, and virtually, when the Navajo Nation, and many of the pueblos, are in crisis, when a large portion of the stakeholders do not have broadband internet access to be able to participate? So I would like an answer to why?

And the second thing is, I would like you to commit to postponing these comments until after the COVID virus is under control and people can meet in person as well as virtually so that it is truly an opportunity, or an effort, for the people-- for the oil and gas interests to really listen to what the people impacted are-- need and are thinking and what they prefer.

So if you're really, truly committed to public input, you know what to do. It's postpone this. And I would like an answer to why you haven't done it so far. Thank you so much.

- Thank you for your comment, Ana. And we will be providing some answers to questions in the Q&A option. Right now, the format of the meeting is to allow us to get all of our participants the ability to comment.

So next on board, we have Logan Glasenapp. Following Logan, we have Felina Romero, Patricio Dominguez, Gabrielle O-N-T, and those are the folks that are next on board. If you guys could raise your hand if you're on the web application, or star 9 for your phone. And Logan, I'm going to go ahead and unmute you. You will have your-- please state your name-- and your first name and your last name and spell them for us, please. You should be able to talk now, Logan. Thank you.

LOGAN GLASENAPP: Sure. Thank you. So my name is Logan, L-O-G-A-N, Glasenapp, G-L-A-S-E-N-A-P-P. I'm the staff attorney with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. And I am joining from Albuquerque, where me and my family are, fortunately, healthy.

We are able to stay safe, and perhaps most importantly for this particular situation, we have access to internet. Regrettably, some of the most directly-affected communities, the Navajo Nation and pueblos across New Mexico, disproportionately lack internet connectivity and have been hit extremely hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore are some of the most likely unable to join these virtual meetings.

Indigenous people should not have to defend their ancestral homeland during an unprecedented global pandemic. And New Mexico Wild stands with the All Pueblo Counsel of Governors in calling on the BLM to extend the comment period, at least until the threat from COVID-19 has subsided and we are able to hold these meetings in-person and engage in meaningful consultation and information sharing. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Logan. Next on board-- on deck, we have Felina Romero. Felina, if you have-- if you are on the phone, can you please raise your hand? OK. I'm not seeing Felina, so next up is Patricio--

- Felina did raise her hand. She's there, just so you can see her there. Oh, she just put it down. But she was there a second ago. Go ahead raise your hand again, Felina. Well, we saw her. There she is.

THERESA ANCELL: There she is.

ART: Yeah.

THERESA ANCELL: Perfect. Thanks, Felina. Sorry about that.

- So you can unmute yourself. OK, thank you, Felina. Go ahead give us your first and last name and spelling.

FELINA ROMERO: It's for Felina Romero. F-E-L-I-N-A, R-O-M-E-R-O.

- OK, whenever you're ready, Felina. Thank you.

FELINA ROMERO: OK. I would like the comment period to be postponed as well so that people could continue to grieve for the loss of all the people. And also, as we know, they have limited resources to the internet access, so that's a way to specifically silence them.

And another fact is, why now? Why would they do it now? They do it because we're all distracted as well. And I would like you guys to address how you guys are completely neglecting article 32, which is supposed to give indigenous rights. And how is it that we still live in America and our rights are still being violated? It's very unfortunate and very disturbing.

This is a new form-- I was literally thinking about how in history class we learned about how the Jews were placed in gas chambers. This is literally what you guys plan on doing. You guys plan on putting gas chambers in front of people's homes, which is a form of environmental racism. This is a way to hurt the indigenous women who are going to give babies that have birth defects, difficulty breathing, and respiratory issues. This is a way to mess around with another race.

And I just want environmental justice. We do not need these wells in our homeland to make a profit for this industry. This is costing people their lives. People are slowly dying. People have been dying because of the issue of these industries, even nuclear industry as well. And I really want you guys to consider stopping, please. And that's it.

- Thank you very much for your comment, Felina. Up on deck, we have Patricio Dominguez. After Patricio, which we do have a hand raised for him, we will have Gabrielle. And the last name I have on file is O-N-T-I-- O-N-T. After Gabrielle, we have Marissa Naranjo, John Alexander, and Joseph "Heran--" Hernandez, excuse me. So I'm going to go ahead and unmute Patricio.

OK, Patricio, you should have the ability to unmute yourself and go ahead and start your comment when your art provide your name and the spelling of your first and last name.

PATRICIO DOMINGUEZ: Good afternoon. My name is Patricio Dominguez, P-A-T-R-I-C-I-O D-O-M-I-N-G-U-E-Z. And I would like to comment that Chaco is probably the only national park in the entire United States where the signs in the park specifically say, sacred site. I believe that that aspect of this very unique park has to be considered whenever any decision around this area is considered.

In the opening comments, it was stated that certain aspects were going to be considered environmental, air, water, and all these physical aspects. But I did not hear-- I did not even hear a

whisper-- of the aspect of the spiritual, of the sacredness, being mentioned in that list of considerations.

I really need you guys, or really request, that you guys put sacred back into the consideration of some of the aspects of the works that will be done around-- in and around this area. For instance, it is really, really important that you go back and reconsider the role that the Freedom of Religion Act plays in your considerations of your activities in this area.

Also, you need to consider the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act in consideration of activities in this area, because these are sacred areas if you do anything to damage, diminish, or somehow change the spiritual, or as we'd call it, sacred aspect of these lands, you have not considered all of the aspects that need to be considered. You cannot go into any temple, church, or religious place and decide for engage in commercial activities without being called on it.

Site-- Chaco is still sacred to the people in this area, and it is sacred, especially, to the Pueblo people. I-- with all due respect to the Navajos, they-- it's on their reservation, but they do not have descendency here, and Chaco is not sacred to them the way that it is sacred to the people known as the Pueblos. Thank you. I have spoken.

- Thank you very much, Patricio. Next on deck, we have Gabrielle. Gabrielle, if you're on the phone, can you please raise your hands? I'm not seeing your hand raised. OK. We'll move on. Marissa Naranjo, you're up next. Marissa, if you could raise your hand, that would populate your name to the top. Thank you, Marissa. OK, Marissa, you should be able to unmute yourself, and please provide your first name, last name, and a spelling.

MARISSA NARANJO: Good afternoon. My name is Marissa Naranjo. That's spelled M-A-R-I-S-S-A, N-A-R-A-N-J-O. I serve as the policy coordinator for the All Pueblo Council of Governors, or APCG, and I've been authorized by APCG Chairman J. Michael Chavarria to deliver these comments, as the leadership of APCG is not able to attend this meeting, or any of these virtual public meetings, because they must remain focused on addressing the urgent health and safety needs of our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

APCG has a significant interest in the RMPA due to potential impacts to the sacred landscape of the greater Chaco region, which contains many of our cultural resources, including traditional cultural properties. APCG, in addition to our member pueblos, maintain a significant and ongoing connection to the greater Chaco region. It's a vital part of our present identity that we maintain through story, song, prayer, and pilgrimage. And because of that deep connection and responsibility to the sacred landscape and our future generations, we and other pueblos have thus far been deeply engaged in the RMPA, EIS, and section 106 process.

APCG, individual pueblos, the New Mexico congressional delegation, state agencies, impacted communities, conservation organizations, and many others have submitted requests for a pause in these processes. You have not responded to our requests. Currently, at the direction of the President's coronavirus guidelines for America and the recommendation of the New Mexico

Executive Public Health orders, pueblos have closed nonessential tribal government operations and redirected their time and resources to providing critical emergency and community services.

For many, this means closure of offices and staff who would be directly working on the RMPA process-- are not available to do so at this time. Many pueblos that have sent tribal staff home are limited in their ability to have staff work remotely due to lack of access of internet, teleworking capabilities, and other infrastructure-related challenges. And the situation on the ground has only grown more dire since our first request.

At present, San Juan County and McKinley county have some of the highest rates of COVID-19 in the state of New Mexico and in the country. The Pueblos and the Navajo Nation have also had significant COVID-19 cases in our communities, threatening the very lives of our people. And for these reasons and others, we and other stakeholders living in these affected communities are in no position to focus our attention on the RMPA.

You're required by multiple federal statutes, your tribal consultation duties, and the trust obligation to pause this RMPA so that our Pueblo nations can meaningfully participate in commenting on it. Although I'm participating in today's virtual public meeting, I want to make clear that APCG and our member pueblos have not had the resources necessary to meaningfully comment on the draft RMPA. A critical document such as that requires extensive review, internal convening and dialogue, and technical expertise in drafting comments, and it is not possible to meaningfully convene and internally develop comments at this time due to our capacity focused on critical response measures.

We are opposed to the decision by the BLM and BIA to host these virtual meetings, and we reiterate our request for a pause in this process. In addition, APCG Chairman Chavarria, in a meeting with key officials from the BLM, BIA, and Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Office in February in Washington DC requested a government-to-government tribal consultation on the draft RMPA and EIS, we reiterate this request, formally requesting and supporting the Pueblo's in-person, full, and meaningful tribal consultation on the draft RMPA at a time when tribal, state, and federal public health directives indicate it's safe to meet in person.

APCG and the pueblos intend to comment on this important draft RMPA and EIS to ensure the final RMPA contains the cultural resource protections necessary to protect the greater Chaco region, and your unwillingness to pause the RMPA, including by extending the common deadline, is putting APCG in pueblos in a position--

THERESA ANCELL: Thirty seconds.

MARISSA NARANJO: --that is limiting our ability to do so. It's simply unconscionable to continue with the current schedule for the RMPA, and on behalf of APCG, I urge you to immediately halt the current schedule and work with tribes and other stakeholders in developing a feasible timetable. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you very much, Marissa. OK, next on deck, we have John Alexander. John, I see--

ART: Theresa, real quickly, before you do that, I need to change something on the PowerPoint real quick. So give me an extra second here for--

- That sounds good. I'm going to go over who we have left, OK?

ART: Yeah, that's great.

- Great. Thanks, Art. We have John Alexander up next, and then we will go to Joseph Hernandez. After Joseph, we will have Mike Eisenfeld. After Mike, we will have Evangeline Wells. After Evangeline, we will have Chris Morris. After Chris, we will have Honor Keller. After Honor, we will have Mario Atencio. After Mario, we will have Richard Grow. After Richard, we will have "Galine" Hecht. After-- Galen? Sorry if I'm saying your name wrong. After that, we will have Val Halacron and Don Andrews.

So John Alexander, you are up next. And I'm going to unmute you now.

- He had this microphone ready, so he can unmute himself.

THERESA ANCELL: OK.

- So, OK? So, John, you can unmute yourself.

- Thanks, John.

ART: And then go ahead and give us your first and last name. And if you're-- if you just-- you hover over your screen, you should see a microphone. There you go. Go ahead and--

JOHN ALEXANDER: OK.

- --say hello.

JOHN ALEXANDER: It J-O-H-N, and last name is Alexander, A-L-E-X-A-N-D-E-R.

ART: OK. Whenever you're ready. Thank you.

JOHN ALEXANDER: OK. The inclusion of the Bureau of Indian Affairs with this draft environmental impact statement is certainly welcome for the-- for regulatory certainty. That sometimes creates an issue between surface administered, obviously, by BIA and the Bureau of Land Management.

I have concerns looking at the alternative C here, concerning some of the step-backs that are required for certain buildings. 7/10 of a mile, I think, is what's referenced there. That's basically a 4/10 of a square mile, with a section being one square mile. That leaves a lot of that area which is not open to use by the operator, and certainly, larger areas, you are allotted if you have multiple dwellings.

Now, I recognize potential for a disruption to, of course, normal activity of people living in the vicinity of oil and gas operations. I would prefer not to develop any wells in the vicinity of anyone's living space, and oftentimes that's not possible, given the price that has been paid to acquire them, acquire the leases.

And we ask that-- I ask that guidelines regarding certain setbacks be considered on an individual basis. A number of pages are committed to the explanation of hydraulic fracturing, and I hope that those who object to this practice will use this information to enhance our understanding of procedure. Virtually all wells in this part of the country, and nationally, are actually hydraulic fracturing. This procedure is very safe. It's critical. And it is well regulated.

Fracturing of any zone where, unintentionally, [INAUDIBLE] water zone or everything else is a loss for everyone, and a lot of effort goes into avoiding that. Also, procedures are available to remedy any unintentional things that happen. So we appreciate that this is not a needed regulation-- this-- BLM does not need to regulate this procedure. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, John. We will now move to Joseph Hernandez. Joseph, if you could raise your hand, if you're on the phone, by hitting star 9. OK, I'm not seeing Joseph. Up next, we have Mike Eisenfeld. And I will-- Mike, if you're on, can you please raise your hand? Thanks, Mike. After Mike, we will have Evangeline Wells and Chris Morris.

Mike, I'm going to allow you to talk. And then if you could please unmute your microphone and state your name, first name, last name, and spell it for us please. Thank you. You should be able to unmute now, Mike.

MIKE EISENFELD: M-I-K-E, E-I-S-E-N-F-E-L-D. I live in Farmington, lived here for 23 years, and I have been part of this resource management plan amendment EIS process since the onset. And I also work for the San Juan Citizens Alliance.

And I would say that we are filing any comments today under protest. We're the epicenter of the pandemic, and this is grossly unfair to people who would like to participate in this process, despite the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic in this area and request for a pause on the project following Department of Interior guidelines and why a pause should be considered.

We haven't even had a common courtesy of a response. And to me, that's just unacceptable. And I think that a tone was set by the BLM in a public meeting at the Ship Rock Chapter House in November of 2016 when the manager of the field office, Richard Fields, led a walk out of the BLM, because he refused to consider comments from the local community and wanted to have a poster session, which obviously doesn't cut it when you have a complicated situation like a resource management plan amendment EIS.

And we've been waiting since 2014 for this RMP EIS. The process has been bogged down, despite us saying that the BIA needed to be involved early on. We were told that we didn't understand NEPA. And then all of a sudden, the BIA's in, and then we've had a series of consulting party and cooperating agency meetings in Gallup. They haven't even been in Farmington.

And now you have a document that all it does is look at a range from 2,345 to 3,200 new wells with a high development area centered right in the Nageezi, Counselor, and Lybrook, the heart of the Greater Chaco area. And those communities have already been hammered by air quality impacts by problems with explosions. I think there was an explosion a few years ago that isn't even mentioned in the document.

And then when you read this RMPA EIS, this thing was written in 2016 to 2018. And there's no mention in the document post-2017 of where we are in ethnographic studies and cultural resources analysis. And I would just say that it's a very disappointing document in that it doesn't even take into account the changing socio-economic standards. It talks about this great need for oil and gas development because prices are so high.

And besides what's going on with the pandemic, y'all may be aware that oil and gas prices have bombed, and even places like the Permian Basin are now a bust. This area is a bust up here, and it's time to start thinking about a post-oil and gas world. I think that--

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Mike.

MIKE EISENFELD: I think that a lot more work needs to be done if you don't think that you're going to be in a bunch of legal challenges.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you for your comment, Mike. OK, up next, we have Evangeline Wells. Evangeline, if you're on the phone, can you please push star 9? OK. I'm not seeing Evangeline. After Evangeline, we have Chris Morris. Chris Morris, and then Honor Keller. After Honor, we have Mario Atencio. And after Mario, we have Richard Grow.

- So I don't see any of the people that you mentioned before Mario at this point, looking down the list. But if you were mentioned, if you could raise your hand virtually or star 9 on your phone, that would really help us a lot, and we could get to you. So just maybe one last look at those number-- those names before we go on to Mario, because I know there were about five people in front of Mario, correct?

- Thanks, Art. Again, Evangeline Wells, Chris Morris, Honor Keller. OK. I'm not seeing a hand raised for any of those folks. Mario Atencio, you're up next. I'm going to push a button to allow you to talk, and then you will have three minutes. If you could please state your name and spell it for us, your first and last name. OK, Mario, you should be able to unmute yourself.

MARIO ATENCIO: Mario Atencio, M-A-R-I-O A-T-E-N-C-I-O. I am here to convey a message regarding public consultation, and do not speak for any groups of people but for myself and interests of my parents' estate. To host these meetings to discuss to the RMPA while a global pandemic is having direct and continued impact on indigenous Dine peoples living in the RMP decision area is the most diabolical and despicable actions BLM and the BIA have ever undertaken.

My parents, Paul and Mary Ann Atencio, as federal allotment holders, are in a trust relationship with the United States government. In Seminole Nation versus the United States, 1942, the court

ruled that the United States has, quote, "has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trusts," end quote.

The actions of the federal officials today when measured by the aforementioned criteria of federal trust's relate-- responsibility absolutely fails every notion of morality, high responsibility, and trusts. The ability for BIA Navajo Federal Indian Minerals Office and the BLM FFO, Farmington Field Office, to communicate to the individual Indian allotment holders about the scope and the impacts today's proceedings will have on the individual Indian allotment holder's life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness in a way resembling a trustee communicating to a trustor, has not even been close to, quote-unquote, "meaningful."

To hold these meetings in English, online, requiring broadband internet speeds, and while communities are under public health shelter-at-home orders, is that the crux of how the BLM and the BIA are instituting institutional racism as 21st-century federal action policy.

In a meeting at the U-- at the Gallup New Mexico Federal Building, I called on a collective body of federal BLM, BIA officials to have a gut check on the reality that participating in railroading indigenous peoples into consenting to oil and gas development without proper free, prior informed consent is tantamount to federal institutional racism. It seems as though those officials are complacent in the injustice of their actions, and I will now openly condemn the BIA and BLM as being figureheads and agents of the highest example of federal environmental racism.

I recognize the irony of calling the BIA racist, but hiding behind the idea that one is only doing their job is an excuse, especially reserved for the cowardly and morally bankrupt. I offer no thanks to the federal officials and agents that convened this so-called meeting and condemn you all as I sign off. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

- Thank you for your comment, Mario. Next we will go to Richard Grow. Richard, I'm going to hit your button to allow you to talk. And after Richard, we do have Galen Hecht and Val [INAUDIBLE] and John Andrews. And that will allow us to get through our list. Richard, you should be able to unmute yourself now. And please give your name and spelling.

RICHARD GROW: Can you hear me now?

THERESA ANCELL: We can hear you, Richard.

RICHARD GROW: OK. My name is Richard Grow, R-I-C-H-A-R-D G-R-O-W. And while I live here in California, I've been to Navajo lands many, many times and maintained ongoing friendships and working relationships with Navajo individuals, families, and communities and agencies for the past 40 years.

I retired from the Environmental Protection Agency last summer, where I had worked for several decades. The last 20 or so years I worked in the Environmental Justice Program on tribal issues. I have to say that with the Navajo Nation and other tribal communities in northern New Mexico under nearly complete lock-down due to the pandemic, the Department of Interior's thus far refusal to extend the public comment period currently scheduled to end two weeks from today

poses a fair question of fair access to the decision-making process, as several folks have noted today.

Fair access to the process is a fundamental requirement of environmental justice, both absolutely and as a matter of current, written federal policy and applicable to federal activities, including this. Providing virtual access is clearly no solution, as Senator Udall noted several days ago. Hopping on to a virtual meeting isn't an option for many of those that are most affected by this planning process.

I have two fairly simple requests. The first request is that you, BLM and BIA, consult with and obtain the advice from the environmental justice programs at both the Environmental Protection Agency and at your parent agency, Interior, both of which have environmental justice departments. Consult with them on the issue of fair access to this process in the context of environmental justice, and get their advice. Make that advice public. We all want to know what that is.

Second, please respond to the March 20th congressional request from Senators Udall and Heinrich, Representatives Luján, Haaland, and Small, to extend the comment period. When I was working at the federal government, we never had the luxury of ignoring congressional requests, regardless of which party they were from. The Bureau of Land Management, as a part of Executive Branch, needs to acknowledge and respect the role of Congress in this issue and in oversight of yourselves. Thank you.

- Thank you so much, Richard. Next, we will go on to Galen Hecht. Galen, raise your hand? I do see that you're online with us. OK.

Galen-- after Galen, we have Val [INAUDIBLE]-- sorry-- Alarcon and John Andrews.

OK, Galen, I'm going to allow you to talk. Please state your first and last name and spelling. You should be able unmute yourself now.

GALEN HECHT: Hi my name is Galen Hecht. That's G-A-L-E-N H-E-C-H-T. All right.

ART: Yeah. You can go whenever you're ready, Galen. Thank you.

GALEN HECHT: Great. Well, I would just like to echo what many others have been saying, that some of the most vulnerable communities to these leases and to oil and gas development in Northwestern New Mexico are not able to fully participate because of a lack of broadband access. And I think that's really unacceptable, and that the agency should, at the very least, extend these public comments until after the health emergency is over, after the pandemic is over. And with that, I would like to add to my statement here.

[MUSIC - TWISTED SISTER, "WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE IT"]

(SINGING) We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. We've got the right to choose, and there ain't no way we're losing. This is our life. This is our

song. We'll fight the powers that be just. Don't pick our destiny, 'cause you don't know us. You don't belong. We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore.

Oh, you're so condescending. Your gall is never-ending. We don't want nothing, not a thing from you. Your life is trite and jaded, boring and confiscated. If that's your best, your best won't do.

[VOCALIZING]

We're right, yeah. We're free, yeah. We'll fight, yeah. You'll see, yeah. We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. No way!

- Thanks, Galen. OK, we'll move on to Val. Val, are you on the phone? Again, hit star 9 if you're on the phone, or raise your hand. I don't see your name on the list, so we will go ahead move on. We have one last person in the queue, Mr. John Andrews. John, can you raise your hand?

OK, John, I found you on the list, so I'm going to hit your name, allow to talk, and then you-- can you please spell your name-- state your name and spell it for us? John, you should be able to unmute yourself and start your comment, please.

JOHN ANDREWS: Yes. Are we going? Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: Yes, sir. We can hear you, John.

JOHN ANDREWS: OK. All right. I want to review the factual and moral basis for drilling in Chaco Canyon. First, I would like to point out that the people most affected are the Native Americans. They have disproportionately lower access to Wi-Fi, certainly at home, so this move to teleconferencing during a pandemic seems to come from the same playbook as voter suppression.

The clearest moral reference given is the important resource management plan. The physical remains of the ancestral Puebloan city of Chaco Canyon are only part of what makes it worthy of being a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Their cultural perspective was the environment was not a resource. It was the source. It was the deity itself.

This is still the Puebloan view and the Navajo view. When you propose drilling for oil and gas and the environmental degradation that follows, you are desecrating the deity.

On a factual basis, I was surprised to see the part of the justification for teleconferencing to be a lower carbon footprint. This is stunningly hypocritical. On November 5 of 2019, 11,258 scientists from around the world, and from many different disciplines, cosigned a letter published in BioScience. They wrote to issue a warning to humanity of the catastrophic threat of global warming.

Neither you nor I are scientists. We have to take the word of someone else, the scientists. This is the data-driven, peer-reviewed conclusion of 11,258 scientists. They know what they are talking about. They can prove it, and any contrary opinion that ignores that conclusion is a delusion. It may be a well-funded delusion, but it is still a delusion.

Humanity has plunged the planet into the sixth mass extinction. Mass extinction means most everything dies. This is really bad for the economy. Fate has put you, William Perry Pendley, in the position of being able to impact the direction of this mass extinction, and therefore, the lives of millions, probably billions, of human beings and countless others species.

We all know your boss, Trump, is hell-bent on exploiting every oil and gas resource he can, but you are the one making this choice. The choice to extract planet-killing oil and gas with a large dose of methane in Chaco Canyon is based on blasphemy and delusion. When blasphemy and delusion are sown, the harvest will be disaster. The COVID calamity will be the good old days compared to the climate crisis. Help us avoid this disaster. Hopefully, John Andrews.

- Thank you, John.

JOHN ANDREWS: That's it. Thank you.

- Thank you. We appreciate your comments. So what we'd like to do right now is open the floor to individuals that have not-- that did not sign up for comments. And the way that we'll do that is we'll have the folks raise their hands, and I will take that in order as it was received.

So if you're on the phone, again, press star 9. And if you're on the computer there's a version-- or a button that you can push next to your name that says Raise My Hand.

OK. So what I have on my screen is a few people with their hands raised. And I have Miya King-Flaherty. first, and then I have a 505-780-5234 next, and then a Sierra Spencer. So we're going to start right now with Miya. OK, Miya, you should be able to unmute yourself.

MIYA KING-FLAHERTY: OK, great. Thank you. Can you hear me?

THERESA ANCELL: We can hear you great. Thank you.

MIYA KING-FLAHERTY: OK. And do I need to--

ART: Yeah, if you could please. Spell your first and last name for those people on the phone.

MIYA KING-FLAHERTY: Yeah, you got it correct.

ART: [INAUDIBLE]. Thank you very much.

MIYA KING-FLAHERTY: So my first name Miya, is M-I-Y-A. My last name, King-Flaherty, is spelled K-I-N-G dash F for Freddie, L-A-H-E-R-T-Y. OK. And can I start?

ART: You can start. Yep. Start whenever you're ready.

MIYA KING-FLAHERTY: All right. Thank you. So I want to start by reading the mission statements of the two agencies responsible for this process in developing the resource management plan amendment. The Bureau of Indian Affairs' mission statement is, "To enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaskan natives."

And the Bureau of Land Management's mission is, "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

Now, I read these definitions, because this process of holding virtual meetings and presenting a draft plan in which all of the alternatives allow for thousands of wells to be drilled in a culturally-sensitive and sacred region essentially negate the purported mission statements of each of these agencies as it relates to their responsibilities to tribes and sustaining a healthy environment for present and future generations.

And at a time when tribal, state, and local governments are dealing with a pandemic, meaningfully engaging in a draft plan is extremely difficult when time, attention, and resources are diverted to ensuring impacted communities are safe. And simply put, these online substitutions are not adequate, nor do they fulfill the federal government's responsibility to engage in meaningful face-to-face tribal consultation, which cannot be done through a virtual reality presentation.

And responses are still owed to the various tribal governments, the congressional delegation, state agencies, and multiple groups that have asked for an extension on the comment deadline. And moving forward with this planning process highlights the environmental injustices and racism in this country that are pitted against impacted communities that are unable to participate.

Virtual meetings are not accessible to many tribal communities that are most impacted by expanded drilling in the planning area. And the comment period should be extended beyond the May 22nd deadline, and in-person meetings resume after we get through this health crisis to ensure adequate participation instead of this inequitable process. Thank you.

- Thank you very much, Miya. So now we'll go on to you the 505-780-5234 number that we have. And I will-- again, I will allow you to talk. And Art, he pushes star 6, right, to unmute?

- I think when you allow them to talk, they unmute automatically, but we will find out. Yeah, so they're unmuted right away as soon as you allow phones.

THERESA ANCELL: Perfect. OK. 505-578-05234 please state your name and spell it for the audience. You're unmuted now.

ROBIN WAKELAND: Yes. My name is Robin Wakeland, R-O-B-I-N W-A-K-E-L-A-N-D. I think the process offered by the government agencies is adequate, notwithstanding the coronavirus. I believe that native people are adaptive to modern technology. They're adapted to

modern society, including the virus. They've been adapting for at least 12,000 years to the southwestern climate, and then after that, they adapted to the Spanish, and after that, they adapted to the USA government.

And I think it's really insulting to assume that native people are not able to implement the technology. For example, the Diné nation received a grant for technology access. In addition to that, at least one telephone mobile phone company has offered unlimited data at no extra cost during the coronavirus epidemic.

In addition, I believe that fossil fuels are on the way out. As exemplified by the coronavirus, people are not buying automobiles anymore. There is a glut of automobiles on the market. And I believe the BLM should consider the solar resources, solar energy resources, and also wind energy resources that this available land could offer as an alternative to the fossil fuels. An example is ecotourism could provide an economy as well as an alternative to fracking. And another example is the wildlife corridors could be interrupted by this type of fracking and other fossil fuel development.

And as far as the issue for Chaco Canyon being disturbed by the vibration, I don't believe that's an issue, because myself and other people, including some native people, really are against the preservation of the Chaco Canyon Historic Park in its artificial state, the way it has now been preserved in the last 100 years by the park service. It's basically artificially restored. They use cement and other unnatural materials to create an artificial environment.

The knowledge that we have from the Chaco Canyon and Chaco culture has been preserved by the archeologists through the digs, through the meticulous recording of all the dimensions and the different data as a result of the digs. And now, we believe that Chaco Canyon should be returned to the dust from which it arose. Those are my comments.

THERESA ANCELL: Wonderful. Thank you, Robin. We'll go on now to Sierra-- Sera Spencer. Sorry if I'm saying that wrong. This is the last person that I show with their hand raised. So again, if you'd like to make a comment, we do have some time left. So please raise your hand. Sera, I'm unmuting you now. You should be able to unmute yourself.

SERA SPENCER: Hello. Yes, my name is Sera Spencer, first name spelled S-E-R-A, last name S-P-E-N-C-E-R. Robin Wakeland's previous comments leave me pretty jarred, kind of made me forget what I had intended to say.

Native American people are still disproportionately without modern technology. Yes, they have adapted over time to the injustices that the USA government have placed on them, but 40% of the Navajo Nation is without water, running water, which is why they are one of the nation's hot spots for COVID right now, at over 3,300 cases.

I do want to echo that this-- while I understand the need for Zoom meetings to replace inadequate in-person meeting to discuss these issues, I think the deadline does need to be extended so that the people who are affected can effectively join meetings in person. There's a lot of elders, a lot of people who don't know how to use cell phones or Zoom.

Robin's comments are incredibly ignorant and offensive.

As a native New Mexican, and as someone who is Native American, I just want to echo the importance of Chaco Canyon. And I am also shocked at Robin's comments about Native People wanting it to return to dust. That is the most absurd thing I've ever heard in my life.

I am just going to read. Chaco Canyon is, as you know, a UNESCO world heritage site. And I just want to read something from the Chaco Culture site on the UNESCO website. "A long-term goal for the property is to ensure that interventions may occur within or adjacent to the property, including development, energy exploration, extraction, and transportation projects, so that they do not have a negative impact on the property's outstanding universal value, authenticity, and integrity."

I'm also an art history major, and as time goes on we need to rely on technology to preserve our history, to preserve the things that our ancestors created. And along with that, it does not give the permission of entities like the BLM to say, well, times are changing. We must drill. We must get that oil.

We need to protect the site, and we need to ignore the value of gas and oil, because sites like Chaco Canyon are not replaceable, and it is a World Heritage Site. And I just hope that as you're sitting there, you're not thinking, great, another commenter. And I hope you actually take these concerns to heart. That's all I have to say.

- Thank you, Sera. We appreciate your comment. We do have another individual that has raised their hand, Leia Barnett. Leia, I'm going to push the button, and you will be allowed to talk. Please state your name and spell it for the audience. Thank you.

LEIA BARNETT: My name is Leia Barnett. That's L-E-I-A B-A-R-N-E-T-T.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Leia. You can go ahead when you're ready.

LEIA BARNETT: I would just additionally like to echo those who have stated that these times are unprecedented. And it feels entirely unacceptable that this process continue as planned via this medium. It's not an effective way for folks to engage in this process.

And I just wanted to highlight, also, that the Forest Service did issue a memo addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and why it creates issues around public commenting processes. And I feel like the BLM should do the same. And I'd just like to finish with this.

[MUSIC - TWISTED SISTER, "WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE IT"]

(SINGING) We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. We've got the right to choose. There ain't no way we'll lose it. This is our life. This is our song. We'll fight the powers that be just. Don't pick our destiny 'cause you don't know us. You don't belong.

We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. Oh, you're so condescending. Your gall is never ending. We don't want nothing, not a thing from you. Your life is trite and jaded, boring and confiscated. If that's your best, your best won't do.

[VOCALIZING]

We're right, yeah. We're free, yeah. We'll fight, yeah. You'll see, yeah. We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. We're not gonna take it. No, we ain't gonna take it. We're not gonna take it anymore. No way!

- Thank you, Leia. I don't show anymore interested comments, so I'm going to move forward our slide and transition from our timer into our last slide and let Jill take us out.

- Hey, everyone. We do still have about 11 more minutes left of this session. So what I would like to do is we could go back to the previous comments slide. And let's sit there for a little bit and offer other people the opportunity to chime in and say-- and announce whether they would like to still provide a comment. And if we don't hear anything within the next five to seven minutes, I'll go ahead and come back and finish this out for the day. Thank you.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Jill. We'll give Art a moment to take back the controls. And again, please free to raise your hand. Star 9 on the phone, and the button by your name will allow you that. Oh, great. It looks like we do have Felina.

Sorry, Felina. I lost my screen. Felina Romero. Felina, I'm going to allow you to talk now, and you can give the audience your first name and last name and the spelling. You will have three minutes. You're unmuted, Felina.

FELINA ROMERO: Hi. Felina Romero, F-E-L-I-N-A R-O-M-E-R-O. Sorry, there's an airplane. I'm not too sure if you guys hear me good. It's flying over my house.

ART: Yeah.

FELINA ROMERO: Can you guys hear me?

ART: Yeah, we do hear you, Felina. Yeah, you're good. Go ahead whenever you're ready.

FELINA ROMERO: OK. I would just like us all to consider and realize the reality of what you guys are literally and truly doing. I'd like to leave off on what was said earlier, about how we learned back in the day, about how Hitler himself literally thought he, himself, had more authority and more-- he literally put these people in these chambers just to annihilate the race. And this is literally what you guys are doing itself, but you guys are doing it out of expense, to chase after money.

And I want us all to realize, money is the root to all evil, and it does make people do evil things. That is why so many of the corrupt and messed up things that you start to look into, happen. It's

because of money, when the betrayal and the lies and the manipulation and everything itself happens, just for money.

And I want you guys to realize how important and sacred this land is to these people. Just going out there and connecting to the land means more than anything to us. Being able to breathe clean air means everything to us. Being able to actually-- me being able to go into the river, and my family tell me that I'm not going to get poisoned, matters to me. Being able to actually have kids that aren't going to be born with birth defects or miscarriages matters to me. Me being able to have a womb and carry my baby in non-toxic water matters to me.

And it doesn't-- I want you to realize how important water is. Water goes up to the sky, and it comes back down as rain. And then we-- it goes out to the animals, and animals drink this. You guys are literally poisoning the animals, the plants, the people, and the whole concept of life. And I value life more than anything, any dollar, can ever imagine.

This is environmental racism. This is a new form of genocide itself to all human race and all animals. And the people who are in office, they sold their souls, and it's gone. Why do they have no emotion, no sympathy, no empathy or compassion to feel? And I hope I upset you all, and I hope you feel, and I hope things brings more rage to us all, because we need to get more people on board and more people awakened and more people here speaking, and more people knowing the truth. So I hope you all go on your Facebook and expose this and put this on all media, because it's time to rise up, New Mexico, like the sunsets and the mountains that we have.

THERESA ANCELL: Thank you, Felina. We do have some more time. I don't show anyone else's hands raised. So if anyone would like to provide a comment, we have about 6 more minutes left. We're here for you to provide your comments. Star 9 on the phone. And right-click by your name to raise your hand if you're joining us online.

We do still have five minutes left.

We do welcome and appreciate your comments, everyone. We will continue to wait and see if we can get any hands to rise. And then we will show other options for commenting.

ART: While we're waiting, if you want, maybe you could go ahead and show that screen that does show the other options for commenting. That might be something good for people to see at this point in time. You can go ahead--

THERESA ANCELL: Thanks--

ART: --and share your screen, Theresa. That'd be a good way of putting it out.

THERESA ANCELL: That sounds good, Art.

ART: Do we have closing-- we have closing comments, right? Yes? From a couple people?

THERESA ANCELL: We do.

ART: OK.

THERESA ANCELL: We do have some closing comments from Jill Argon, and we'll just continue to monitor for people that have their hands raised.

ART: We'll need about a minute-- I'm assuming we'll need a couple of minutes for closing comments, correct, in order to end at the top of the hour?

THERESA ANCELL: Absolutely.

ART: --hour correctly? OK, good.

THERESA ANCELL: [INAUDIBLE]

JILL ARGON: Yep. We've got it under control. Let's go ahead and keep it on the slide till we get to closing comments. Thanks.

THERESA ANCELL: Just let us know when you're ready. And we do have three more minutes. Please feel free to raise your hand, star 9.

ART: And I stopped sharing so you can share your screen with the those other ways to comment. Yes, thank you, Theresa.

JILL ARGON: We do want to remind our-- all participants that we are still taking your comments, either through the Zoom interface or from the phone lines. If you are on the phone, please press star 9, and we will unmute your phone line. For the participants on Zoom, please press the Raise Your Hand button.

I know that we've moved on to this final slide, but we are still taking your comments for a few more minutes.

Thank you everyone for your time and comments today. The BLM and BIA, we value your input, and we will continue to accept your comments on the draft EIS through May 28. Any comments received or postmarked after the May 28 date may not be considered.

I will be sharing the information that you can use to provide your comments and who to contact directly if you need further assistance. You can go to the e-planning tab on the online portal at www.BLM.gov/nm/farmington, or you can leave a voicemail comment by calling 720-213-5786.

You can also mail your comments to either project manager at the following addresses, Sarah Scott, 6251 College Boulevard, Suite A, Farmington, New Mexico, 87402, or to Robert Begay at 301 West Hill Avenue in Gallup, New Mexico, 87301.

Again, there will be four more meetings after this one. You may register for those meetings online or by calling 505-635-9701.

This concludes today's virtual public meeting for the Farmington Mancos-Gallup Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and associated environmental impact statement. Thank you for joining us today. Have a great day, and stay well.