

July 13, 2023

**Written Testimony by Kendra Pinto Opposing HR 4374, the Energy Opportunities for All Act, before the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**

Dear Chairman Stauber, Ranking Member Ocasio-Cortez, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of opposition to HR 4374, legislation that would prevent Public Lands Order No. 7923, known as the Chaco Area mineral withdrawal. My name is Kendra Pinto, I live in the Counselor Chapter of Navajo Nation, within the Greater Chaco landscape and what is now known as the San Juan Basin. My family and I are Dine' and have lived and worked on our ancestral lands for generations. Our home and ancestral lands are now surrounded by oil and gas development with at least 5 active well sites within a mile of me.

Over the last decade, truck traffic, well sites, compressor stations, and related infrastructure have blighted our landscape disturbing wild trees, wild grasses, dwindling rare cacti, and plants used for medicinal purposes. These drastic changes to our natural environment have also impacted our human environment. The influx of unfamiliar oil field workers has corresponded with more violence, drug, and alcohol abuse in my community, leaving me in fear for my own safety. Women in the community are told to be alert of their surroundings, a common suggestion in recent years with the hydraulic fracturing boom, with workers that typically do not live in or reside in the Chaco region. Due to our location in a remote area, emergency services for people who live in the Chaco Canyon are limited and may be significantly delayed if weather is a factor.

In July of 2021, I became a certified optical gas imaging (OGI) thermographer. As staff for Earthworks, a national nonprofit dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from mineral development, I operate a specialized infrared camera, used by industry and regulators, that can see otherwise invisible methane and other volatile organic compounds (VOC) generated by oil and gas facilities. In April 2022, I filmed OGI videos detecting these emissions over the course of two days in and near the 10 mile buffer of the Chaco Area mineral withdrawal, and subsequently found one facility within the buffer zone and two facilities on the outskirts of the zone that were emitting. Three complaints were filed with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).<sup>1</sup> Since 2018, I have filed more than 50 complaints to NMED regarding methane and VOC emissions from oil and gas facilities in the Four Corners region. These

---

<sup>1</sup> The YouTube links to the OGI videos are available here: [Morrison SWD #2, San Juan County, NM \(April 2022\)](#) and [Federal 21-6-28 SWD #33, Sandoval County, NM \(April 2022\)](#) and [Federal 21-6-29 #2 Sandoval County, NM \(April 2022\)](#)

complaints document how oil and gas development has damaged my air quality, ancestral lands, traditional resources, and quality of life.

Over 90% of the public lands surrounding me and my family have been leased for mineral resource exploration and development, and it has not been entirely beneficial to all who live in this area. Public health and public safety are major concerns for local residents who are living with the impacts of development. The Chaco Area mineral withdrawal will ensure me and my family have a future and the lands surrounding us will have the potential to remain pristine and liveable. I request you oppose H.R. 4374. Thank you for your consideration.