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In Advance of Earth Day, Feds Announce Protections for Public Lands



Morning Word

By Julia Goldberg

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Feds sign rule protecting public lands

US Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna) [signed a final rule](#) yesterday [during a ceremony in New Mexico](#) to protect more than 4,200 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands in the Placitas area. “Indigenous communities have called the Placitas area home since time immemorial, with evidence of their presence found from nearly every settlement period of the past 10,000 years,” Haaland, a former US congresswoman for New Mexico, says in a statement. “The site contains significant cultural ties to neighboring Pueblos and provides outdoor recreation opportunities to the local community.” Haaland’s announcement came as the Biden administration also [announced a final BLM rule governing conservation](#) on federal lands [described by the Washington Post](#) as a “seismic shift” to federal land-use policy by placing conservation on par with extractive uses. “As stewards of America’s public lands, the Interior Department takes seriously our role in helping

bolster landscape resilience in the face of worsening climate impacts,” [Haaland says](#). “Today’s final rule helps restore balance to our public lands as we continue using the best-available science to restore habitats, guide strategic and responsible development, and sustain our public lands for generations to come.”

The BLM’s final rule swiftly garnered praise from local governments and environmentalists. “The climate crisis continues to have a severe and ongoing impact on Western communities,” Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber [says in a statement](#), noting the BLM “is the largest land manager in the nation, and its final Public Lands Rules will play a leading role in protecting our public lands for the future and mitigating the impacts of climate change.” [In a statement](#), New Mexico Wild Executive Director Mark Allison notes that “with almost 90% of New Mexico BLM lands open to oil and gas leasing, the Public Lands Rule’s emphasis on conservation is not just important, it’s essential.”