

More Than Meets the Eye

Integrating the Management of Landscape Character and Archaeological Resources for Culturally Significant Landscapes

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ABSTRACT

Culturally significant landscapes, which evoke and promote strong feelings of attachment among their constituencies and advocates, pose a management challenge for federal agencies. Current cultural resources laws and policies focus largely on the physical characteristics of individual sites and features. I call here for a management approach that differs from current practice in several important ways. First, it recognizes the power of landscapes and landscape character. Drawing from both wilderness and park management, it calls for the identification and preservation of landscape characteristics, and the development of landscape-level inventories that can identify current landscape condition. Finally, it recognizes that how a landscape is experienced by its constituencies and advocates is a measure of management effectiveness. For management to succeed, management approaches must recognize and respect the core values and experiences that are at the heart of culturally significant landscapes.

Keywords: culturally significant landscape, landscape character, landscape value, landscape management

Los paisajes culturalmente significativos, que evocan y promueven fuertes sentimientos de identificación entre sus constituyentes y defensores, crean un desafío de gestión para las agencias federales. Las leyes y políticas actuales sobre recursos culturales se centran en gran medida en las características físicas de los sitios y características individuales. Pido aquí un enfoque de gestión diferente que difiera de la práctica actual en varios aspectos importantes. Primero, reconoce el poder de los paisajes y el carácter del paisaje. A partir de la gestión de áreas silvestres y parques, exige la identificación y preservación de las características del paisaje incluyendo características intangibles pero críticas, como la forma en que se experimenta el paisaje. Exige también el desarrollo de inventarios a nivel del paisaje que puedan identificar la condición actual del paisaje. Finalmente, reconoce que la forma en que sus constituyentes y defensores experimentan un paisaje es una medida de la eficacia de la gestión. Para que la gestión tenga éxito, los enfoques de gestión deben reconocer y respetar los valores fundamentales y las experiencias que se encuentran en el corazón de los paisajes culturalmente significativos.

Palabras clave: paisaje culturalmente significativo, carácter del paisaje, valor paisajístico, administración del paisaje

Among the most vexing heritage resource issues facing public land agencies today is the management of landscapes rich in memory and meaning in the face of increasing development pressures. Unfortunately, examples of such landscapes and their attendant management controversies abound, and new management challenges are coming to the fore frequently. For a very recent one, consider Minidoka, a former internment camp on Bureau of Land Management (BLM)–administered land in Idaho, where 13,000 American citizens of Japanese descent were held during World War II. At present, the BLM is analyzing the potential impact of a commercial wind farm that would be situated on the former campgrounds and their immediate viewshed. Camp survivors and their descendants have protested the proposal and

claim that this development will “fundamentally alter” the once desolate and isolated landscape, and be completely “distracting, disruptive, and disrespectful” (Mohr 2021:9).

For an example more familiar to many archaeologists, consider my primary focus in this article—the current controversy surrounding management of the Greater Chaco Landscape (Mitchell 2022). The portion of this landscape within northwestern New Mexico is one of most intensely investigated, archaeologically rich landscapes in North America. It is also the locus of oil and gas production. Advocates for Chaco have now successfully lobbied the federal government to undertake additional archaeological survey, develop ethnographic studies, and call a halt to future oil and

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feel when they are contemplating those landscapes, and how they want to experience these landscapes. We must recognize and begin to manage for these intangible—but very real—properties of place that trigger and reinforce strong feelings of connection and stewardship. Thinking about how to give primacy to how people feel and how people want to feel in a given setting can help us build a more inclusive approach to the management of culturally significant landscapes. Although I will use the example of the Greater Chaco Landscape and our current efforts to manage the public lands within this landscape effectively, the management ideas and strategies I explore here could be applied to any of the numerous culturally significant landscapes on federal lands today and, potentially, to culturally significant landscapes under development pressure, wherever they exist.

A PERSONAL ARGUMENT FOR CHANGING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Let me be clear from the outset about why I am advocating for adopting an approach to management that emphasizes landscape character and the experience of landscape over the identification and evaluation of individual historic components. I was shaped as a person and as a professional by two distinct sets of experiences. The first was the experience of exploring heritage-rich but largely stable and unindustrialized landscapes such as the Owens Valley in today's California; the Montezuma Valley and the Mesa Verde in today's Colorado; Red Valley in Arizona; and the San Juan drainage in today's New Mexico. The second was the experience of managing, as a responsible federal official, some of the most iconic landscapes of the American West, including Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument, Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, and two of our national historic trails—the Old Spanish Trail and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro—which cross the Greater American Southwest from Mexico through New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and Nevada to California. I explored these places on foot, I drove across most of the West on or near national historic trails, and I met with many members of the public, tribal officials, and local managers and agency professionals while holding dozens of scoping meetings, consultations, and countless staff discussions over how best to manage the public lands. For me, the experience of doing archaeological survey and the experience of walking or driving through open, quiet, mostly undeveloped landscapes has been deeply formative. I expect that many archaeologists who entered the field in the 1970s and 1980s and continued on to work with contested landscapes have had similar experiences. Our archaeological research reports and planning documents are one outcome of that experience. The time spent in ancient and unchanging places, and places with a strong and immutable connection to our history was and is another—perhaps more lasting—outcome.

Modern changes to these landscapes often feel like loss. I want to be able to keep experiencing these powerful landscapes as I first saw them. I want them to remain unchanged. I want the best possible management for these unique and irreplaceable landscapes. In cases where the landscape documents events and processes that were painful or harmful or especially difficult to

understand and address, I think it is critical to preserve the experience of such hallowed grounds. The Minidoka internment camp advocates are expressing this hope today, in a situation that is especially complicated by the recognition that the camp was established on land held dear by yet wrested from its original occupants in the previous century. I believe that the conservation efforts underway on behalf of the Greater Chaco Landscape are also spurred by a desire to keep this extraordinary place from changing beyond recognition. That, of course, may not be possible. What is possible, though, is to recognize that the value of these landscapes reaches far beyond their obvious, tangible cultural resources and to change our approach to conserving, protecting, and—where possible—restoring these irreplaceable landscapes to a condition that befits and reflects their value. I hope that the approach to landscape management that I advocate here will help to clarify some of the difficult issues currently surrounding Greater Chaco and other culturally significant landscapes that will emerge as the public lands face more development challenges in coming years.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPES

I do not want to confuse the culturally significant landscapes that I am addressing here with cultural landscapes as the latter are understood in context of current cultural resource management. For the purposes of eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, the federal government defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values” (National Park Service [NPS] 2022). The NPS describes four, nonmutually exclusive types of cultural landscape (NPS 2022):

- a historic designed landscape, consciously designed and laid according to a design principle or according to a recognized style or tradition
- a historic site (landscape) significant for its association with an historic event, activity, or person
- a historic vernacular landscape whose use, construction, or physical layout reflects endemic traditions, customs, beliefs, or values
- an ethnographic landscape, which is a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also recognizes cultural landscapes as a category of heritage resource (Mitchell et al. 2009). The UNESCO definition is also broad: “Cultural landscapes are those where human interaction with natural systems has, over a long time, formed a distinctive landscape. These interactions arise from, and cause, cultural values to develop” (Mitchell et al. 2009:6). UNESCO describes three main categories (Mitchell et al. 2009:20):

- a clearly defined landscape, such as an intentionally developed park or garden

- an organically evolved landscape, which may be a “fossil or relict” landscape, or a “continuing landscape,” where the landscape retains an active, traditional role in a contemporary society
- an “associative cultural landscape,” where the natural landscape elements have powerful religious, cultural, or artistic associations

The two examples of culturally significant landscapes I named earlier—Minidoka internment camp and the Greater Chaco Landscape—would be considered in distinct ways under the US and UNESCO programs. The Minidoka internment camp would be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under the category of historic site, and Minidoka was in fact listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 10, 1979. It is currently managed as a national monument, following President Bill Clinton’s use of the 1906 Antiquities Act (P.L. 59-209, §16 U.S.C. 431–433, <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/tools/laws/antact.htm>) to establish it as such in January 2001. The camp may not be recognized as a cultural landscape under the UNESCO World Heritage Program, however, because it does not represent a landscape that developed distinctive cultural features through a long evolution in place. It would be eligible for inscription as a historic site on the World Heritage List, of course. The main cluster of ancestral ruins in Chaco Canyon was named as one of the first Antiquities Act proclamations by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907, and the sites within the national monument were inscribed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. The World Heritage List today includes Chaco Culture National Historical Park as a “network of archaeological sites” (UNESCO 2022). It should be noted that the World Heritage List inscription in 1987 came before development of cultural landscapes as a heritage resource type in 1992. The center of the Greater Chaco Landscape, now managed as Chaco Culture National Historical Park, has not yet been formally described as a cultural landscape, nor has the larger landscape of Greater Chaco, although studies to that end have been proposed and may be carried out in the future (De la Torre et al. 2003).

By contrast, both the Minidoka and Chaco landscapes are easily recognized as culturally significant landscapes of critical importance to their constituents. These places and others like them evoke strong emotional reactions and a heightened sense of connection among their stakeholders as they challenge land managers to make good management decisions. Landscapes such as these may, and often do, still bear the traces of historical events. They may see intermittent uses by descendant populations and may be visited as a form of pilgrimage or religious observance or commemorative event, or they may be open to the public. They can be labeled as “cultural resources” in the way that this term is used by ethnographers, historians, and archaeologists, but what makes them stand out are the ways in which they affect individuals and communities. Each of these places is alive for descendant populations, for hikers and historians, for bicycle riders, for modern-day explorers and map makers, and for archaeologists. They play an important role in our understanding of our nation and our relationships to each other. Their recognition as special places worthy of preservation has come about through concerted effort on the part of passionate stakeholders who often—but not always—share the same conservation goals.

IDENTIFYING, DEFINING, AND DESCRIBING CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Identifying, defining, describing, and ultimately managing culturally significant landscapes in ways that honor the experience of place calls for an approach that is different from the current standard for identifying cultural landscapes as they have been defined for the National Register of Historic Places and the World Heritage List. Culturally significant landscapes may have been previously identified as cultural landscapes by historians, ethnographers, preservationists, and cultural resource specialists—albeit with modest or minimal input from descendant populations, landscape advocates, traditional users, outdoor recreationists, and others with direct experience of place. In the American West, landscapes once considered remote and poorly suited to industrial-scale uses are now threatened by regional population growth, increased interest in visitation and use, encroaching development, and/or by proposals to extract and/or develop resources within their boundaries. Unfortunately, the full import and value of these landscapes—including the experience of place—may not be identified and understood until their constituencies and advocates are alerted to proposed new or intensified uses. There is no unified approach to identification and management that meets the needs of these landscapes today. Two examples—one from my experience with the national historic trails, and one from the past two decades of management at Chaco and in the Greater Chaco Landscape—illustrate the challenges.

Being Directed to Manage for Experience: A Legal Mandate for the National Historic Trails

The national historic trails provide a good example of a legal direction to manage explicitly for an experience of place, albeit one that has met with only qualified success for federal agencies. Under the National Trails System Act (NTSA) of 1968 (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 116-9, March 12, 2019, 16 U.S.C. § 1251, Sec. 12, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/upload/National-Trails-System-Act-Amended-2019.pdf>), national historic trails managers are directed to preserve opportunities to “vicariously share” the experience of the trail’s original users. That experience should take place on a landscape that preserves sensory experiences and landscape features that would have been familiar to a trail traveler. National historic trails may be thought of as a set of resources associated with the trail experience—which is to say, not only the actual trail tread or trace, if one exists, but also the landmarks, campsites, cultural features, and natural resources used by the trail travelers. When these exist together along a section of trail and have historic integrity, and when the historic trail can be followed by modern travelers using the means of transportation typical of the period of active trail use, and when a management corridor including these resources has been defined and adopted, the managing agency can be said to have preserved the vicarious experience of trail travel. This means managing for views, viewsheds (what can be seen from a particular vantage point), soundscapes (what is heard at a particular vantage point), and soundsheds (the area over which sound travels to and from a particular vantage point); for the presence of others on the trail;

for trail-related experiences; and for the integrity of the trail corridor.

The experience of trail travel, at least as it was in the historic period of use, defines the management focus. Managing for a vicarious experience of trail travel should be relatively straightforward: the law and its objectives are clear. In practice, however, defining what constitutes the total trail landscape; the size of the trail corridor; the significance of landmarks and physical trail features; the condition of the viewshed, soundscape, and soundshed; and even the allowable modes of transport become areas of contention during the development of historic trail management plans. The acreage to be protected when trails cross large stretches of yet undeveloped, remote backcountry—such as was the case for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (spanning more than 2,700 miles from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Los Angeles, California, through Colorado, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada)—is immense. Development pressures from solar energy projects, wind energy projects, transmission lines, highways, and property development in general push for narrowly focused trail corridors, with small footprints, or even no corridors. As a result, the BLM, at least, has yet to establish permanently protected trail corridors for many of the still undeveloped miles of historic trail across the public lands. When development projects are proposed within the viewsheds and soundsheds of trails, managers are hard pressed to mitigate impacts to trail resources themselves and must rely on existing general land management direction. Although there has been general consensus on the significance of trail features and trail landscapes, the scale of the effort has resulted in largely uncoordinated and highly variable preservation efforts, and an overall challenge to the agency mission to conserve, protect, and restore trail values—including the vicarious experience of trail travelers.

Failing to Manage for Experience: The Greater Chaco Landscape vis-à-vis Chaco the Park

The BLM's experience with managing the Greater Chaco Landscape over the past decades has been equally challenging. Archaeology Southwest (2022) maintains an excellent web resource, Protecting the Greater Chaco Landscape, that has captured many of these management challenges; broader media coverage and commentary is nearly continuous (see, for example, Davenport 2021; Sage 2022). Some protection efforts have been very successful: five of the extraordinary "Chacoan Outliers" that make up that "network of archaeological sites" that underlie the World Heritage List inscription lie on BLM-managed public lands in northwestern New Mexico. These outlying communities, often connected to the Chaco Canyon pueblos by ancient roads, are Pierre's Site, Twin Angels, Halfway House, Casamero, and Kin Nizhoni. Some 20 other sites and site clusters associated with Greater Chaco have been recognized as "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern," which trigger additional restrictions for land-use activities under the current resource management plan (United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management 2003). And, of course, for the past 20 years since the adoption of the current plan for the area, the BLM has attempted to minimize impacts in the active oil and gas field that is spatially congruent with much of the Greater Chaco Landscape. The most recent protection effort includes the 2021 proposal to withdraw more than 350,000 acres from new oil and gas leasing, which—if

adopted through Presidential Order—will halt new oil and gas development within 16 km (10 mi.) of the boundary for Chaco Culture National Historic Park for the next 20 years. To date, however, as much as 90% of the public land under the management of the BLM within 16 km (10 mi.) of the boundary of Chaco Culture National Historic Park has already been leased for oil and gas development (Reed 2019).

At present, the extent of the Greater Chaco Landscape and its main man-made features have been defined and described primarily by archaeologists (Lekson 2006; Stein and Lekson 1992; Van Dyke 2008). In general, it is now seen as encompassing some 155,400 km² (60,000 mi.²) centered on the San Juan Basin of northwestern New Mexico and including vast tracts of what is now Arizona, Colorado, and Utah (Van Dyke and Heitman 2021). Within the 155,400 km² (60,000 mi.²) Greater Chaco Landscape are the now familiar Chaco-era great houses—or outliers—with formal, stylistically distinctive architecture, constructed roadways, and a rich suite of ancillary features.

Indigenous perspectives on this landscape have been invaluable to our understanding of its significance, its character, and the fuller suite of values and resources that make this a culturally significant landscape. In a recent discussion, Pueblo leaders described the Greater Chaco Landscape as a place of pilgrimage; as a place of stopping points on a migration journey; as a place that the Pueblos continue to steward and learn from; as a place connected to them by stories, ceremonies, and song; as a place where critical knowledge was gained and passed on; as a place where archaeological sites should be protected and archaeological materials should be left in place; as a place that is still alive and where spirits can and do return; and as a landscape that deserves respect (Chavarría et al. 2020). Recently, Van Dyke and Heitman produced a video highlighting additional Indigenous perspectives, including the value of Chaco for Indigenous and traditional education, for ongoing traditional practices, and for a greater understanding of the deep history of Indigenous peoples of the American Southwest and their relationship to this landscape. This video is available through the University Press of Colorado (<http://www.read.upcolorado.com/projects/the-greater-chaco-landscape>).

Archaeologists concerned with the Greater Chaco Landscape and other threatened culturally significant landscapes have tried to expand the values associated with archaeological sites to include some of these more intangible aspects of landscape character. Most recently, Ruth Van Dyke and her colleagues have called for management measures to preserve and protect what they have called "experiential values" in the Greater Chaco Landscape (Van Dyke 2008; Van Dyke and Heitman 2021; Van Dyke et al. 2016). These include both maintaining site viewsheds and lines of sight from one location to the next—and complexes of lines of sight—and conserving soundscapes. They have proposed that viewsheds, soundsheds, and soundscapes constitute potentially significant attributes of archaeological sites. I applaud their ground-breaking work, which has yielded very interesting information, and I am in sympathy with this approach to coping with inadequate cultural resource protection laws and regulations. However, it is not the archaeological sites that benefit from protection of viewsheds, soundsheds, and soundscapes, even when these are based on what the original occupants of the site might have seen or heard. It is instead the modern site visitor and the modern practitioner of millennia-old cultural practices who benefit

from the preservation of general landscape characteristics of unimpeded or unimpaired views—and quiet.

Park managers at Chaco Culture National Historical Park have also recognized what we might think of as visitor-based experience values. These include spiritual values; the aesthetic values inherent in sweeping, unchanging views; the social value of an uncrowded park and the opportunity to appreciate ancient sites with minimal distractions, including intrusive noise or light; and environmental values such as clear air, clean water, and adequate facilities (De la Torre et al. 2003). The character of the landscape at Chaco—which is formed by a remote location with striking scenery, exquisite masonry work in pueblos established more than a thousand years ago, quiet places, dark night and clear day skies—draws and inspires park visitors. In turn, park managers seek to manage for a visitor experience that includes unimpeded access to skies, vistas, and viewsheds, dark night and clear day skies, low levels of mechanical noise and frequent access to natural quiet, a lack of intrusive modern elements in viewsheds, and a sense of remoteness (De la Torre et al. 2003:13–19).

FEDERAL WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT AS A MODEL FOR MANAGING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

I fear that the BLM's management challenges for the Greater Chaco Landscape would not be solved by extending the boundaries of Chaco Culture National Historical Park to encompass the Greater Chaco Landscape, and the proposed 16km (10 mi.) mineral development exclusion zone will not solve the management issues either. What is needed is a change in management approach.

The approach that is needed today is one that integrates managing for qualities of landscape, landscape character, and the experience of a landscape with managing for the more tangible aspects of cultural resources. Of course, I am not alone in recognizing the need for a change in federal approaches to cultural landscape management; the controversies surrounding development proposals for culturally significant landscapes attest to a broad consensus for change. To date, however, the approaches to landscapes on BLM-managed lands have focused primarily on identifying, preserving, and—where possible—mitigating impacts to physical elements of cultural landscapes while expanding understanding of the traditional significance of cultural landscapes through more extensive and collaborative ethnographic and historic research (Colwell and Ferguson 2014). I am proposing something different, which emphasizes understanding how desired experiences are connected to and supported by landscape features and landscape character. The BLM, as well as the Forest Service and other federal land-managing agencies, have the basis of such a management approach available now—one that is used today to manage large tracts of federal lands for visitor experiences. Here, of course, I am talking about wilderness areas designated and managed under the Wilderness Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-577, 11 U.S.C. §1131-1136, <https://wilderness.net/learn-about-wilderness/key-laws/wilderness-act/default.php>).

We may not ordinarily think about wilderness areas as places managed to meet visitor or user expectations, but it is helpful to think about them in this way. The 1964 Wilderness Act famously recognizes the need to manage for visitor experiences when it discusses the value of preserving places “where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” (11 U.S.C § 1131[c]). “Untrammelled” is an unusual term. In the context of the Wilderness Act, it means an area in which natural disturbance and change run their course and that is free from modern human control or manipulation. In public meetings and discussions, I have heard (and am wholly sympathetic to) comments to the effect that none of our wilderness areas were ever “untrammelled,” or more specifically, that all these areas—indeed, the entire North American continent—were of course lived in by people. I do not wish to suggest that I think what has been recognized as wilderness through the Wilderness Act is or ever was “wilderness,” in the sense that humans played no role in nor had any cultural connections to these lands. These lands were, and are, quite simply, tracts of land without extensive motorized vehicle access and extensive commercial, modern, land-altering development. I have also heard (and am in sympathy with) objections to the notion that all who come to wilderness come as mere visitors. I agree that the term “visitor” seems to demean the relationship between people and place that is recognized by those who are concerned with culturally significant landscapes.

Leaving aside unfortunate archaic language, within the Wilderness Act itself are sections that recognize that wilderness can be replete with ancestral sites and historic ruins, and that there are persistent uses—including spiritual pilgrimages as well as ranching and recreation—that take place in these areas and have done so for generations. The point here is that the experience-based values approach that has evolved to define the management of Chaco Culture Historical Park and overall wilderness management guidance are remarkably similar. The National Park Service's general approach was established in 1916 through the National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. §1, <https://www.doi.gov/oc/nps-organic-act>), which identified the NPS as an agency under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, with the stated purpose of promoting use of national park lands while protecting them from impairment. Specifically, the Act declares that the NPS has a dual mission, both to conserve park resources and provide for their use and enjoyment “in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired” for future generations (National Park Service Organic Act 16 U.S.C. §1). Today, the unimpairment clause is understood to apply broadly to park values identified in the designating language of any particular park and through subsequent planning efforts for that park; “unimpairment” in general can be understood to mean free from permanent harm and available for future enjoyment.

The wilderness approach derives in part from our nation's experience with national parks. In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act to preserve and protect certain lands “in their natural condition” and therefore “secure for present and future generations the benefits of wilderness” (The Wilderness Act 11 U.S.C. § 1131[a]). Congress therefore directed that designated wilderness areas

shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them

unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness [11 U.S.C. § 1131 (a)].

Two things make wilderness management a helpful model or starting place for managing culturally significant landscapes: First, many land-managing federal agencies are familiar with wilderness management and processes for assessing landscape character (see, for example, United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management 2012). Second, the management goals are clear, and they are focused on the experience of users and visitors. Wilderness is to be managed to maintain, retain, and even, where possible, enhance wilderness character. Wilderness character, of course, guides the wilderness experience. Wilderness character has five distinguishable qualities, or components: (1) untrammelled (unhindered and free of modern human control or manipulation), (2) undeveloped, (3) natural, (4) solitude, and (5) other features of value, including historic, educational, and ecological features and resources. Here is what the Wilderness Act says is a wilderness:

an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value [11 U.S.C. § 1131-1136, Sec. 2 (c)].

There is no way that the public lands—the BLM lands—surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park will qualify for wilderness designation: the presence of a well-developed modern transportation web associated with oil and gas energy extraction alone would disqualify them from consideration. And, again, I am not arguing for the creation of a Greater Chaco Landscape National Park. What I want to see is a management approach that will identify and retain the characteristics of the Greater Chaco Landscape that are most prized by its many advocates: intact archaeological sites, unimpaired viewsheds and soundsheds, solitude and quiet—in short, a landscape that would be largely recognizable to its former inhabitants and to its modern users, and that would allow for a contemplative and potentially spiritual experience for modern visitors and users.

My sense is that the several stakeholder groups that have been most involved in recent discussions with the BLM—the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Navajo Nation, the NPS, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, and the Coalition to Protect Greater Chaco (a collaborative that includes Archaeology Southwest, the Wilderness Society, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Conservation Lands Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, and

Park Rangers for Our Lands)—would agree that these are indeed critical values for the culturally significant landscape that is Greater Chaco. Regardless of whether these values were critical to the builders of Chaco and the Chaco communities, these values are critical to its modern constituents. I believe the BLM is now being challenged to manage for natural quiet and natural sounds, a night sky where the stars shine brightly, a sense of remoteness and antiquity, and an opportunity for solitude without the intrusions of the modern world. Taken altogether, honoring these values not only preserves critically valued experiences but is also, at the most basic level, a show of respect.

MANAGING FOR LANDSCAPE CHARACTER: A POSSIBLE MODEL FROM WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT

The essentials of an experience- and landscape-character-based management approach as it pertains to culturally significant landscapes are to:

- Identify the kinds and qualities of experiences desired by those who come to that place
- Identify other features of the landscape that are particular to that landscape and that give it a distinct character
- Translate those experiences and characteristics into objective measures
- Provide inventory for the presence and condition of landscape characteristics
- Prescribe management actions that will conserve, protect, restore, preserve, retain, or enhance existing landscape character

Many of the values identified for the Greater Chaco Landscape overlap with or are the same as wilderness values. (Of course, other culturally significant landscapes, especially those that are associated with negative or particularly painful incidents, events and emotions—such as Minidoka—may have additional or different values that could shape the visitor experience in ways that are more appropriate to that setting.)

The work undertaken to date in the Greater Chaco Landscape has identified a suite of values—some tangible, some intangible—that can form the basis for an inventory of landscape character and landscape characteristics. A landscape character inventory would identify the degree to which any particular place within a culturally significant landscape offers the experiences and features that make that landscape valuable to its constituents. The inventory would look at the presence and integrity of archaeological and historic values (Ancestral Pueblo communities and large village sites; great houses and monumental Chaco-style architecture; other contemporaneous archaeological sites, shrines, and roads; significant and/or named landmarks that play prominent roles in Pueblo and Navajo history); the integrity and quality of environmental values (air quality/sight distance; quality of night sky; viewsheds of individual great houses, individual shrines, and roads; visibility of landscape features from roads); landscape character values (naturalness or degree/amount of modern intrusive elements, appearance of natural condition, natural ecosystem integrity); social values (opportunity for

solitude or reflection, opportunity for community activities and freedom from interruption, and the opportunity to enjoy an undeveloped setting); and economic values (resources available for development, development need, and development likelihood).

IS A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND EXPERIENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT APPROACH POSSIBLE?

We can certainly develop a landscape character inventory, and we can capture and model landscape data and values in a Geographic Information System (GIS) to determine whether values are being preserved and to what level, and where there may be threats to preserving those values. Van Dyke and colleagues have done much of this work already as they have explored the Greater Chaco Landscape (Van Dyke and Heitman 2021; Van Dyke et al. 2016), and the BLM has already gathered data on naturalness and opportunity for solitude in the Greater Chaco Landscape. An integrated, experience-focused inventory will identify where the critical elements of landscape character are in place, where they are most threatened, and where they may be most effectively restored through management actions. It would establish baseline conditions for landscape character and characteristics across the Greater Chaco Landscape as a whole and would be critical to identifying the priorities for management actions to conserve, protect, or restore landscape character. With such a baseline, managers can work with stakeholders to explore desired landscape conditions and potential management actions.

When culturally significant landscapes enter public discourse as conflict zones, discussions often center on issues of respect. At what level of impact or potential impact are managers no longer showing respect for these culturally significant landscapes? At the level of any impact? At the level of impacts visible to a pilgrim? To a casual observer or hiker? What level of impact would affect the integrity of the landscape or impair it for future generations? These are the questions on which discussions of how to manage the Greater Chaco Landscape on public lands have foundered, and that need to be resolved, not just for the Greater Chaco Landscape but for any culturally significant landscape that may be recognized on public lands as our once open spaces become more crowded. To start to answer them, we must have a clearer understanding of the landscape and its essential character.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING FOR LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Conservation advocates believe the segregation and withdrawal of mineral development from the 16 km (10 mi.) buffer around Chaco Culture National Historical Park will lead to the protection of the Greater Chaco Landscape. Even if the withdrawal is approved, however, the BLM will still need to change its management approach to achieve the larger goals of the advocates for culturally significant landscapes. More importantly, federal land managers will need to be ready for the hard discussions surrounding

more culturally significant landscapes as more of the West is developed for commercial purposes.

What follows are some recommendations for how that management approach should be structured, along with a strong caveat. I may be wrong. Conflicts over the management of the Greater Chaco Landscape and other culturally significant landscapes may be resolved through the acquisition of more standard cultural resources management data, more archaeological survey and research, and more ethnographic surveys. I do not think this will end the conflicts, however, because I believe that the conflicts are about how the land is treated and experienced and not about the significance of the resources (or their sacred nature or other sensitive cultural information). That is why I am advocating an experience-based, landscape character-based approach. Views and viewsheds, sound, a sense of remoteness, the feeling imparted by the landscape, the degree of intrusiveness of the modern world, an opportunity for calm and contemplation, the ability to be in a place with or without others—these are not proprietary or sensitive cultural values. These are values that can and should be documented extensively and their condition shared freely. Managing for these values can capture a sense of respect and responsibility without delving deeply into culturally sensitive associations or raising issues of intellectual cultural property and inappropriate disclosure. Indeed, this is one of the major benefits of such an approach: Experiential values may be described and identified by a wide range of stakeholders without divulging or sharing sensitive information. Soliciting feedback on how stakeholders wish to experience a landscape is very different from asking stakeholders to share privileged information about that landscape.

There are several fundamental changes that must be made to our approach for managing culturally significant landscapes, and I believe that the tools that agencies need to accomplish these changes are already in hand. Perhaps the most important is to recognize that the landscape values of the public lands are tied to experiences as well as to archaeological or historic features—experiences that are as integral, distinct, and valid as the desired experiences that underlie national wilderness policy. This means that archaeologists and historians are not the only federal agency professionals to involve when dealing with culturally significant landscapes. Of course, agencies should seek assistance from descendant and historically connected communities and their experts. They should also bring in social scientists, recreation and wilderness specialists, and those with direct expertise in visitor experience management. This expertise exists in federal agencies such as the BLM today; it must be integrated with the work of cultural resource specialists. Next, agencies must make the identification of landscape values an explicit part of the planning process. For land-managing agencies such as the BLM and the US Forest Service, this will mean developing a holistic and integrated inventory and condition assessment process, combining aspects of wilderness characteristics, cultural resource values, visual resources and scenic values, recreation values, and, critically, experience-based values to capture data relevant to the experience of culturally significant landscapes. A major part of this will be working to identify and engage a broad group of stakeholders. This will include affiliated descendant communities, residents and neighbors, and public land visitors and users—including avocationalists, recreationists, and wilderness advocates—to understand what has given and what gives a landscape its character and

importance in the past and especially in the present. Another major effort will be to find better ways to identify levels of acceptable impact. The questions to be asked are not “Is this a significant archaeological site, a traditional cultural property, or a sacred site?” but “In what ways and how do you wish to experience this place, and what is important to see and hear and feel (or not see and hear and feel) when you are there?” The National Council on Historic Preservation could play a critical role here by supporting and promoting an explicitly experience-based approach to landscape preservation.

Landscape condition inventories and assessments are critical elements here, and these inventories, assessments, and monitoring programs must be transparent and easily intelligible to the public—if not conducted by the public. I have suggested an inventory system that extends what the BLM would recognize as a wilderness characteristics inventory; there are obviously other ways to approach this problem, and there are many ways to design data collection efforts. At any rate, culturally significant landscapes need a management approach that builds on multiple lines of input and a transparent inventory and assessment program to identify goals and desired experiences and to develop management actions. These management actions should include setting goals for the conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of desired landscape experiences. The US Department of the Interior is initiating a program called “Honoring Chaco,” which puts the development of management actions under a coordinating group drawn from the Bureau, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Tribal Nations (United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management 2021). I would urge this program to include landscape advocates as well as advocates drawn from wilderness, recreation, and archaeological communities, and I would urge their first step to be the development of a baseline landscape inventory that includes the identification and inventory of desired experiences for specific places within the Greater Chaco Landscape.

Finally, a new management approach must be established, with the understanding that management of culturally significant landscapes on the public lands is measured by many in terms of respect and how respect is demonstrated. Respect is demonstrated not only by outcomes that align with goals and objectives. It is demonstrated through the development of management approaches that recognize the core values and experiences that are at the heart of culturally significant landscapes. These are landscapes that have advocates, that play and have played an important role in people’s notions of identity, that provoke arguments and lead to heated debates, and whose advocates would certainly argue should be treated with recognition and respect.

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Data Availability Statement

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Competing Interests

The author is retired from the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.

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