

We recognize that the Indians desire firm assurance that the ceremonial areas will be protected and be available to them on a permanent basis. There is also a need to assure the many non-Pueblo residents who depend on the resources of the large Rio Pueblo de Taos watershed that these resources would be served and protected.

Accordingly, we have studied the area in the vicinity of Blue Lake with a view to defining an area which could be set aside by Congress for the exclusive use of the Pueblo. In our report to you on S. 1624 and S. 1625, we recommended amendments to those bills which would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to amend the existing permit granted to the Pueblo to provide also for the exclusive use by the Indians of about 3,150 acres in the Blue Lake area. The Secretary of Agriculture would further be directed by S. 1624 and S. 1625 to continue to protect the area's resources.

We would have no objection to the enactment of S. 1624 or S. 1625 if amended as suggested in our report, in lieu of H.R. 3306.

The 3,150 acres which that report describes encompasses Blue Lake and two other lakes that are reported to have special significance in the ceremonies of the Indians. A legislative grant of exclusive use and possession of this tract should meet Indian needs with respect to use of the area.

Other recommended provisions would be beneficial in confirming the Secretary's authority for protection and management of the remaining part of the permit area not subject to exclusive use and occupancy by the Indians, and the provisions relating to Indian and non-Indian use of the area.

The Bureau of the Budget advises that there is no objection to the presentation of this report and that the Bureau concurs with the views expressed herein.

Sincerely yours,

ORVILLE L. FREEMAN,
Secretary.