

draw them from mineral and other entry, in order to safeguard the interests and welfare of the Pueblo de Taos Indians. The lands described by section 4 include 32,000 acres within the Carson National Forest, N. Mex., from which the Indians obtain water, forage, and wood. The Indians also use part of the area for religious ceremonials.

Section 4 also directed the Secretary of Agriculture to grant to the Indians a permit to occupy and use the land and resources for their personal use and benefit for 50 years, with a provision for subsequent renewals. This permit has been granted. The Indians are also permitted exclusive use and occupancy of the described area for religious ceremonials in August of each year.

H.R. 3306 would amend section 4 by: (1) Redescribing the area of lands set forth in that section to include an additional 18,000 acres of national forest lands, thus including a total of 50,000 acres in the permit area, and (2) providing that non-Indian lessees or permittees using the described lands would have the right to renew their leases or permits, but the Indians would have the right to obtain relinquishments of such permits or leases and to pay for them and related improvements from tribal funds.

The bill would also declare the entire 50,000-acre area to be held in trust for the Pueblo de Taos. The area would be a part of the Pueblo de Taos Reservation and would be administered the same as other trust or restricted Indian lands, except that the Secretary of Agriculture would supervise the establishment and maintenance of conservation measures for the area.

We strongly recommend that no additional national forest lands be made available for the use of the Pueblo de Taos. The entire area involved in H.R. 3306 should remain a part of the Carson National Forest. We believe the Taos special use permit adequately protects and provides for the interests of the Indians. At the same time, the permit allows the greatest possible public use and benefits consistent with Indian needs.

H.R. 3306 would declare to be held in trust for the Pueblo not only the national forest land covered by the present permit arrangement but also an additional 18,000 acres of national forest land now fully available for public use. This would extend to this limited group exclusive and special privileges not available to other citizens.

The additional area is now administered under multiple use principles for greatest public use and benefit. These lands contain scarce resources in a generally arid region. The resources presently available to the Pueblo de Taos Indians appear to be sufficient for their needs.

The area described in H.R. 3306 includes approximately 2,000 acres of the Wheeler Peak Wilderness. This area was made a part of the national wilderness preservation system by the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964. This act defines wilderness, in part, as an area of at least 5,000 acres of land or of sufficient size as to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition. Elimination of 2,000 acres from the wilderness would reduce its total to about 4,000 acres. If H.R. 3306 were enacted, the remaining portion of the Wheeler Peak Wilderness would no longer meet these criteria.

We are concerned that transfer of the tract in trust would be a far-reaching, undesirable precedent. The Pueblo de Taos is seeking the area in partial settlement of a recent determination of the Indian Claims Commission. Thus, transfer to the Indians of any part of the