

Dated: May 4, 1968.

Council Members:

Juan de Jesus Romero; Ben Marcus; John Marcus; Frank R. Archuleta; Joe D Romero; Manuel Lujan; Onesimo Cordova; Avelino Archuleta; Ben A. Lujan; Teles Reyna; Jerry Mirabal; John D. Reyna; Lupe Sandoval; Frank C. Martinez; Querino Romero, Governor; Severino Martinez, Council Spokesman; Paul J. Bernal, Council Secretary and Interpreter; Louis Castellano; James Mirabal; John J. Reyna; Teresino Jiron; Geronimo Trujillo; Manuel Reyna; Eleseo Suazo; Cesario Duran; T. L. Gomez; Cruz P. Trujillo; Cesario Romero; Don Mondragon; Santano Jiron; Sam Martinez.

SUMMARY

H.R. 3306 would transfer to Taos Pueblo by trust patent the entire watershed of the Rio Pueblo de Taos (hereinafter sometimes called the Blue Lake Area) and about 7,200 acres in the drainage of the Rio Lucero to the northwest, as shown on the map annexed hereto. The Indian Claims Commission held on September 8, 1965, that Taos Pueblo held aboriginal Indian title to all of that land, and that the United States extinguished that title without compensation in 1906 (exhibit 1). Since 1906 the Blue Lake Area has been continuously occupied and used by the Indians in the practice of their ancient religion. But the Indians' right to the exclusive use of the land under a permit authorized by Congress in 1933 has been challenged by the Forest Service.

The Pueblo now asks Congress for return of the land itself for the following reasons:

1. *Preservation of religious privacy.*—Ownership of the entire Blue Lake Area is necessary to preserve the absolute privacy with which the Indian religion is protected; if the sacred ways can be learned by outsiders, the religion will be profaned and its power vitiated. As a Taos Indian told the anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons: "Our ways would lose their power if they were known. People have learned about the ways of the other pueblos, and those pueblos have lost their power." (1 Parsons, "Pueblo Indian Religion," p. 433 (Chicago 1939).).

2. *Preservation of natural ecology.*—Ownership of the entire area is necessary to preserve the natural environment within which the religion is practiced. Preservation of the natural ecology of the "bowl" formed by the watershed of the Rio Pueblo is as important as preservation of privacy. The Indians' religion focuses on the world of nature undisturbed by technology; disruption of the ecology is a desecration of the area which threatens the vitality of the religion.

3. *Community progress.*—The will and leadership necessary to advance the life of the Pueblo and to sustain its orderly transition into American society depend upon preservation of the Pueblo's ancient religion. The religion is the basis for the social and political life of the Pueblo and for most of its economic life. Any weakening of the power of the traditional religion will thus weaken the cultural bonds that have held the Pueblo community together since A.D. 1300.