

I again would like to point out that public use of the resources and values of the area under permit to the Pueblo is in accord with the 1933 act which directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish safeguards for supervision and operation of the area for national forest purposes, as well as for Indian needs.

When Congress passed this act it considered the Pueblo's claims and decided conclusively that the area would not be devoted only to Indian use.

The 1940 permit and our subsequent actions are in accord with this congressional decision.

Even though the 1933 act and the 1940 permit provide for some other public use, the Indians have throughout the years insisted that this large public property should be held for their exclusive use and occupancy.

Reconciling this insistence with the interests of non-Indians who share the water from this area and who also desire to enjoy the area's other resource values has presented many problems. We believe that this has been done in ways that have recognized and protected the rights and interests of all concerned parties as Congress set them out in the 1933 act.

On balance we feel our relationship with the Indians has been good. There have been many occasions when the tribe has complemented the work of our local foresters.

Yet we recognize that the Pueblo de Taos is not entirely happy with the current arrangements and with our administration of the permit. H.R. 3306 has been introduced to fulfill the desire of the Pueblo for exclusive rights of use and principal control of the entire watershed of the Rio Pueblo de Taos, based primarily on its native religious significance.

The bill would transfer in trust to the Indians a 48,000-acre tract including this entire watershed. S. 1624 and S. 1625 would transfer in fee or in trust respectively 3,150 acres of the watershed.

In the past, we have recommended strongly that no substantial additional areas of national forest lands be set aside for the Pueblo. Because of the other public values of this area, this continues to be our recommendation.

However, we have examined ways to give the Indians firm assurance that their ceremonial areas will be protected and available to them on a permanent basis. We have studied the area in the vicinity of Blue Lake with a view to defining an area which could be set aside for the exclusive use of the Pueblo. In our reports to your committee we have suggested amendments to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to amend the 1940 permit to provide also for the exclusive use by the Indians of about 3,150 acres in the Blue Lake area. The 3,150 acres we recommend encompasses the area which in our dealing with the Pueblo, we have understood to be of special significance in their ceremonies. It includes Blue Lake and two other lakes which are reported to have particular religious meaning. The area is the same as is described in S. 1624 and S. 1625.

Practically all of it is now covered by the 1940 permit but it includes a small acreage of lands now outside the permit area.

A legislative grant of exclusive use and possession of this tract would assure the Pueblo of perpetual use of Blue Lake; there would