

currently doing all that is possible to protect the sacred lands and insure freedom of the Indians to practice their religion in privacy.

The part of the two statements quoted above remaining to be discussed is the desire of the Taos Pueblo to preserve the area in its natural state. If the Pueblo could demonstrate that this is not being done by the Forest Service or that passage of H.R. 3306 is the best and only assurance that the natural ecology will be preserved, then perhaps there might be some justification for the Pueblo's case. But these facts simply cannot be demonstrated.

The ten points listed above are overwhelming evidence of the Forest Service's and the Government's intentions with regard to exclusion of non-Indian recreational and commercial activities in the Blue Lake Area. Conservationists have long agreed that the Forest Service is the best equipped agency to manage forest lands. Their knowledge and experience best equips them to manage the Blue Lake Area so as to maintain the high watershed yield and preserve the ecology which the Indians claim they desire. H.R. 3306, by giving responsibility for conservation to the Secretary of Interior with authorization to contract with the Forest Service as needed, is insufficient assurance that the lands in question will be managed properly. With few exceptions, the BIA has been unable to effect sound conservation practices on Indian Trust Lands. The lands on the Taos Pueblo grant and the lands acquired by the Pueblo are a case in point. More important, the Forest Service if employed by contract cannot manage the area properly since it will lack authority to enforce conservation practices. Also under H.R. 3306 there is no assurance that funds will be appropriated for conservation purposes. As it now stands, the Forest Service has the responsibility and the authority to manage the Blue Lake Area and is compelled to provide for management of the area from its annual budget whatever the amounts appropriated.

The vital necessity for sound conservation practices to continue in the Blue Lake Area cannot be overstressed. The person who drafted the report for the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs composed an erroneous conclusion, "The Indians have a greater need for the land than does the public." The public water needs alone refute that conclusion. There are far more people dependent on the Blue Lake Area for water than the 1200 Taos Indians. In the Southwest, water is our life's blood. That Congress recognizes our need for water is attested to by passage of the billion dollar Central Arizona Project.

Water is vital to the prosperity and economic growth of the Taos area. In turn the economic development of the Taos community is necessary to the welfare of the Taos Pueblo. The old agricultural ways of the Tribe are insufficient to meet the economic needs of the Indians. More Indians are becoming dependent on outside employment for their livelihood.

The per acre yield of water from the Blue Lake Area is the highest per section of any lands in the state. Given the dependence of the Taos and downstream communities on the watershed, no risk is justified with regard to the proper management of that watershed.

The proponents of H.R. 3306 have made much about the religious importance of Blue Lake to the Indians of Taos Pueblo. They have misled the Indian Claims Commission on this point and their erroneous statements have persisted to this time. In his testimony before the House Committee, Secretary Udall quoted from the report of the Indian Claims Commission as follows: "In August of every year, the entire adult population of the Pueblo goes to Blue Lake for ancient religious ceremonies which have continued uninterrupted for centuries." "This area is used every day by at least a few Taos Pueblo Indians for private religious reflection."

These statements are simply not true. During the first week of September of this year, in the company of two Forest employees and two others, I visited Blue Lake. It was our intention to be the first non-Indians on the scene after the August ceremonials.

Few alpine lakes can compare to Blue Lake in placid natural beauty. It is perfectly round. The alpine spruce forest extends to and shades its banks. Its waters are unbelievably clear and unusually deep giving the lake a unique, rich blue color. The Indians had left the area in a mess. Only a few new deposits could be found in the trash pit provided by the Forest Service. Papers, bottles, and cans were left where they had dropped. Green trees had been felled. Only six or seven campfires were counted; but the remains were unburied and the logs were left to smoulder.

It was saddening and distressing to me to see such a magnificent place being desecrated and abused by the very people who were ostensibly trying to protect