

NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, INC.,
Santa Fe, N. Mex., October 14, 1968.

Subject: Hearings on H.R. 3306 (90th Cong.).

Hon. GEORGE MCGOVERN,
*Chairman, Subcommittee on Indian Affairs,
 Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,
 Old Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C.*

DEAR SENATOR MCGOVERN: Thank you for affording me the opportunity of making further comments in response to Mr. Schaab's letter of September 27. I understand that these additional remarks are to be made a part of the hearing record.

With respect to the entry permit for our September 6 trip to Blue Lake, the Forest Supervisor, Mr. Don Seaman tells me that the request was for entrance to the Blue Lake area. Bear Lake is outside the Taos Pueblo authority; therefore, no permit is required to visit Bear Lake. This fact should be well known to the Pueblo War Chief.

I don't believe that it is incumbent upon me to prove that the BIA is not competent to adequately protect and conserve the Rio Pueblo Watershed. My statement was, "Conservationists have long agreed that the Forest Service is the best equipped agency to manage forest lands." The way to prove or disprove that statement is to interview a significant sample of recognized conservationists. As evidence to support my statement, I invite a general comparison of the present conditions of BIA administered lands in New Mexico versus those administered by the Forest Service. This comparison will support another statement of mine with which conservationists in general will agree. That is, "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." I do not mean to judge the BIA too harshly. The agency understandably has had to emphasize economic, health, and educational programs ahead of conservation.

I suppose the only real proof of the source of the litter we found at Blue Lake after the 1968 ceremonials would have to come from the testimony of impartial eyewitnesses. There being none, we must rely on the evidence. Let me elaborate on why the five of us who visited Blue Lake believe the little and the freshly cut green trees were left by the Indians.

Forest Service records as far back as 1932 reveal that clean-up crews have always had to police the area after the August ceremonials. My interviews with Forest Service personnel, both retired and active, indicate that there has always been a mess at Blue Lake after the Indians have left.

The nature of the litter we found was not of the usual type found in campgrounds frequented by non-Indians. In my camping experience, which spans some 25 years, never have I seen anything quite like it. Virtually all of the six or seven campsites we found contained unburied campfires with logs which were left to smolder. The Forest Service's highly successful Smokey Bear television campaign has had a great effect on the camping public. White campers in all probability, would not have been so universally careless with fire.

While there were a few wine and liquor bottles, there was a strange absence of freshly dropped beer cans. Instead, there was a peculiar preponderance of olive containers at every campsite. Also there were large, blackened coffee and syrup cans near a number of the fires. Using such containers as cooking utensils is not common among non-Indian campers as modern campers usually use lightweight cookware. The age of all the sign appeared to coincide with the ceremonials.

As for the cutting of living trees, the stumps in Figure 4 of my statement may indeed have been cut by non-Indians. Again we have no impartial eyewitnesses. The trees in that picture were obviously cut with a saw, perhaps a power saw, perhaps not. I have since learned that the Taos Indians do have and use power saws. They use wood extensively for fuel. The Forest Service has not cut firewood or teepee poles at Blue Lake since 1962. The freshly cut stumps in Figure 4 positively do not predate 1962. Be that as it may, I definitely saw freshly cut teepee poles with green pine needles still attached. (Enclosed is a photograph of a fresh, axe cut, green tree at Blue Lake.)

The principal reason a non-Indian would want to go to Blue Lake is to fish. However, most fishermen have lost interest in fishing by the time of the Blue Lake ceremonials. It is generally known that a permit is needed to go to Blue Lake. It has not been stocked with fish for years, and it has been closed to fishing.