



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Testimony of the Society for American Archaeology Regarding H.R. 2621, the Chimney Rock National Monument Establishment Act of 2011

Before the House Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

November 3, 2011

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) appreciates this opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 2621, the Chimney Rock National Monument Establishment Act of 2011. This legislation would provide greater protections for the priceless Chimney Rock Archaeological Area in the San Juan National Forest, Colorado.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With nearly 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

Chimney Rock Archaeological Area is a 4,726-acre plot in southwestern Colorado's San Juan National Forest, and it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970. The archaeological resources of this area are the physical record of the ancestors of modern Pueblo Indian tribes. The ancient peoples who occupied Chimney Rock and the surrounding area left behind significant architecture as well as hundreds of smaller archaeological sites. The importance of these resources in our efforts to understand the past and the peoples who came before us cannot be overstated.

Though the Forest Service works very hard to protect Chimney Rock and other cultural heritage sites located on its land, the current level of oversight afforded to the area through its present designation is incongruous with the importance of the site. Chimney Rock needs a clearer, stronger cultural resources protection mandate, one that will enable more staff and financial resources to be dedicated to surveying, inventorying, maintaining, and interpreting the location. Designation of the Chimney Rock Archaeological Area as a National Monument under H.R. 2621 will allow the federal government to provide the support needed for the public to enjoy and learn about the significant natural, cultural, and scientific resources of this unique place.

The legislation would also set forth a number of other steps to support the designation and future viability of the Monument. The Department of Agriculture, in consultation with Indian tribes and other stakeholders, would develop a management plan setting forth uses of the Monument as authorized by the Act, including use of the land by Indian tribes for cultural and religious purposes, and scientific and archaeological research. Lands contained in the Monument would

be withdrawn from mining and mineral leasing activities. Importantly, H.R. 2621 would also authorize the Department to include public lands adjacent to the park in the Monument if those lands contained significant archaeological resources.

Chimney Rock is one of the most significant archaeological sites in the nation. Its designation as a National Monument will expand our knowledge of the continent's past and ensure the preservation of its cultural resources for future generations of Americans. SAA strongly urges that the committee and full House consider and pass this important legislation as quickly as possible.