



## SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

### **Testimony of the Society for American Archaeology Regarding S. 3303, the Chimney Rock National Monument Act of 2010**

#### **Before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on National Parks**

**May 19, 2010**

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) appreciates this opportunity to testify in support of S. 3303, the Chimney Rock National Monument Act of 2010. This legislation would provide enhanced protections for the unique and 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 more than 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 hard to protect Chimney Rock and other cultural heritage sites located on its land for present and future generations, the current level of oversight afforded to the area through its present designation is inadequate. Chimney Rock needs a clearer, more concise cultural resource protection mandate, one that will enable more staff and financial resources to be dedicated to surveying, inventorying, maintaining, and interpreting the site. Designation of the Chimney Rock Archaeological Area as a National Monument under S. 3303 will allow the federal government to provide support needed for the public to enjoy and learn about the significant natural, cultural, and scientific resources of this area.

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, scientific and archaeological research, and the construction of a visitor's center and

curatorial facilities. Lands contained in the Monument would be withdrawn from mining and mineral leasing activities. Importantly, S. 3303 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. It's 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 Senate consider and pass this important legislation as quickly as possible.