



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

**Media Contact:** Office of the Secretary

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The withdrawal of 1,393 acres of public lands in New Mexico for scientific research by New Mexico's A. & M. College with a special provision protecting the traditional right of local Indians to use a portion of the area for religious purposes was announced today by the Department of the Interior.

The lands are located in Dona Ana County. They will be used by the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts for research on electromagnetism and other subjects.

The order provides that the Tortugas Indians may continue crossing the area on foot to visit a piece of land located on a hill near the College which they have traditionally regarded as sacred. Some members of the small Tortugas band live in Mexico and others in the United States. They are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Subject to valid existing rights, the lands are withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including mineral leasing and mining. Grazing will be permitted to continue, Bureau of Land Management Director Edward Woolsey said.

Notice of the application for withdrawal was published in the Federal Register on March 11, 1959. No comments were received.

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<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/1393-acre-withdrawal-aids-new-mexico-m-research>