



News Release

State of New Mexico
Historic Preservation Division, Department of Cultural Affairs
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sacred Mount Taylor Listed to State Register *Emergency Listing by CPRC will Protect Spiritual and Cultural Site*

ALBUQUERQUE — In a rare special meeting, the state Cultural Properties Review Committee, agreed on Friday to an emergency listing of Mount Taylor in the State Register of Cultural Properties at the request of Acoma, Zuni and Laguna Pueblos, the Navajo Nation, and Hopi Tribe.

Considered life sustaining and of great spiritual significance to Native Americans, the emergency listing of Mount Taylor affords it the protections of the State Register of Cultural Properties. The nomination calls out the New Mexico Mining and Mineral Division's streamlined process of issuing mining permits without notification on tracts of land less than five acres that do not include registered cultural properties, and a permit recently issued for exploration at the site of a reburial completed under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

"It is not about putting a stop sign in front of mining interests," said CPRC Chairman Estevan Rael-Galvez. "Our responsibility is to advise on cultural properties."

Mining on any land designated as a cultural property or where there is a cemetery or listed archaeological site requires a multi-agency review.

The emergency listing affords protections to Mount Taylor for one year while the CPRC investigates the property to determine if it should be permanently listed in the State Register. During that time the tribes will more fully develop the nomination, but must finalize it within 365 days or it will become ineligible to be listed for a period of five years.

The nomination establishes Mount Taylor as a Traditional Cultural Property that includes the summit and mesa tops that spread out from it at an elevation of 8,000 feet and higher. The southwest boundary is the one exception where the elevation drops to 7,300 feet and was devised

to include all lands on Horace Mesa or higher. The Indians do not conceive a specific size of the mountain, although Zuni Pueblo determined an area with a diameter of 25 miles.

The nomination was assembled by the nominating tribes with Acoma Pueblo serving as the lead sponsor and point of contact. The mountain's spiritual significance to each of the tribes — all having different names for it — is provided in summaries that provide glimpses into the migration stories of the Hopi, its life sustaining qualities to the Zuni and the origins of Mount Taylor, which Acoma Pueblo believes dates to the beginning of time. Their tradition speaks of a supernatural being who taught two sisters, Nautsiti and Iatiku, the necessities of living in the world based on the contents of baskets containing seeds and carved animals needed to complete the world. The sisters created mountains in four directions and the Mountain of the East, Mount Taylor, they populated with plants and animals from the baskets they were provided.

"Given how important and sacred this place is to these five tribes and pueblos, and how reluctant they have been in the past to share information about the role of Mount Taylor in their culture, the request for placement in the State Register indicates how urgent they feel the threats are," said Katherine Slick, State Historic Preservation Office and director of HPD.

During public testimony at the meeting, Acoma Pueblo Lieutenant Governor Mark Thompson explained that the tribes have withheld information on some of their practices in the past because they were misinterpreted or resulted in persecution. But he said the threats to Mount Taylor overrode those concerns.

"We have to take that risk to protect what is sacred to us," Thompson said.

Since 2001, the CPRC has approved only two other emergency listing to the State Register, a process used only when a property faces an imminent threat. In 2000, the Woodall at Bosque Farms in Valencia County was listed when it faced demolition. In 2002, an emergency listing of the New Deal-era New Mexico Public Welfare Building was approved and subsequently permanently listed. It was rehabilitated and now is part of the State Attorney General's complex in Santa Fe, but at one time faced demolition.

Often snow-capped, Mt Taylor rises to 11,301 feet and can be seen from many points in the state. It continues to provide essential water to the dry, high desert region along with vegetation, timber, wildlife and other life-sustaining elements that were especially important to early Native Americans. They also ascribed human qualities and personalities to the mountain by conducting prayers and pilgrimages that are little known to modern society, but are essential to tribal members to this day.

Listing Mount Taylor and the Traditional Cultural Property area in the State Register will require mining interests to obtain a standard permit before exploratory work can begin. Unprotected lands of five acres or less may obtain a minimum-impact permit. But listing Mount Taylor and some of its surrounding lands in the Register will require a full review by HPD of all permit

requests under Section 7 of the State Cultural Properties Act. Reviews by the state Environment Department, the Water Quality Division, State Game and Fish and other state agencies also will be required and tribal consultation with all interested tribes and pueblos included in the process.

Mount Taylor lands overseen by the U.S. Forest Service are subject to a Section 106 Review by HPD and other agencies under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Private in holdings and state-owned land in the Traditional Cultural Property area that would not be reviewed under federal law may be subject to state reviews because of the emergency listing.

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