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The President today signed H. R. 471 which declares that certain lands in Carson National Forrest, New Mexico, are held in trust for the Pueblo de Taos. This tract, comprised of approximately 48,000 acres of land and the Blue Lake, has been used by the Taos Pueblo Indians for religious and tribal purposes since the fourteenth century.

In 1906, the United States Government appropriated these lands for the creation of a national forest. The Indian Claim s Commission has determined that the government took these lands without compensation, The President, in his July 8, 1970 Message to Congress on Indian Affairs said:

The restoration of the Blue Lake lands to the Taos Pueblo Indians is an issue of unique and critical importance to Indi ans. throughout the country. I therefore take this opportunity wholeheartedly to endorse legislation which would restore 48,000 acres of sacred and to the Taos Pueblo people, with the statutory promise that they would be able to use these lands for traditional purposes and that except for such uses the lands would remain forever wild.

H. R. 471 would declare that the U.S. holds title, in trust for the Pueblo de Taos, to the described area and that the l and s will become part of the Pueblo de Taos Reservation and will be administered by the Secretary of the Interior under the laws and regulations applicable to other Indian trust land. The bill provides that the Indians shall use the land for traditional purposes only, such as religious ceremonies, hunting and fishing, a source of water , for age for livestock , wood, timber and other natural resources for their personal use, subject to the necessary conservation practices prescribed by the Secretary. Except for these described practices, the land will remain forever wild and will be administered as a wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Other provisions of H. R. 471 include the permission for nonmembers of the tribe to enter the lands for purposes compatible with wilderness preservation upon consent of the tribe. This bill does not alter the rights of present holders of federal leases or permits covering the land but would authorize the Pueblo, with tribal funds, to obtain the relinquishment of such leases or permits. Finally, this bill directs the Indian Claims Commission to determine to what extent the value of land conveyed in this legislation should be set off against any claims the Taos may have against the United States.