

Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in the Permian Basin of New Mexico

In 2008, the Permian Basin Programmatic Agreement (PBPA) was created out of the desire to find a more effective way to obtain compliance with Section 106 in areas of southeast New Mexico that had been subjected to extensive oil and gas development and associated archaeological surveys. During the last 40 years, over 25,000 archaeological surveys have been conducted in response to oil and gas development in southeast New Mexico. Despite most archaeological sites being avoided, over the years it became evident that oil and gas development has contributed to a drastic increase in cumulative and indirect effects to archaeological sites. It was also recognized that many of the more developed areas have been subjected to repeat archaeological surveys. In 2008, the Bureau of Land Management, the State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and seven Native American tribes assisted in the creation of the PBPA. The PBPA was developed to explore whether money generated by the oil and gas industry might be used more productively to fund targeted research projects within certain areas of the Permian Basin that had already been subjected to extensive survey coverage. Essentially, the agreement allows for oil and gas companies to contribute the cost that would have been paid to conduct an archaeological survey to a research fund, managed by the BLM, and appropriated to studies designed to better understand and manage archaeological sites in the region. Since its inception, over a dozen such projects have been carried out. An example of the studies completed include an ethnographic and archaeological inventory of Mescalero Apache Tribe Traditional Cultural properties, remediation of several prehistoric village sites that had been subjected to extensive unauthorized excavation and collection in the past and extensive documentation of rock art in the Guadalupe Mountains/Carlsbad region. The link below takes the reader to a summary booklet that describes both prehistoric and historic rock art present at 21 locations in the region and how that art was recorded and interpreted as part of a PBPA project.