**TEACHING NOTES**

**for**

*Through the Taos Pueblo Lens: Values and Emerging Strategies for Protecting Wild Lands and Waters*

By

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**Learning Objectives**

* Explain the cultural importance of Taos Blue Lake
* Explain the ecological importance of Taos Blue Lake
* Describe various ways to build effective policy between a Tribe, other governments, and external partners
* Understand the factors that stand in the way of effective policy relationships and the ways to overcome obstructions and challenges to long term goals
* Understand the degree of commitment of resources and persistence to regain lands
* Be able to explain the key factors that Taos consistently identified in its efforts to accomplish the return of Blue Lake to the Pueblo.
* Describe the costs and benefits of the long process to regain Blue Lake
* Understand the choices available to Taos Pueblo after the return of Blue Lake and the associated water rights settlement

**Intended Audience**. This case can be used in a variety of courses in multiple disciplines. It is especially appropriate in political science, public administration, law, environmental studies, cultural studies policy, wilderness studies, natural resources, sociology, Native studies, and history. Depending on the questions posed it is suitable for students at the high school and undergraduate and graduate college levels.

**Themes:** policy processes, intergovernmental relations, cultural preservation and values, treaty rights and sovereignty, law and justice, natural resources, land management, water resources, sacred sites

**Implementation**: The case can be taught is a variety of ways including inviting in speakers, role playing, and small group discussion around themed questions as outlined below. To teach the case using small groups, randomly divide the students into small groups of 3-7 people with each group discussing and later reporting out on different questions. This approach allows greater depth in analyzing the case. Each group should have a large poster paper pad and markers to record their conclusions. This helps the group stay on task.

**FILM RESOURCE: ADDITIONAL RESOURCE FOR TRAINING OR CLASS USE**

Playing a short video that illustrates the unique cultural and environmental context of Taos Pueblo is a good way to introduce the case.

The short video NMTrue TV Taos Pueblo can be found on Utube.  Ityo shows the historic Pueblo location, the Rio de Taos, and the vistas beyond.

When discussing the final congressional and presidential response, another short videothqt  gives an eye-witness account is useful:  Bobbie Kilberg: The Return of Blue Lake also n Utube.

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**OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This case raises questions about how communities make choices about what institutions and actions best help them achieve goals to restore culture and traditional life ways in governance systems through relationships to wilderness. Historically, especially after the infusion of funds for HUD and other social programs occurred during the 1960’s people looked to tribal governments to provide for them, opening the valves for these monetary infusions and solve a great range of problems. This case raises a number of questions for critical thinking about monetary and non-monetary values.

**BASIC QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

1. What were the main values expressed by Taos Pueblo throughout its long battle to regain Blue Lake?
2. Is the Taos definition of pristine different than the federally designated wilderness definition that says wilderness must be “untrammelled” and humans are only visitors? How do you think Taos Pueblo would react to the term “untrammeled” and the ideas that humans are only “visitors” in the wilderness?

3. Why is recreational use incompatible with Taos Pueblo wilderness management?

1. What do you think that Taos Pueblo people would think of the idea that humans must be banned in a natural area to keep it “untrammeled?” How do you think Taos Pueblo would react to the term “untrammeled” and the ideas that humans are only “visitors” in the wilderness?

5. What cultural institutions inform tribal government on how to achieve the Taos goals for Blue Lake?

6. What role should traditional institutions like kiva leaders or councils of elders play? Who is accountable to the people?

7. Why do the Taos complete the 20 miles pilgrimage on horseback rather than motorized transportation? How do cultural values affect the choice to use technology in wilderness?

8. What about using mechanical devices for traditional agriculture today at Taos? What about seed? Why do they want to use native seeds? Would GMO seeds produce more corn? Why are they not using them?

9. Neighboring villages and the town of Taos are hungry for water. After the Abeyta settlement, Taos Pueblo owns the dominant water rights. Should they lease some of their water to the surrounding communities?

**ADVANCED QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

1. Why do you think that the earlier agreements between the Forest Service and Taos Pueblo failed?

2. Climate change is here and it is affecting everything from Native agriculture to increasing controversy

over water rights. What actions should Pueblos and Tribes take in the context of climate change?

3. How do you engage the tribal community? What do you think works?

4. What elements of the Taos Pueblo strategy helped them build a strong external support coalition for their goals?

5. Where do you start when you are trying to restore a tribal cycle of resilience and sustainability in a wilderness area managed by the federal government?

6. Did Taos make the right choice in devoting major governmental and financial resources over a period of nearly 100 years to regain and protect Blue Lake? Explain

7. Taos Pueblo holds the rights to a large amount of water while the tourist-based town of Taos and the surrounding ranch communities worry about limited water resources. If Taos Pueblo does not want to lease water, could they create mutually beneficial arrangements to share water? Explain your answer

**SMALL GROUP TEACHING OPTION**

**Table 1 Taos Blue Lake -- The Time Before**

1. Create a diagram of the relationship between Taos Pueblo and Taos Pueblo Blue  
 Lake that connects the cultural and origin stories and its function as sacred water.

source. Feel free to illustrate with drawings

or pictographs. Choose a maze, a spiral or other diagram to reflect connectedness.

2. Explain the diagram in a narrative.

**Table 2: Taos Blue Lake – Analyzing the History, Policies and Actions of the Removal Time**

1. Make a timeline that captures the major government actions and policy decisions that justified removing Taos Blue Lake and holding onto it as part of the public lands system.
2. What were the crucial turning points in the history of the removal of the Lake from Taos Pueblo?
3. Based on this case what values shifted to justify the removal of the Lake?
4. What shifts occurred in the power and governance relationships of the major players (tribes and government agencies) during the public lands phase?
5. What were the important steps taken to ensure that the Lake would be available for public recreation while attempting to ensure that Taos Pueblo goals were maintained at the same time?
6. What changes were made to try to ensure that the dual sets of values and goals were maintained? What worked and what didn’t work?

**Table 3: Leadership: Returning the Lake Over Long-term Time**

1. Who were the major leaders in the return of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo?
2. What specific roles did tribal leaders play within the Pueblo? With external partners and opponents?
3. What were some of the cultural roles and differences among the players and how did they negotiate agreement on policy?
4. What are the important lessons you learned from this case about leadership across time? What were the Pueblo’s objectives and how do you think that they are able to maintain such consistency across times of wide change in public policy?
5. What were the various strategies pursued to create productive partnerships relationships without sacrificing the values and practices of Taos cultural and political sovereignty?

**Table 4: The Policy Process: Government Time**

1. What were the factors that promoted success in reaching policy goals?
2. Did Taos change either its policy goals, or its strategy during the extended legislative and negotiation processes? Explain your answer.
3. What are the important lessons you learned from this case about the process of legislative change? How did the Pueblo engage with the state as well as the federal government? Did waiting for the right moment figure into the strategy?
4. How did they initiate partnerships to help them achieve success? What did they trade to achieve their major aims?
5. Do you think that the Taos model affected tribal participation in the other wilderness initiatives? Explain your response.

**Table 5: Looking Back: Challenges in Evolving Definitions and Decision Processes**

1. What were the key challenges and obstructions in obtaining the return of Blue Lake?
2. How did this long policy process evolve to find common values so that the return of the Lake became a success for Congress, the President, the State of New Mexico and environmental groups?
3. Did the Pueblo’s willingness to discuss their essential cultural and sacred values as the policy process moved ahead to be reinterpreted or helped in common with the external environmental definition of a “wilderness” help in achieving their goals? Xplain your answer.
4. What additional discussions of government policies and processes for future wilderness designation on public lands near Taos Blue Lake did the Pueblo support? Why do you think they took these supportive positions?
5. How does wilderness help to support tribal goals and values in other areas mentioned in this case?

**Table 5: Success and Implementation: Change after the Time of Return.**

1. Looking at three arenas of change that became possible after the return of the Lake ---education, natural resources and health—identify what you see as the important factors that the return made possible as policy developed. Why were these important?
2. How should Taos Pueblo engage in making decisions about new opportunities after the return of Blue Lake?
3. How would you describe the evolution of the defining characteristics of tribal sovereignty in this case considering the usual definitions from law and political science to the roles of culture, policy expertise, leadership and building partnership in the definition?
4. Did the kinds of federal policy and state policy processes and designations described in this case threaten your definition of tribal sovereignty? Why or why not? ?
5. What are the important lessons you learned from this case about making change?

**Additional research opportunities**

Have the students do research on tribal initiatives to regain lands and waters or influence over their stewardship. Consider tribal participation in cooperative management of wilderness areas as well as return to trust lands and tribal participation in past and present discussions from Sandia Pueblo to recent tribal consortiums developing around Bears Ears, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other areas that have rich policy issues.

They might pick one area, or two or three areas to take a comparative approach.

**Evaluation and assessment**

Student understanding can be assessed in a variety of ways through position papers, tests, essays, research papers, in class performances, etc. We recommend that students write and hand in their answers to short reflection questions at the conclusion of doing the case where they also assess their group’s performance.