



The Navajo Nation **DR. BUU NYGREN** *PRESIDENT*
Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees **RICHELLE MONTOYA** *VICE PRESIDENT*

Transmitted via email to: heidi_todacheene@ios.doi.gov

May 3, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We thank you for taking the time to meet with us in a government-to-government meeting on April 25, 2023 to discuss the proposed withdrawal of public lands from location and entry under United States' mining laws and from leasing under the mineral leasing laws around the Chaco Culture National Historical Park for 20 years and to learn more about the Honoring Chaco Initiative.

We heard the position of the United States Department of the Interior is that the withdrawal does not include allotted lands and as such will not affect allotted lands. The Navajo Nation respectfully disagrees as the practical effect of a withdrawal of federal lands is that the economic potential of the mineral leasing from allotted lands will be diminished. As we shared with you, the proposed land withdrawal impacts thousands of our Navajo people who hold allotment lands and hundreds of Navajo people who live within the area of the 336,000 acres of public lands currently proposed to be withdrawn.

Many of these people are elderly culture bearers, who rely on income from oil and gas royalties to meet their basic needs. As an environmental justice community, our community represents the complicated multifaced nature of what it means to be an environmental justice community. At the heart of our community are people who have lived on these lands from time immemorial and desire to live there forever. All of the complexities that are part of this issue, along with the voices of our Navajo people, must be carefully weighed.

On April 27, 2023, the Navajo Nation Council's Naabik'iyatí Committee approved Resolution NABIAP-11-23, opposing the withdrawal of approximately 351,000 acres of public land surrounding Chaco Canyon. At the same time, the Committee rescinded the Navajo Nation's previous position supporting a five-mile buffer zone. **As leaders of the Navajo Nation, we support the Navajo allottees who oppose the proposed withdrawal of these public lands.**

Thank you again for meeting with us and we hope to continue the dialogue so that all American citizens' voices are heard on this issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Buu Nygren, *President*
THE NAVAJO NATION

Crystalyne Curley, *Speaker*
25th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL