



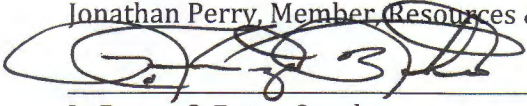
23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

HONORABLE LORENZO C. BATES
SPEAKER, 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

TO: Alton Joe Shepherd, Chairperson, Resources & Development Committee
Benjamin Bennett, Vice Chairperson, Resources & Development Committee
Davis Filfred, Member, Resources & Development Committee
Leonard Pete, Member, Resources & Development Committee
Walter Phelps, Member, Resources & Development Committee
Jonathan Perry, Member, Resources & Development Committee

FROM: 
LoRenzo C. Bates, Speaker
23rd Navajo Nation Council

Date: October 13, 2016

SUBJECT: **Concerns of Tri-Chapters of Eastern Agency Regarding Sacred Sites**

First, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Resources & Development Committee (RDC) for addressing numerous issues and considering many legislations that impact the Navajo Nation.

With this in mind, concerns were brought to the attention of the Sacred Sites Task Force Sub-Committee by the Tri-Chapters consisting of Counselor, Ojo Encino, and Torreon regarding on-going petroleum drilling activities occurring on identified areas of culturally and historically sacred areas. The three communities hosted a meeting in Counselor, NM on October 11, 2016 to provide information to the task force.

The meeting resulted in additional concerns. These concerns include health issues, air quality, protection of sacred sites, road conditions, human rights, public safety, jurisdiction, lack of community consultation, and lack of communication. The task force took the initial approach on minimal information due to the proximity of the activities related to cultural and historical areas.

In addition, a list of tasks were proposed in coordination with Division of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Department, and Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission on how to address the chapter's concerns. The following tasks were identified:

- Position Statement of the Navajo Nation
- Identify the issues as it applies to jurisdiction issues
- Describe the direction the Navajo Nation will take in addressing community concerns
- Identify the role of BLM and BIA as it applies to community concerns

The task force recognized the complexities in addressing these concerns that involve potential violations of drilling related activities and the negative impact it places on the communities. One argument the Navajo Nation continues to encounter is the various jurisdictional issues as it relates to BLM boundaries, allotment boundaries, and trust boundaries. It is suggested a form of communication needs to be established to help determine the jurisdictional issues.

Recognizing RDC as the oversight authority, it is able to address these concerns. With this, I recommend that Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to meet with RDC on this matter. In addition, I recommend the Tri-Chapters to present a thorough report to RDC. The Sacred Sites Task Force Sub-Committee can assist in arranging the meeting details, which should occur no later than 30 days.

It is important for players to come together to further discuss and attempt to identify solutions. BIA and BLM are vital in addressing the situation. Therefore, I am requesting your guidance in addressing these issues.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated. Please feel free to contact Office of the Speaker at (928) 871-7160 if you have any questions or suggestions for the next meeting.

cc: Sharon Pinto, Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Aden L. Seidlitz, Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office
Jonathan Hale, Member, Sacred Sites Task Force Sub-Committee
Dwight Witherspoon, Member, Sacred Sites Task Force Sub-Committee
Otto Tso, Member, Sacred Sites Task Force Sub-Committee
Bidtah Becker, Executive Director, Division of Natural Resources
Leonard Gorman, Executive Director, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission
Tamara Billie, Sr. Archaeologist, Historic Preservation Department
Tim Begay, Navajo Cultural Specialist, Historic Preservation Department
Harry J. Wellito, President, Counselor Chapter
Samuel Sage, CSC, Counselor Chapter
George Werito, President, Ojo Encino Chapter
David Rico, President, Torreon/Star Lake Chapter