



24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

HONORABLE SETH DAMON

Speaker, 24th Navajo Nation Council

September 17, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-404 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We applaud Congress for its historic inclusion of tribal program investments in the proposed \$3.5 trillion budget resolution and reconciliation proposals. However, we write to respectfully inform you of our opposition to the managers amendment of the House Natural Resources Committee proposal that includes a section to prohibit new oil and gas development within the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area in northwestern New Mexico and the Navajo Nation.

In the fall of 2019, *Legislation 0366-19 (attached)* was approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council, which affirmed the position of the Navajo Nation through its governing body. The legislation solidified the cultural, spiritual and cosmological connection that the Navajo Nation and the people have to the greater Chaco Canyon region area. Further, Legislation 0366-19 established a collective voice that expounded upon the efforts of not only protecting the landscape of Chaco Canyon, but to also respect and work with Navajo allottees to further advance development, as well as protection of our precious resources. As a result, this legislation passed in support of all the above, which included a position of setting the boundary of a 5-mile buffer within and around the greater Chaco Canyon National Heritage Monument area.

In the summer of 2019, *Legislation 0189-19 (attached)* was also approved by the 24th Navajo Nation Council authorizing and requiring Navajo Nation leadership to meet with Congressional leadership to request Congress to hold hearings in the affected areas of the Navajo Nation, which has not been completed.

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The official position of the Navajo Nation reflects the interests of the Navajo allotted land owners ("allottees") in the greater Chaco area and it provides a compromise between the threat to their livelihoods and the bills' calls for increased protections from mineral development.

There are numerous Navajo cultural resources sites across the eastern portion of the Navajo Nation where Navajo allottees will potentially be impacted. The proposed cultural resource investigation ("study") that is to be performed by cultural experts within the Chaco Canyon and Chaco Culture National Historic Park, should fully fund the Navajo Nation to oversee due to the land status that surrounds the Park is all within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation.

The 24th Navajo Nation Council respectfully submits another request for a Congressional field hearing at Nageezi, N.M. by members of Congress before any language prohibiting new oil and gas development within the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area. The purpose of this field hearing will allow Congressional leaders to hear directly from the Navajo people who face a real threat under the current version of the managers amendment of the House Natural Resources Committee proposal that includes a section to prohibit new oil and gas development within the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Chief of Staff Sherylene Yazzie at sheryleneyazzie@navajo-nsn.gov. The Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker will respectfully follow-up with your offices within two weeks regarding this request. Thank you for your honorable consideration.

Sincerely,



Seth Damon, Speaker
24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL



Rickie Nez, Chair
RESOURCES & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



Mark Freeland, Council Delegate
24th NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

Cc: Chairman Raul Grijalva, Chair, House Natural Resources Committee

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