



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Naabik'íyáti' Committee approves the purchase of ranch land in Colorado with the Land Acquisition Trust Fund

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Tuesday during a special Naabik'íyáti' Committee meeting, the committee considered Legislation No. 0269-17, regarding the purchase of property for sale to the Navajo Nation by Wolf Springs Ranch, Inc. The land area includes approximately 16,379 acres and is located within Huerfano and Custer Counties, CO, approximately 195 miles south of Denver.

According to the legislation, the purchase of the land would cost \$23 million plus any closing costs and expenses, which would be consistent with the general terms of the Real Estate Purchase Agreement.

Pursuant to Title 16 Section 4 of the Navajo Nation Code, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee grants final approval for land acquisitions or property exceeding \$20 million per calendar year.

Legislation sponsor, Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) stated that the land purchase would provide many opportunities for the Nation.

“The purchase of the ranch would make agricultural, political, business, and spiritual sense. This would open many opportunities for the Nation within all those areas. The ranch is in excellent condition and consists of valuable assets and resources that the Nation can benefit from,” stated Delegate Witherspoon.

The land area consists of grandfather water rights, approximately \$10 million in improvements, nearly \$792,000 in equipment, and would include bison and cattle. The property features an owner's home with six bedrooms and restrooms, three family cabins, manager's home, guest home, three apartments, and equipment and livestock buildings/stables.

In support of the legislation, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said that the land purchase would also allow the Navajo people to be closer to the eastern Navajo sacred mountain, Sinaajiní, also known as Blanca Peak.

“This opportunity will allow us to be near Sisnaajiní, which is the only sacred mountain that we are not close to. The purchase will let us gain some of our aboriginal lands back,” stated Delegate Tsosie.

Council Delegate Steven Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl’a’a’) added, “Sisnaajiní has a strong spiritual meaning within our prayers and songs. Many of our Navajo clans also originated from Sisnaajiní. It would allow spiritual growth for our people and children.”

Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) stated that the land could be a great purchase, but had uncertainties due to the Nation’s previous land purchases.

“The Nation has made dozens and dozens of land purchases in the past, like buying new toys left-and-right, but to this day, I have not seen any investments or developments within those land areas. I toured the ranch myself and in my personal reflection, it is too far to travel and the ranch has hard access. Why can’t we spend the \$24 million on our own people,” stated Delegate Chee.

During the discussion an amendment was approved with a 8-7 vote, which states the property will be used for economic development purposes, equine therapy sessions, veteran rehabilitation therapy, educational purposes, housing, firewood, and traditional Navajo use.

Additionally, the amendment states that the use of land is to be managed pursuant to a plan provided by the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, which is to be approved by the Naabik’iyati’ Committee.

Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í) stated, “We need to have assurance that this land will be utilized by all Navajo citizens, especially our youth, elders, and veterans.”

The legislation states that the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources executive director will initiate and complete the requirements for the property purchase on or before August 27.

The Naabik’iyáti’ Committee approved Legislation No. 0269-17 with a vote of 17-1, and serves as the final authority for the bill.

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