



Navajo Nation requests US Government extend 50-year Quadrilateral Agreement for one year to allow for consultation with local communities

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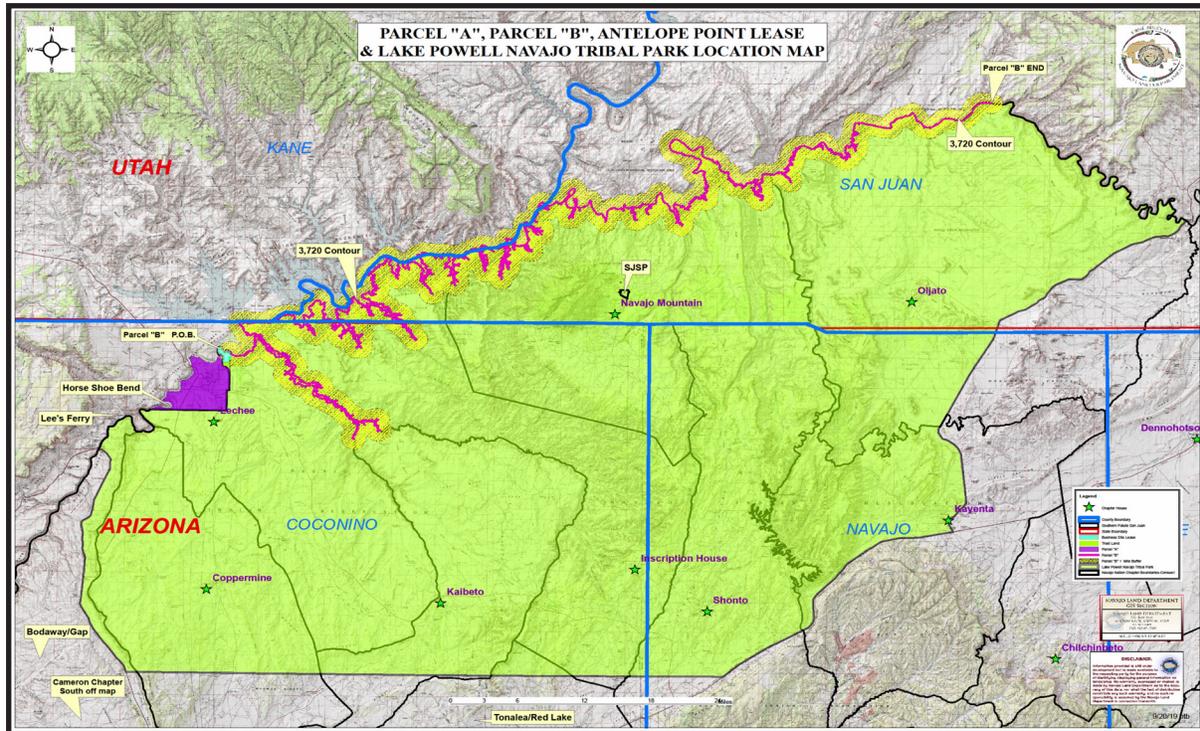


PHOTO: A map generated by the Navajo Land Department of the Parcel A, Parcel B, Antelope Point Lease and the Lake Powell Navajo Tribal Park locations.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation formally approved a request for an extension to the termination date of the 50-year-old Quadrilateral Agreement, the attendant Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Bridge Agreement with the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The agreement's original termination date is slated for Sept. 10, 2020.

Navajo Nation Council Resolution No. CS-70-20 was unanimously approved on Friday, Sept. 4, by a vote of 22 in favor and 0 opposed to request the extension of the agreements and the MOU by one year. The new proposed termination date would be Sept. 10, 2021, if the parties agree.

The 1970 Quadrilateral Agreement, the MOU dated Sep. 16, 1994, and the 2003 Bridge Agreement together govern the co-management of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, including the Antelope Point and Rainbow Bridge areas.

The agreement currently preserves the Navajo Nation's rights, privileges, and remedies available by law, with respect to the co-management of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. It also authorizes the Navajo Nation to construct, contract for, and manage the Rainbow Bridge Concession Area and outlines the rights and responsibilities relating to the development, maintenance and management of Antelope Point.

Navajo Nation leaders planned to conduct a series of public meetings to include 13 nearby local Navajo chapter governments and communities on the renegotiation of the agreements and MOU. However, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic caused Navajo leaders to postpone all meetings as they focused on coordinating immediate responses and carrying out the legislative appropriations process for federal CARES Act funds.

Council Delegate Paul Begay (Broadway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'biit'o, LeChee, Tonalea), sponsor of the legislation, stated, "This legislation is critical for economic development in the western Navajo region." The region includes traditional Navajo homelands which draw millions of visitors and tourists annually from around the world.

The agreements and MOU were intended to give the then-Navajo Tribe and surrounding Navajo communities an opportunity to create and operate economic development opportunities.

To further the Quadrilateral Agreement, the Navajo Nation, NPS and the BIA entered into the 1994 MOU to implement the development concept plan for Antelope Point. The MOU allowed the Navajo Nation and NPS to develop a concession contract and business site lease for Antelope Point Holdings, which was the developer selected by the Navajo Nation for Antelope Point. That MOU is also to remain in effect until Sep. 10.

"The National Park Service has not kept that promise the way they should have," added Delegate Begay, speaking on behalf of Navajo communities in the area. The Navajo Nation continues to learn about NPS developments after they are approved, which contradicts the tribal consultation provisions found in the agreement. Additionally, boundaries defined in the agreements that are tied to reservoir water levels continue to obscure the jurisdictions intended for the Navajo Nation to control.

In 2003, the Navajo Nation and NPS further entered into a Bridge Agreement based on the Quadrilateral Agreement, the MOU, and the execution of the Concession Contract and Business Site Lease. The Bridge Agreement will also to expire on Sep. 10, although it is subject to renewal for an additional term to run concurrently with the second term of the Quadrilateral Agreement.

During Friday's special Council session, BIA Navajo Regional Director Bart Stevens indicated that many of the conditions in the Quadrilateral Agreement were drafted and included in the document by upper-level government officials with little to no input from the Navajo people.

To avoid making the same mistake, Stevens explained that the Navajo Nation needs time to have meetings, conduct research and consult the key stakeholders moving forward with each area while maintaining safe meeting protocols.

"The Navajo Nation still requires its people to maintain social distancing, which has created the limitations in carrying out the necessary consultation among Navajo Nation leadership, Chapter officials, employees, and Navajo citizens," said Council Delegate Herman M. Daniels, Jr. (Tсах Bii Kin, Navajo Mountain, Shonto, Oljato), co-sponsor of the legislation.

The extension request pertains to the agreement termination dates set to expire at midnight, Sep. 11.

Council Delegates Otto Tso (To' Nanees Dizi) and Jimmy Yellowhair (Hard Rock, Forest Lake, Pinon, Black Mesa, Whippoorwill) voiced their support for the legislation. They advised that the Navajo Department of Justice, other council delegates and Navajo Nation division directors be present for meetings with local communities to assist in outlining any new agreements.

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