



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Navajo leadership participates in discussions with federal officials regarding the Bears Ears National Monument**

**TOWAOC, Colo.** – On Friday, Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Tecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), who also serves as a commissioner on the Bears Ears Tribal Commission, attended a meeting with officials from the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service to discuss the future of the Bears Ears National Monument in terms of park management.

In February, Delegate Filfred was appointed to the Bear Ears Tribal Commission to represent the Navajo Nation by the Navajo Nation Council's Naabik'íyáti' Committee through the passage of resolution NABIF-10-17.

At Friday's meeting, the BLM and U.S. Forest Service provided an update report to the tribal commissioners to present plans to initiate the official opening of the Bears Ears National Monument, although it is currently open to the public.

According to the Bears Ears Tribal Commission and federal officials, to date there have been no official signage, welcome center, or park manager assigned to the monument area, which has been a concern for the commission.

Delegate Filfred expressed his appreciation to the BLM and U.S. Forest Service officials for meeting with the tribal commission, and said he hopes the relationship between all entities would be strengthened and cooperative.

"I would like to thank the federal officials for meeting with the Bears Ears Tribal Commission. I want to stress the importance that our relationship remain collaborative, not just to serve as consultation because it will take our collective effort from all sides to run the national monument and ensure its success," said Delegate Filfred.

He added that the tribal commission and its staff would need an office space to begin commission operations and to start carrying out their goals and initiatives. An office space was initially requested, however, federal officials said they do not have funding at this time to build an office, said Delegate Filfred.

The Bears Ears Tribal Commission has been working collaboratively with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which has identified some funds to aid in setting up the tribal commissions operations. However, Delegate Filfred said additional resources are needed and thanked the coalition for their assistance and efforts.

“As we move forward in building up the Bears Ears National Monument, I want to thank the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and staff for coordinating and assisting with the tribal commission meetings. We are at this point because of their hard work and I wanted to express my appreciation,” said Delegate Filfred.

Delegate Filfred also thanked Utah Diné Bikeyah and Friends of Cedar Mesa, for their continued advocacy and commitment to ensuring the national monument is successful and its status remains protected.

James Adakai, who was appointed to the tribal commission by President Begaye, was also in attendance at the meeting. He expressed concern regarding the assurance that Native American locals continue to have access to wood gathering, medicinal plants, sacred site areas, and livestock grazing.

Federal officials responded saying that they will need a more thorough discussion with the tribal commission to clarify those specific areas, as well as to receive guidance on the handling of sacred objects that may be found in the vicinity of the national monument.

The tribal commissioners also received drafts of the monuments signage, literature, and website information that was presented by the BLM and U.S. Forest Service. The next Bears Ears Tribal Commission is scheduled for May 19.

For more information regarding the Bears Ears Nation Monument, please visit the U.S. Forest Service website at <https://www.fs.fed.us/visit/bears-ears-national-monument>.

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